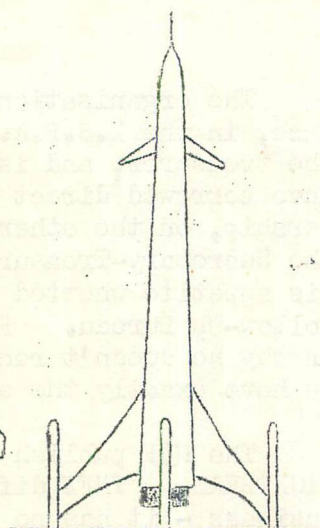


B.S.F.A. newsletter



(VECTOR 19a)

JUNE 1963

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No. 17

HEADING by Christopher Priest, cut on to stencil by
Harry Nadler

BOOK REVIEWS by E.C. Ball and Brian W. Aldiss

"SPARROWVARIATION" by David A. Sparrow

All other material is by the Editor, who wishes to thank
the sources of the various news items

OUR AMERICAN COUSIN The B.S.F.A. reckons to maintain amicable relations with
its American opposite number, the National Fantasy Fan
Federation (more commonly known as the N.F.F.F. or the N3F). The two bodies,
however, are not exactly each other's equivalent. Members of the B.S.F.A. may
be interested to see how their ways compare with ours.

To begin with, the N3F is considerably the older of the two, having been
founded in 1941. Not unnaturally, it is also the larger of the two - though
not disproportionately so. In fact, population for population we have a
slight lead over them - so we're not doing so badly.

There's a difference of emphasis, too - the B.S.F.A. tends to be more of
a serious society whereas the N3F exists frankly for the enjoyment of its mem-
bership - it does not, for example, seem to be interested in attracting the
professionals into its ranks as we are. Nor does the N3F run any conven-
tions, each American convention being organised by an ad hoc committee from
the locality involved. In recent years, though, the N3F have taken to
manning a hospitality room at the annual World Convention, where hot coffee
is dispensed free to all comers. (If London does, as is hoped, get the
Worldcon for 1965, will anything be done in that line, anybody know? Just
a stray thought, that's all.)

The organisation of the N3F is far more elaborate than ours. For instance, in the B.S.F.A. an applicant for membership contacts the secretary, pays the treasurer, and is greeted by a member of the Welcommittee (an idea which we have borrowed direct from the N3F, incidentally). An applicant for N3F membership, on the other hand, is recruited by the Recruiting Bureau, inducted by the Secretary-Treasurer, has his hand shaken by the Welcommittee, and then has his appetite whetted for further participation on various projects by the Follow-Up Bureau. Finally, there is a Renewals Committee to sit in inquest on why he doesn't renew his subscription the following year. (Don't laugh - we have exactly the same problem. And we haven't solved it, either.)

The N3F publish two regular magazines - THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN and TIGHTBEAM. TNFF differs from VECTOR in that it is mainly confined to club business - it has no reviews, no science fiction articles, no letters etc. It does have a small-ad section - one advert in a recent issue offering a chess set for sale solemnly included the line: "Men have felt bottoms". Somehow, I don't think the advertiser realised he was committing a double entendre - much less a triple one! TIGHTBEAM is a letterzine, containing nothing but readers' letters. It has a system of rotating editors, to spread the load a bit.

The current order-of-battle of the N3F - it has recently been streamlined, believe it or not - includes the following bureaux:

Collectors'

Correspondence (for encouraging contact between members)

Follow-Up

Information

Manuscript (for placing members' work with suitable fanzines)

Overseas (for liaison with unAmerican organisations such as ourselves)

Publications (other than the two regular magazines)

Publicity

Recruiting

Tape (this is really a club-within-a-club, and has its own official organ. Members can obtain copies of tapes of all sorts of things, such as convention speeches, historical events etc)

Welcommittee

Besides the above bureaux, the N3F includes three advisory committees on various topics, and six "miscellaneous services" - these latter include its own amateur press association, similar to several other such both inside and outside science fiction fandom. It doesn't, however, appear to have a lending library. This is another one up for the B.S.F.A.

"I learned something from the discussion about the dogs in orbit. It had never occurred to me that the upper atmosphere would be short on tree-trunks."
- Piers Jacob, in a letter in TIGHTBEAM No. 16

AMATEUR SCIENTISTS:

Why not investigate B.A.S.R.A. ?

The British Amateur Scientific Research Association

Details from Jim England, 64 Ridge Road, Kingswinford, Staffs

CHANGE OF ADDRESS. M.28 K. Freeman, now at 1A Hamlyn Avenue, Hull, E. Yorks

NEW MEMBER . Mrs D.E. Parker; 38 Millfield Rd, Deeping St James, Peterborough, Northants (M.376)

BOOK REVIEW

John Carnell (ed.): Gateway to Tomorrow (Panther Books 2/6d)

This anthology, first published in 1954, is a collection of stories by British authors. The general quality of the stories is good, although a few of them are poor.

The first two stories, Dumb Martian by John Wyndham and Hide and Seek by Arthur C. Clarke, are too well known to need any comment. Home is the Hero, by E.C. Tubb, is one of the Alien Dust stories, about a Martian colonist recalled to Earth to publicise a recruitment campaign for the colony. Lost Memory by Peter Phillips is rather difficult to describe adequately. A space-ship crashes on a planet populated by robots which know nothing of living creatures. The story is dragged out by conversation between the pilot and the robots, with the pilot trying to explain that he is different from the robots and that the help they are trying to give him will be fatal.

My favourite story in the book is The Bliss of Solitude by J.T. McIntosh. Colin Ord is alone on a space station near Pluto and suffers from solitosis, a mental aberration caused by isolation, which takes a different form with each person. Ord has hallucinations which affect all five senses, and when the doctor arrives to take him back to earth he is unable to tell whether she is real or just another of his hallucinations.

Of Those Who Came by George Longdon is good reading but has rather a poor plot - three alien criminals land on earth and are tracked down by another of their kind.

The above-mentioned stories are the best in the book. The remaining four have well-worn plots and there is nothing about them which lifts them out of the rut. On the whole, however, the book is definitely worth buying.
E.C.B.

NEW MEMBER : (see also previous page):

M.377 A.Q. Orchard; 8 Westbourne Road, Walsall, Staffs

HASTA LA TRIESTA The FESTIVAL INTERNAZIONALE DEL FILM DI FANTASCIENZA is scheduled for the second week in July, at the Castle San Giulio, Trieste, Italy. Besides showing scientific films (including The Day of the Triffids), it aims to put international sf and its perpetrators on public display. Probable attendees include, among others, Ray Bradbury and Brian Aldiss, the temptations offered including a tour of the Dolomites and a day in Venice. Brian Aldiss has further offered to report the occasion for VECTOR. His offer has been accepted. Stay tuned.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE LOCAL CINEMA, The Day of the Triffids has started going the rounds somewhat unostentatiously. "Maybe," suggests Dennis Tucker, "like the triffids, it just escaped." It is reported that the film (in CinemaScope and Eastmancolor) is not so much a picturisation of the book as a parallel story stemming from the same basic premises - and with a hero (Howard Keel) bearing the same name as the book's hero. Keiron Moore also takes part.

ANYONE Maxim Jakubowski, our Secretary, edits a French fanzine entitled
 UNDERSTAND NOCTURNE ("insolite science-fiction"), the 9th issue of which
 FRENCH ? is now to hand. Unfortunately I don't seem to have access to any
 French-speaking reviewers (except possibly for Maxim himself),
 but it consists of some fifty foolscap pages of neatly-typed, neatly-repro-
 duced and interesting-looking material by assorted Frenchmen and Frenchwomen.
 It includes a report on the Peterborough convention by Maxim; stories and art-
 icles, and a photopage. The cover (on semi-stiff card) is by ATom. No
 sterling subscription rate seems to be quoted - anybody who may be interested
 is advised to get in touch with Maxim Jakubowski at 90 Matlock Road, Leyton,
 London E.10.

BOOK REVIEW

Robert Sheckley: Shards of Space (Corgi Books 3/-)

Sheckley at his best is nobody but Sheckley; his ability to make what
 may roughly be described as moral points with a sort of genial free-wheeling
 ingenuity is purely his own. There is also a second-best Sheckley, when it
 is obvious that he is not trying very hard; then the unlikeliness of his
 stories becomes tedious and often enough the genial note turns sour and snick-
 ery; in this phase, he writes like John Collier in a shabby grotesque mask.
 There is also a third Sheckley.

Shards of Space contains three unadulterated bits of third grade Sheckley
 in its eleven stories. They are just tired exercises in gruesomeness. They
 have none of the Sheckley aura about them; any hack in the field might have
 written them. I'm thinking of a little story like Alone at Last, that might
 have come out of a bad Matheson collection.

Three bad apples in a bag soon contaminate all the rest, and these stories
 (or I'm dreaming) lend a feel of shoddiness to the others. I don't rate one
 of them as top-grade. Stories like Prospector's Special are terribly con-
 trived - perhaps only a writer would recognise how contrived. The words flow
 on, the plot churns, the ending strikes a rather mechanical note of dismay.
 Sheckley slumbers.

It dismays me to say this, because I am a devout Sheckley fan. The man
 has a wonderful creative well from which delight and invention often bubble.
 That well's healing waters do not flow here. For all that, there is some
 pleasant second-grade stuff, notably The Girls and Nugent Miller, a post-bomb
 encounter, and Potential, an early one from "Astounding" with a crazy kicker
 ending.

Let's deduce nothing from the fact that this collection is disappointing.
 Let's just cross our fingers and wait for the next one! B.W.A.

POHL TO VISIT LONDON Frederik Pohl, noted sf author and editor of "Galaxy",
 plans to visit London after the Trieste festival (see
 previous page). It might be worth while haunting the Globe tavern, Hatton
 Garden (near Chancery Lane underground) on Thursday evenings towards the end
 of July, on the off-chance that he turns up at this traditional one-time
 science-fictional gathering-place.

S P A R R O W V A R I A

Corn cropped or dropped by: DAVID A. SPARROW

THE B.S.F.A. LIBRARY list contains an entry for The Tracer of Lost Persons, by Chambers. Oh, well! So long as they aren't under the bed

One fan surprised me by saying that he had never read any of Heinlein's stories - he had bought The Day After Tomorrow and kept putting it off.

Walter Lippman said: "Our ancestors knew their way from birth through to eternity; we are puzzled by the day after tomorrow." He must have been a Heinlein fan, too.

How would you like to be a Chrysalid - or a Kraken - wakened with an Outward Urge in the Seeds of Time by the noise of the Midwich Cuckoos on the Day of the Triffids?

Who said that the first men in the moon had to dig Wells?

It's a good job Eric Frank Russell isn't a Farmer, or our Next of Kin would make very Strange Relations

"As I'm off to America," said the T.A.F.F. winner, "perhaps I'll meet Isaac."

Sf, in playing with time, will have to be careful of its tenses. For instance, "he gives her a present" will become "he gave her a past".

In some sf tale, apparently, the centipedes on a far planet used the light from the stars to provide FTL travel. I suppose the author thought that many hands could make light work.

If life really is lengthened by FTL travel, I can imagine a new life insurance coming out - "60 years of age or 500 light years".

Astronomers report huge galaxies of stars which are going away from the Earth at a speed of 90,000 miles a second. Do you think they know something?
D.A.S.

EDITOR'S NOTE. David Sparrow threatens to go on doing this sort of thing, provided he can get enough raw material. He can be fed at 1 Oolite Grove, Odd Down, Bath, Somerset.

CORRECTION The Aldiss bibliographical listing mentioned in VECTOR 19 should have been shown as costing 5/- plus postage, not 3/6d.

I should like to point out that the booklet in question, professionally printed, contains not only a complete list of Aldiss-written and Aldiss-edited material up to the end of 1962, but also Brian Aldiss's own notes on items of particular interest. It is still eminently worth the price. It can be obtained from Fantast (Medway) Ltd, 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs.

INTRODUCING

B.A.G.H.D.A.D.

Psychiatrists tell us that the urge to explore, to find out what lies beyond, is common to both mortal creatures and supernatural manifestations. A sphinx, given a riddle to solve, will often stay to solve it even though tempted by the smell, sight and sound of food.

It is therefore surprising that the majority of people regard investigation into the unknown as not only somewhat unnatural, but as strictly sinful. Nevertheless, there exist large numbers of eternally dedicated amateurs whose hearts and souls (particularly souls) are committed to the furtherance of the quest for knowledge. It is to help these people that the British Association of Good Hearted Dabblers in Amateur Demonology has been formed.

B.A.G.H.D.A.D. is open to anybody who is aware of the rudiments of Arabian sorcery and English spelling, and who wishes to make the best use of his enthusiasm. You and your familiars are cordially invited to contact:-

Djinn Iraq, 1 Hanging Gardens,
Babylon on Avon, Somerset.

(AM, with apologies to Jim England who certainly seems to have the right idea)

GOOD NEWS FROM NOVA VECTOR 19 reported the indefinite suspension of Nova Publications magazine "Science Fiction Adventures".

B.S.F.A. NEWSLETTER 17 is glad to report that Nova's other bi-monthly, "Science Fantasy", is definitely scheduled to go monthly as soon as editor Carnell has suitable material in sufficient quantity.

REMINDER B.S.F.A. annual Convention, Easter 1964, again at the Bull Hotel, Peterborough. 5/- to Tony Walsh, 167 Sydenham Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, ensures your keeping abreast of developments - and counts towards the admission fee.

REMINDER Ella Parker holds open house every Friday evening for B.S.F.A. members who live, or happen to be, in London. The address is Flat 43, William Dunbar House, Albert Road, London NW.6. Queen's Park station is just round the corner. Bring your own parachute. (There is also a lift).

FOR YOUR INFORMATION Owing to various people's annual holidays coming up in the near future, the B.S.F.A. publications schedule looks like having to take a back seat for a month or two. It may be possible to squeeze a smallish VECTOR into July, but at the time of going to press nothing is guaranteed. If a July VECTOR doesn't prove feasible, the next issue should appear during September. I'm hoping that we'll be able to make July though.

TELEREPORT Tony Walsh reports that the recent sf documentary on BBC.TV could have done with a little of Disney's humour to counterbalance the heavy accentuation of the "doom" theme. At least, however, the programme concentrated on serious rather than horrific aspects - though the plot of at least one film seems to have been misunderstood. The message, says Tony, seems to be that if sf could be channelled away from the physical sciences, the "doom" might somehow be prevented!