

Great Train Robbery Charges

"NO FEWER THAN 15" TOOK PART IN RAID

"CRIME STRIKES AT ROOT OF SOCIETY" SAYS COUNSEL

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER

FINGER and palm prints of four of the men accused in the Great Train Robbery were found at the gang's hideout, Leatherslade Farm, Bucks, the prosecution said when the case against 10 men and three women opened at Aylesbury, Bucks, yesterday.

The fingerprints of a fifth man were found in a brief case filled with stolen money, stated Mr. HOWARD SABIN, opening for the prosecution. He said that the raid was a "crime that strikes at the root of civilised society."

Mr. Sabin outlined to three magistrates, one a woman, the careful planning over three months, described the intricate knowledge needed in the actual raid and referred to a mysterious "Freddie" involved in the planning of the raid and disposal of part of the £2½ million stolen.

No fewer than 15 men took part in the actual raid, he said.

CHARGES AMENDED "Conspiring together"

Charges against eight of the men of robbery and stealing £2,631,784 were amended to conspiring together with persons unknown between May 1 and Aug. 9 this year to stop a train with intent to rob the mail.

They were further accused of being armed with offensive weapons and robbing Frank Dewhurst of 120 mail bags.

References were also made during the opening statement to BRUCE REYNOLDS and ROY JOHN JAMES, known as the Weasel, whose photographs and descriptions were issued by police regarding inquiries into the robbery.

The hearing was adjourned until Oct. 4.

FULL AMOUNT NOT DISCLOSED PROSECUTION CASE

MR. HOWARD SABIN, opening the prosecution's case, said that just after three a.m. on Aug. 8 a travelling Post Office train was stopped and robbed about two miles south of Leighton Buzzard and 120 mail bags were stolen.

They contained 615 high-value packets in transit to various banks, and £2,631,000 had been mentioned as having been stolen.

"None of these 15 charges mentions a sum of that kind and the prosecution is not proposing to prove the full amount of money that was on the train."

"The prosecution believes that no less than 15 men took part in the actual raid and you may think it was skilfully carried out and that a great deal of careful planning was required beforehand. Even the telephone wires in three

or four places near where the raid took place were pulled down by ropes.

You may think that certain persons who did not take part in the raid itself took part in the planning of the enterprise. This was a mail train engaged on the routine task of sorting and delivering letters to persons all over the country.

"It was a crime that strikes at the root of civilised society and a crime that affects everyone."

Mr. Sabin said the train carried no goods traffic and no passengers and it left Glasgow about 6.50 p.m. on Aug. 7. Other coaches joined it during its journey until there were 12 pulled by a Diesel engine.

The front coach had a corridor which did not connect with the rest of the train. Of the other coaches some were used for transporting the mail and some as sorting offices.

"HIGH-VALUE" COACH Packages for banks

The second coach was known as the high-value package coach. It dealt only with high-value packages. They were on their way to the East Central District Post Office, London, for delivery to head offices of a number of banks.

A high-value package envelope contained banknotes from one bank to another and the limit imposed by the post office was £5,000.

Other coaches joined at Carstairs and Carlisle and mail was put aboard.

There were over 600 high value packages collected into 120 mailbags. At the time of the raid there were five postmen sorting in the high-value package coach.

There was none in the coach between them and the engine, the remaining 65 Post Office employees were busy in different coaches in the rest of the train. The train also had a guard, engine driver and fireman.

SIGNALS RULES Yellow warning

Referring to railway signalling procedures, Mr. Sabin said: "Signal failures will occur from time to time and if the home signal is found to be red the rule of British Railways is that the train stops, and before it goes on there must be a telephone call made to the signal box."

"That means that if there has been just a failure the train will be able to go straight on."

The train had passed Leighton Buzzard just before 3 a.m. The next signal was at Seare Crossing, about two miles on. The distant signal showed yellow, a warning that they might find the next signal red.

There were a number of checks on signals, and one of these would cause a buzzer to work in the signal box if there was a failure.

Just after the train passed Leighton Buzzard the warning buzzer sounded in Leighton Buzzard signal box, indicating the distant signal had failed. At that moment the signal was tampered with.

"LIGHT REMOVED" Train stopped

Later examination showed the green light had been removed and the yellow light had been lit up by having a battery attached.

The train driver saw the distant signal yellow and slowed down. He then saw the home signal was red. This also had been tampered with. A glove had been put over the green light and a battery attached to the red light.

The train was stopped and the fireman got down to telephone Leighton Buzzard signal box. He noticed the telephone wire had been cut. He saw a man, who he thought was a railwayman, beckoning to him.

"He went over to the man, thinking he would tell him what was wrong. The man suddenly caught hold of him and pushed him down the bank. Other men seized him. One said, 'If you shout I will kill you,' and showed him a cosh."

DRIVER "FELLED TO FLOOR" TRAIN SPLIT

"The driver, Mr. Jack Mills, was attacked by a man who entered his cab holding a bar about 2ft long. He saw the man about to strike him and grappled with him and almost forced him out of the cab."

"He was hit from behind by another man. He was felled to the floor and quickly overpowered. He spent two days in hospital and had 14 stitches in his head."

Up to that time the Post Office men in the train thought everything was normal. The robbers split the train between the second and third coaches.

"This was done extremely quickly, you may think, almost certainly by somebody who had some knowledge of railways."

A Post Office employee in the third coach saw a man dressed as a railwayman beside the second coach. Another man, similarly dressed came from between the coaches.

"He heard somebody say 'That is it.' No doubt this was when the coaches were uncoupled."

Mr. Mills was made to sit in the driver's cab and told to keep his head down. He was told 'Get going and stop when we say stop.' Mr. Mills had blood pouring from his face and was feeling extremely groggy and did as he was told."

The train and the first two coaches drove on for about half a mile. They got to a bridge where Mr. Mills was told to stop.

The railwaymen in the high-

The accused and the charges

Eight of the accused men are charged with being concerned in the actual robbery. They are:

ROGER JOHN CORDERY, 42, of Hurst Road, East Molesey, Surrey; WILLIAM GERARD BOAL, 50, of Burnthwaite Road, Fulham; CHARLES FREDERICK WILSON, 31, bookmaker, of Crescent Lane, Clapham;

ROBERT ARTHUR BIGGS, 34, carpenter, of Alpine Road, Redhill, Surrey; JAMES HUSSEY, 30, painter and decorator, of Eridge House, Dog Kennel Hill, East Dulwich;

THOMAS WILLIAM WISBEY, 33, bookmaker, of Ayton House, Camberwell; LEONARD DENNIS FIELD, 31, merchant seaman, of Green Lanes, N.

BRIAN ARTHUR FIELD, 29, managing clerk of Kabri House, Bridle Road, Whitechurch Hill, Oxfordshire.

Two other men and three women were charged with receiving. They are:

ROBERT WILLIAM PELHAM, 26, motor mechanic, of Lonsdale Road, Notting Hill;

MARY KAZIM MANSON, 42, of Wimbledon Close, The Downs, Wimbledon;

ALFRED PILGRIM, 52, florist, of Bridge Road, East Molesey; and his wife;

MARY FLORENCE PILGRIM, 49; RENEE BOAL, 52, of Burnthwaite Road, Fulham.

The charges

The charges are that: Cordery, William Boal, Wilson, Biggs, Wisbey, Hussey and the two Fields.

Between May 1 and Aug. 9 this year in Buckinghamshire conspired together and with other persons unknown to stop a mail with intent to rob the mail;

On Aug. 8 in Buckinghamshire being armed with offensive weapons and robbing Frank Dewhurst of 120 mailbags;

William Boal and Cordery each between Aug. 7 and 15 received £36,037, £79,120 and £5,060 in money, the property of the Postmaster-General, knowing it to have been stolen;

Brian Arthur Field between Aug. 7 and 17 received £100,900 in money, the property of the Postmaster-General knowing it to have been stolen;

Robert Arthurs Boal between Aug. 9 and 16 received sum of £335 and £860 knowing them to have been stolen;

Alfred Pilgrim and May Florence Pilgrim between Aug. 9 and 16 each received £800 knowing it to have been stolen;

Pelham between Aug. 9 and 25 received £545 knowing it to have been stolen;

Mary Manson on Aug. 9 received £835 knowing it to have been stolen.

value package coach closed the back door and pulled the communication cord, thinking there had been an accident.

"As the train stopped at the bridge, suddenly the window was broken and they heard a great deal of shouting, then they realised it was a raid. They did their best to bolt the doors and pile mailbags against them."

The next thing they heard was someone shouting that the bolt was being put on and "get the guns."

MAN "WAVING AXE" Postmen overpowered

The next thing was that two men burst into the coach waving axes and another man rushed in waving an axe. In seconds about eight or 10 men were in the coach and the postmen were overpowered and made to lie down with their faces to the ground.

Other raiders entered the coach, all wearing dark clothes and with their faces covered with stockings. The mailbags were swiftly removed by a chain of men to a lorry and possibly to another vehicle. Mr. Mills and the fireman were brought into the coach handcuffed together.

"Somebody said, 'We are leaving now. Do not move. We are leaving someone behind.' A few minutes later they left."

"Out of the 128 mailbags in the high-value package coach, 120 had been stolen."

ADVANCE RENT FOR FLAT BOURNEMOUTH CALL

On Aug. 10, a little over 48 hours after the raid, a man telephoned the advertiser of a flat in Wimborne Road, Bournemouth. Later that day WILLIAM BOAL called to see him. He was shown over the flat and paid £58 16s., a month's rent in advance.

The following Monday William Boal rented a garage in Ensbury Avenue, Bournemouth, saying he was buying a house and wanted a garage. He paid three months' rent in advance.

That day Boal and CORDERY both arranged to buy a Ford car for £273 14s. from Broadway Car Sales, Bournemouth. They gave the names of Boal and Thomas, and Boal paid £73 deposit. Later that day a Rover car was garaged at Ensbury Avenue.

"On Aug. 13 both men returned to Broadway Car Sales and Boal paid the remaining sum of £200, £100 in £5 notes. They took the car away. One of the £5 notes paid on that occasion was certainly despatched by a bank and was on the mail train."

Mrs. Clark, also living in Bournemouth, had an advertisement for her lock-up garage to let in her shop window. On Aug. 14 Boal visited her. She agreed to let him have the garage.

WOMAN "SUSPICIOUS" Telephoned police

He insisted on paying three months' rent in advance. He said he proposed to open a business where he would earn £5 an hour. She became suspicious and later telephoned the police.

Mr. Sabin said that later that day Boal and Cordery went to the Northbourne Service Station and bought another car, an Austin van. "That is three cars," he commented.

Boal gave the name J. Gosling and paid £110 in cash, including 34 £5 notes.

Later that evening the two men drove to Mrs. Clark's garage and said they wanted to speak to her. As they came into the kitchen Det.-Sgt. DAVIES and Det.-Sgt. CASE, of Bournemouth police, came in at the front door.

Cordery and Boal saw them and left by the kitchen door. The



Mrs. Lily Rison, who gave evidence yesterday at the mail train robbery hearing, walking in Aylesbury, Bucks. With her is her husband, Mr. Bernard Thomas Rison, owner of Leatherslade Farm, Brill.

police officers followed and saw them split up. Boal returned to the house and asked if the two men they had seen come in were friends of Mrs. Clark's. She said they had come in for a game of cards and then Boal made a remark that one looked like a police officer.

Cordery was detained by Det.-Sgt. Davies on coming out of the garden nearby. He protested and even after a warrant card had been produced he shouted: "Help, help, I want witnesses."

Cordery also said he was "minding his own business." He became violent and was arrested.

BOAL "VIOLENT" "Honest businessman"

Boal was seen walking along the road. Stopped and told he was going to be arrested, Boal said he lived there and had a business at Wimborne. He became violent and both men were taken to the police station where they were searched.

Cordery was found to have on him £160 3s 9d and Boal had £118 and a receipt for the Austin.

When Boal was questioned he gave his correct name and address, that in Fulham, and said he was in business in Surrey; the business being worth £70,000.

Asked about the vehicle left in Mrs. Clark's garage, he said he had bought it from a man called Gosling in Bournemouth and knew very little about him. He then began to scream and shout that he was an honest businessman and had a good precision engineering works.

SUITCASE AND HOLDALL "£56,037 notes"

In the meantime Det.-Sgt. Davies went to the garage and unlocked the Austin with one of Boal's keys and saw there a suitcase

and a pillow case. In the holdall, suitcase and kitbag were notes valued at £56,037 and in the pillow case were a number of brown wrappings which you will hear are very similar to the sort of wrappings used by banks to wrap their notes."

When Det.-Sgt. Davies told Boal of the large number of notes found in the Austin car, Boal abandoned further pretence and said: "Fair enough. It came from the train job."

"Then the officers went to the garage and they found the Rover car. This was opened with one of Boal's keys and in the boot were six cases full of bank notes of a value of more than £29,000."

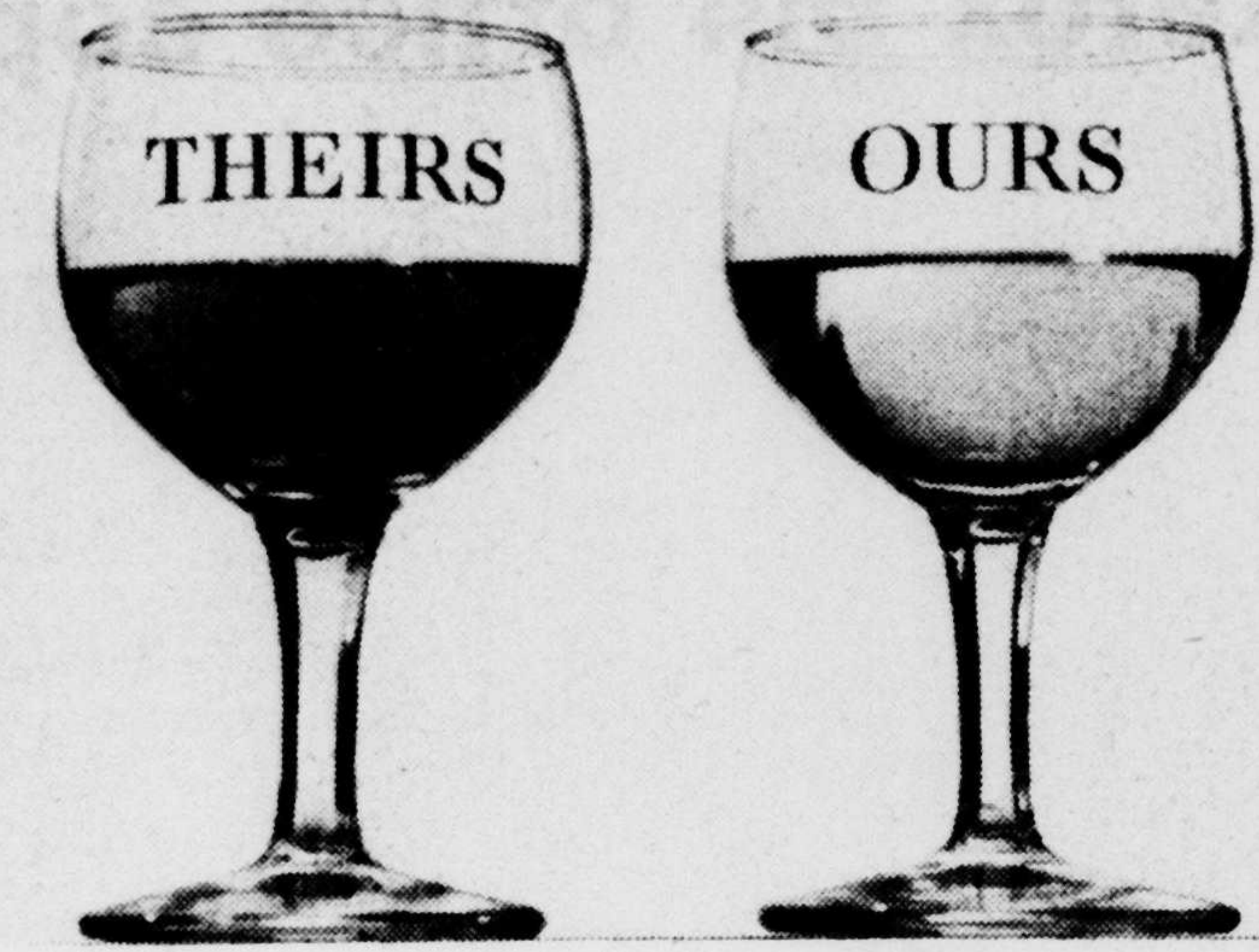
"£141,000 IN CARS AND FLAT" CORDERY'S DENIAL

Mr. Sabin said that over £141,000 was found in the cars and the flat. Asked about it by police, Cordery said: "Well, to be honest, the money does come from the train job, but I was not on the track."

Cordery said he had been asked his advice as to how the train could be stopped and that he had been offered "a few thousand."

"He said he told them how to do it. Asked what advice he had

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WHAT'S YOURS?

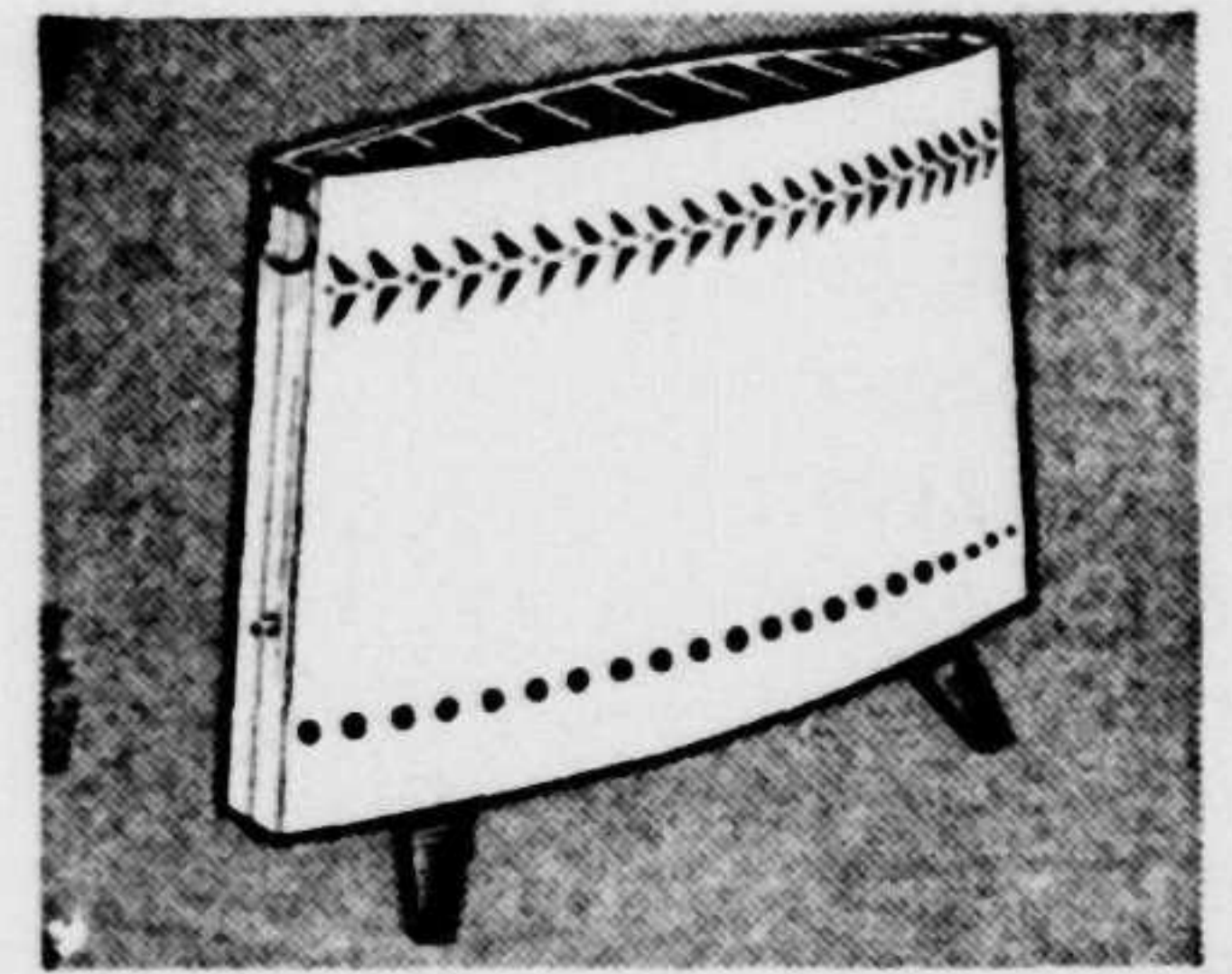
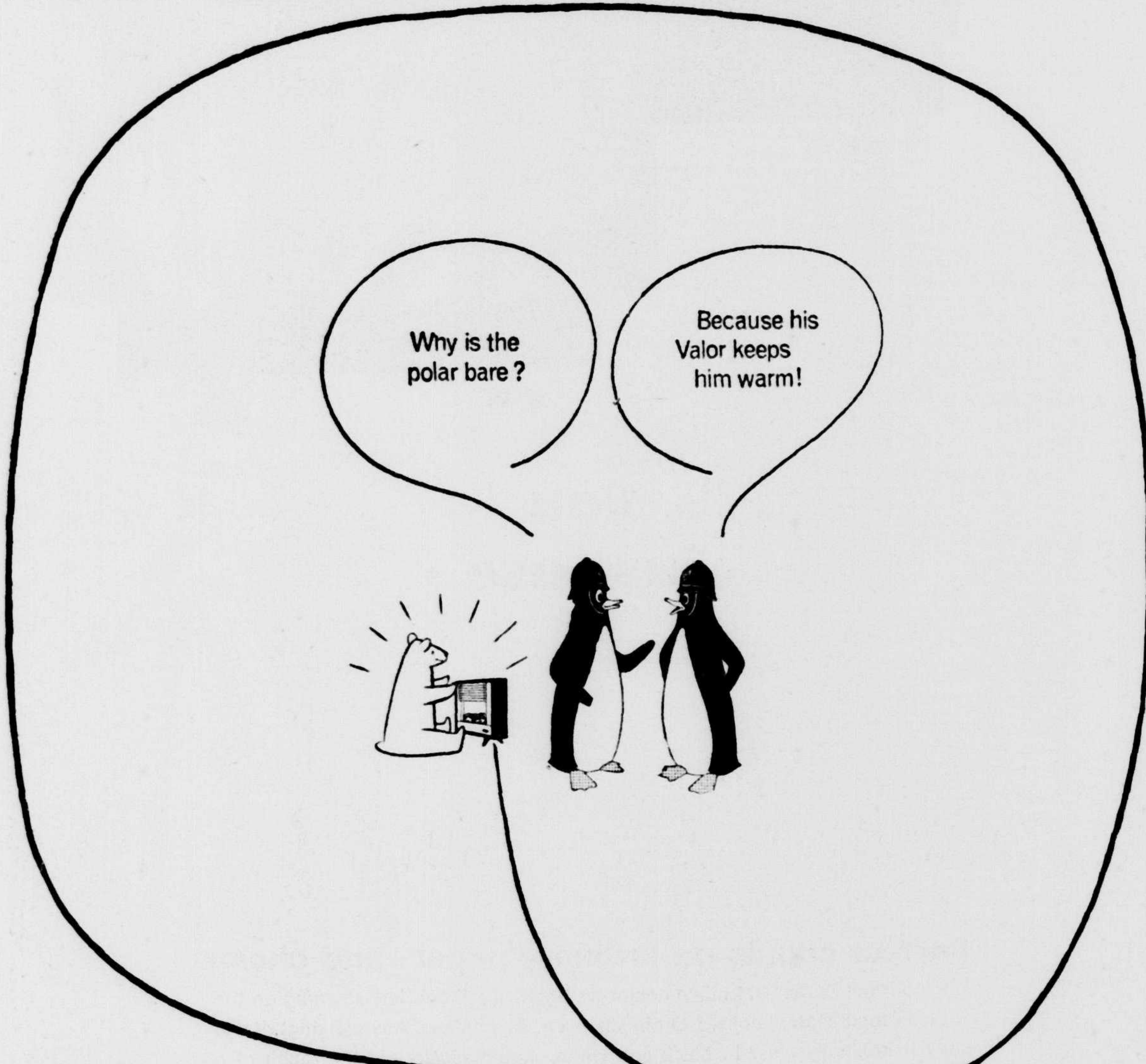
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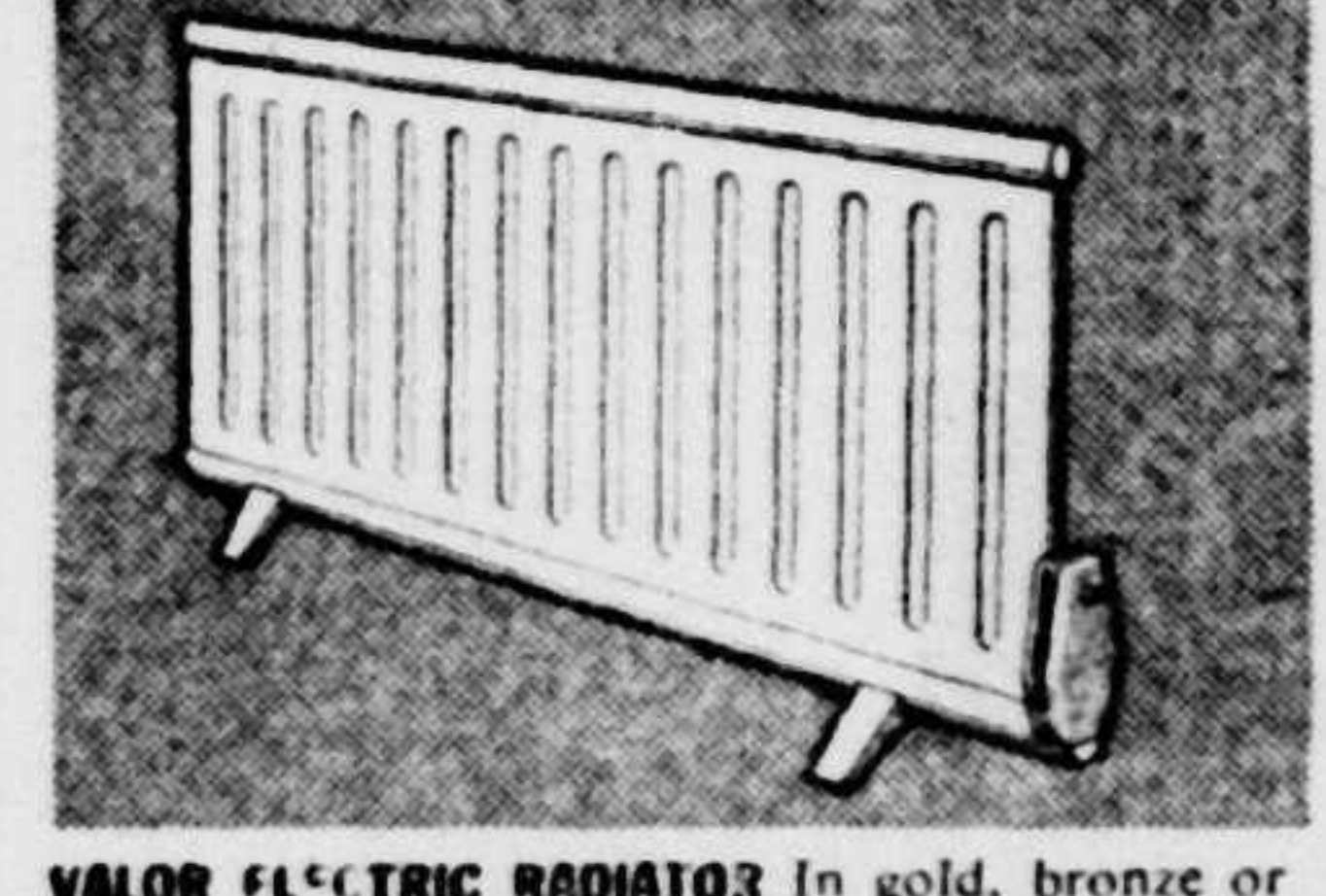
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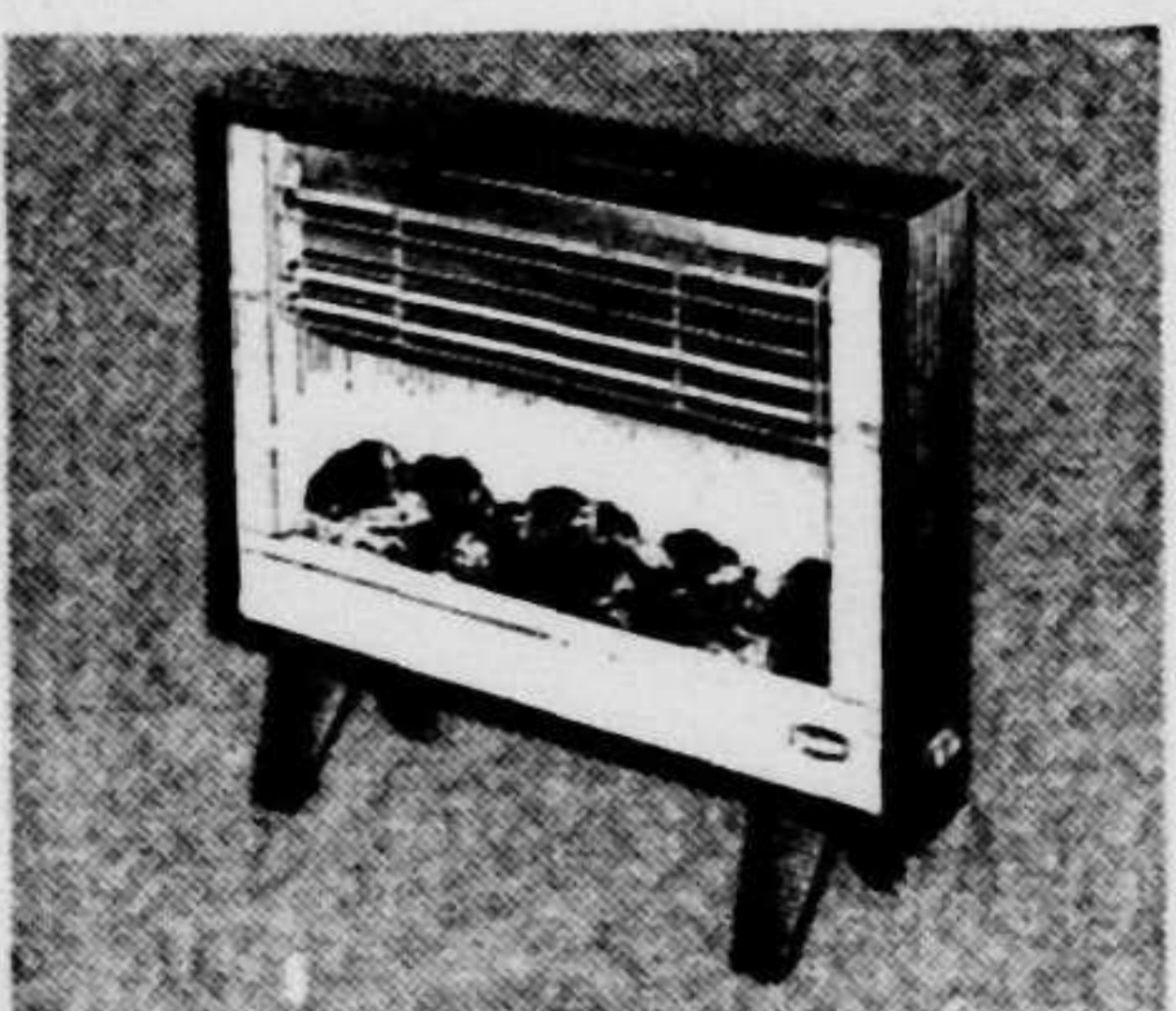
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Daily Telegraph Reporter. "No Fewer than 15' Took Part in Raid." Daily Telegraph, 27 Sept. 1963, p. 30. The Telegraph Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IO0704887040/DSLAB?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-DSLAB. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.