

COMPACT



COMPACT No 1

It is customary, on joining an APA, to introduce oneself in the first mailing you manage to make. For those of you not already in the know: my name, Ella Anderson Parker. My abode: 43, Wm. Dunbar House, Albert Road, London. N.W.6. I came into fandom just three weeks before Easter in 1958, which makes it easy for me to keep track of my fannish birthday, should I want to for any reason. I have edited and published a genzine, ORION, since 1959, on an irregular schedule. Published the ATOM Anthology, have attended all British Conventions since, including the one in '58. Attended the SEACON in 1961, and currently belong to only two organisations, if you discount OMPA: The Science Fiction Club of London, and The British Science Fiction Association. I am, in fact, a founder-member of both these bodies.

Maybe I should explain my reasons for titling my OMPazine as I have. 'COMPACT' is the name of a soap-opera type programme on British TV. It is a mushy look at the life in an office, though no-one does any work that I can see, of a monthly 'slick' woman's magazine. It is renowned for the gossip that goes on eternally. So, as I, if I'm renowned for anything at all, am renowned for my habit of talking endlessly about things of no importance, it seemed to be just the title for me.

Whichever, I hope that those of you who have been urging me to join OMPA, almost since I came into fandom, will now be happy that I've finally made it. I had every intention of making the first of the deadlines for which I was eligible, but, as so many of you have heard before, all my fan stuff and materials were packed for ages before I did finally move to here. Now, I've unpacked only what I wanted of needed immediately so I could get this out. It means, of course, that I won't be doing mailing comments this time, but I do want to put my hand on the last mailing if you couldn't put my hand on the last mailing if you paid me, which I don't suppose you will? No, I didn't think you would.

I said I wasn't going to do any mailing comments this time, but I do want to make special mention of the Dick Schultz report on the Chicon. Dick, I don't recall reading anything of yours before that I've liked and enjoyed as much as this. It complemented very nicely the one done by Walter Breen, in WRRN. If there are any criticisms to be made it would be on the score of repetition. Too often you used the expression, and I have to quote from memory: "I'm only having you on", or some such. It would have paid you well if you had asked someone to edit it for you. Going through it, as I did after first reading it, I could have saved you, at least, two pages. Even so, it was a nice change to read something from you that was so enjoyable. You are an able reporter.

I hope Elinor Busby is with me right now, because I am going to pick up something she said a couple of mailings back. I don't want to make a start on it at the foot of a page, so, over you go.....

Elinor: A couple of mailings back, you said something like:- Has TAFF had its day? One could just as easily ask, have 'special funds' had their day? But, as you were talking about TAFF, let's give it some more thought. First, considering the innate fairness of fen in general, I am surprised that none have supported the CRY to increase the voting fee to double, at least, what it is now. I wonder how many worthy candidates for TAFF have refused because they knew they couldn't afford to make the trip, even with TAFF paying part of the fare, which is what it comes down to for Britfen travelling to AmericanCons. It was all very well to make it as low as it now stands when fen were a lot younger and poorer than seems to be the case these days. None of this is as irrelevant as it might appear to be. If we don't raise the voting fee for TAFF, you will continue to have fen refusing this dubious honour because they can't afford to lay out the extra cash needed to make the trip. If, in face of these refusals, we don't get a platform of fen to stand, of what use is TAFF? Take this current campaign. We have the spectacle of the Administration begging fen to accept nomination just so we can have a vote. Not a word is said about their suitability, worthiness, or whatever it was that made fen in the past eligible for the honour. You must surely agree it is becoming farcical. If we have to lower our sights when it comes to finding someone worthy (having earned the honour, is how I interpret that) then, yes, I would say that TAFF has outlived its usefulness, no matter how loudly the administrators, past and present, might shout in protest.

I admit, I would hate to see it go but, on the other hand, why let it drag its skirts rather than adapt it to something workable. Fandom is, after all, the place where one expects to find an elasticity of thinking that should make it easy to adapt from something to something else when and if the need arises. The main difficulty with TAFF, and one of which I am always aware, is trying to keep interest alive in it while there is no campaign going on. TAFF always needs money, it never has enough. How to keep the funds up when fen are thinking of most anything except TAFF? Plugs in the fmz are so frequent and uninspired, I would hazard a guess the fen read them without really seeing them. This is inevitable when a thing is repeated so often it becomes part of the scenery. We need some live-wire thinking and action. With the panel of past winners in our midst, surely they could get together and think up something to make TAFF interesting to fandom? It's all very well to sit back and say 'leave TAFF alone, it's worked like this for years, if we change anything it will fall to pieces.' Nuts, I say. Why should the administrators have the worry of trying to drag a few extra £££ and £££ out of us in order to send someone over either way? TAFF is only really successful if we have sufficient in the Fund to send them over without having to beat the drum extra hard when someone is found hardy enough to accept nomination.

First raise the ante for voting and, I've no doubt, you'll find many, so far reluctant fen, quick to accept nomination. No, I am not proposing we should turn the Fund into a charity organisation, but, why should the not so wealthy fan have to refuse, simply because he can't afford to accept what should be a fannish honour? So, come on you people, if you don't want to lose TAFF, for CRYsakes, do something constructive about supporting it, PLEASE?

Well, as you can see, I'm at it again. I've been quiet for so long maybe it was on the cards that I should open my big mouth as soon as I got near a stencil again. TAFF has always been my favourite fannish charity and I would hate to see it die for lack of courage to change what needs changing, or from lack of support. I would like to see some realistic thinking and doing in aid of this worthwhile project.

I suppose too it is quite the normal thing for me to talk some about this long awaited move of mine. Suffer, you dogs!

It was before I went to America that I heard we would soon be moved from 151, under the local council's 'slum clearance' scheme. Not being used to the way in which local government works, I imagined that when they began haunting my doors, asking me all sorts of personal questions, like: where does your brother sleep?, do you have to share a lavatory with anyone?, have you a bathroom in the house?, etc, it would only be a matter of weeks before we had our new home. Still, being naturally lazy, and what fun isn't? I left things ride and went blithely off to L.A., Seattle and all points. On my return, Fred said he hadn't seen or heard from anyone at the Town Hall so we went about our business.

One fine day I was working at the Gestetner when, lo, a man came from the 'housing dept.'. He asked me many questions that I had already answered for someone in some other department. I have nothing to do with that, I need your answers for my office, I was told. I continued working while he filled in the papers he had with him. Out of the blue he shot his bolt. 'You won't be able to do that where you're going', he said. Getting him to explain that he was alluding to my duper, I explained, very carefully, that it was a hobby, not a business. 'That makes no difference, they won't stand for it in the new flats'. I'll admit I just about blew my top, not to him, fortunately, but to anyone in the London gang who would listen to my tale of woe. I had tried to pin him down to admitting I could have a flat if I forfeited my hobby; but he wouldn't come right out and say so, though it was what he meant.

After much thought I decided to come out into the open and approach the Housing Manager, what an imposing title that is. I went into some detail about what I'd been told by one of his men, and please, is it true? I really piled on the agony. I found it an absorbing hobby, which I do, but I neglected to tell him of the life of ease I could enjoy if he really did forbid me to continue publishing. He wrote back, asking what kind of equipment I had; he assumed I used the usual type home printing apparatus, and, please, could he have a copy of my magazine to show at a council meeting when they discussed my case? I did some soul searching, I can tell you. I toyed with the idea of letting him assume what he liked, in case he should disapprove of what I was actually using and with-hold his permission, but, clear thinking won the day. If I lied, and later there were complaints about the noise, they could, and would be justified, in chucking us out of the flat. I didn't want this to happen, as those of you who have visited the old Pen will understand. I told him the truth, that I have an electric Gestetner, I also sent him a copy of ORION #28. I heard nothing more for months.

Yet another of the Town Hall minions appeared. This time to tell me they had considered my case and I would be allowed to continue publishing, but not in the new flats, they didn't think the noise would be absorbed sufficiently, so they were going to rehouse us in a place that had been 'reconditioned'. This, in case you are not 'up' in officialese, means that they've taken over a house too good for demolition, so they have done some work, which usually means putting in a bathroom, proper kitchen etc., and we could have that. He would be back later to weigh my duplicator, books, paper and the like, meanwhile, please, could he have a copy of my magazine if I had another to spare. He reads SF and, in fact, in their union magazine THE TRIFFIDS was currently being run as a serial. As far as I could ascertain, this was the only SF he had ever read! He voiced the opinion that what I really needed was a house so I could carry on my activities without fear of annoying any neighbors. I agreed with him, but, we also agreed that I didn't stand a hope of being allocated one by the council. Once more I was left alone to wonder what our eventual fate would be. Oh, I forgot to tell you, when he told me I had permission to publish, I informed him I wasn't prepared to accept his word,

I wanted to have it in writing from someone in a responsible position. To this he was quite amenable. In a couple of weeks time I received a letter from the Housing manager giving the required permission. During all these comings and goings no-one seemed to know just when we'd be moved out, nor to where we'd be going. Things stayed like this for the next few months.

One night I came home from work to find a notice in the door saying someone from the council had been to see me; would I fill in the bottom half of the paper giving them an alternative time to call when I'd be in. This was the 'bug-boys' as I call them. Seems, when the local council is going to move you into a new place, they have to make sure you aren't taking any pet insects with you, like bedbugs and others of that ilk. They were a couple of youngsters and friendly; even more so when they came into the fan-room and saw some copies of Asf on the table. To cries of joy from them at finding someone who read the stuff, they were happier when I told them they could have the mags; they did a tour of the place and pronounced it clean...I almost said clear.

I asked them the inevitable question: did they have any idea when we'd be moved? They told me that on past experience it should only be about 3 weeks after their visit, this was how it usually worked out. On hearing this I began packing! The biggest headache was going to be all the fan stuff; fanzines I had collected, books and magazines etc, to say nothing of reams of duplicating paper, envelopes....the lot. I got them done in good time and even began on the household goods as far as possible.

Then, we sat and waited, and waited, and waited. This most of you already know. Three weeks before Xmas the people from the downstairs flat were moved out; they hadn't been in the house for longer than 3 years and you were supposed to be there at least for 5 before you became entitled to a new home. Just a week after they left, half the ceiling fell down in the lavatory, making it unusable. The weather was atrocious and the place reeked of cold and damp. I think that last month we spent at 151 was the most miserable I can remember in my whole life.

Just as we had given up all hope and I was seriously considering unpacking some of my fan stuff so I could resume publishing, I got a letter asking me to call and collect the key for my new flat. You couldn't see me for dust. Fred was rather surprised, I think, that I didn't rush up to see what the flat was like; I couldn't. I had helped the woman downstairs to take some of her stuff over so I could look at her place. I have never in my life felt such envy of another human being; it was beautiful! I had been told I couldn't have one of them because the stuff I had was too heavy; it didn't make much sense to me, but that was what they said. Now I actually had in my hand the keys to one of the new flats and I was afraid to push my luck too far. I still had the idea they might find they'd made a mistake and we weren't to go there after all. I had exactly one week in which to complete my packing ready for the removal men.

I handed out my larger Atomillos and the large pic of me among the Cincy Fantasy Group Don Ford had sent me to some of my friends for safe keeping. I didn't trust the removal men not to break them. A friend of mine helped to cart my glasses and other breakables to the flat before moving day. I wasn't too happy with the rooms as I saw them then, they looked to be like matchboxes, and I didn't think I could do much with them. I have since traced the reason for this feeling; the rooms are plenty large enough, it's just that the ceilings are so much lower they make the rooms look smaller than they actually are. I need quite a bit of electrical work done, (any volunteers?), but we are highly delighted at the whole place. We have five rooms including a bathroom/lavatory and kitchen large enough in which to eat our meals if we so wished. We have a

private balcony all to ourselves; central heating and an enormous, by our old standards, airing cupboard in which I keep my spare blankets and pillows, among other things.

For years I have dreaded the day when I might have to become a 'council tenant'. In the past I have heard of how dictatorial they can be, telling you what you can and can't do. I know of someone who has never been able to paint or paper her rooms as she would like; it has to be done to their specifications. This isn't in Willisden, but it did have me worried. Now we are here, it appears we can do pretty well as we like, provided our rent is paid regularly. We are unable to do any decorating for the next six months; this is to allow them to inspect the place and discover any faults that may have developed in that time. If any, they will be made good before they sign for the building. We are delirious with joy over our new home, and still can't quite believe in our good fortune. I am enchanted with my kitchen and enamoured of my bathroom. Why, I've been known to rush in there first thing in the morning, just to make sure it hasn't disappeared during the night! I think even more than all the joys of convenient and comfortable living, I relish most the view to be had from the kitchen and one of the living room windows; especially after dark. I often stand in the kitchen doorway just to look out over Kilburn which looks much prettier than I would ever have thought it could.

We are still in a mess, mind you. I've unpacked most of the household stuff and shoved it away into cupboards and drawers for the time being, just so I could get rid of a number of boxes for which I didn't have storage space. The kitchen is about the only room already thoroughly organised and operational. I did hope that once I moved I might get a bedroom to myself without a stack of fan stuff crowding me out; seems it isn't to be. My bedroom is still more of an office than it is a bedroom, my bed is about the only domestic object in the place. I have my desk, filing cabinet, cupboard unit in which I have stored my ink and duplicating paper etc. The Gestetner is in here too, so any time I can't sleep I just have to get out of bed and I can go right to work.

Yes, we are still a bit dazed at our good luck; Fred goes around still looking as if he expects to be chucked out any day. I have to keep reminding myself that it is true and this is our new home. I don't know how long it will take for us to convince ourselves of the fact. George Scithers was the last overseas fan to come to the old Pen; I wonder who will be my first to come here? Now don't rush all at once, give me time to get things organised, then you can sigh the visitors book for us, and welcome.

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I would remind you that all the opinions in this magazine are those of the editor and publisher, except those quoted in the column by Arthur Thomaon, with whom I do not always disagree.

My apologies for any stencil slipping that shows. My typewriter has developed a fault too late to have it put right, if I'm to catch this deadline. I hope it doesn't prove to be too bad.

Yours, in a happy delirium.

*F.H.C.*

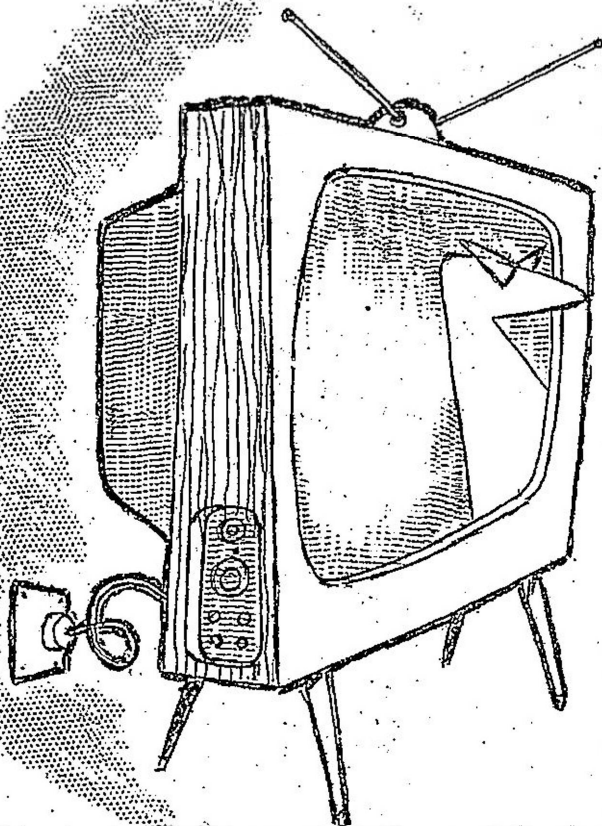












There are two columns in this magazine for which I need titles. Arthur and I have been playing around with the problem, to no result, as you can see. Anybody coming up with one that finds favour in my eyes will be doing me an inestimable service for which I will be grateful. None of your lousy puns, now.

I am taking full advantage of my position in having read what Arthur Thomson had to say and adding here some opinions of my own on part of his column.

First, he mentions what Bernard Braden had to say on the subject of the firm which advertised 'fall-out shelters'. It has worn off a bit now, but for a long time after I returned from America I watched our TV with fresh eyes and compared it with the U.S. brand. I must confess, I prefer ours here. I also confess that it is probably because I am more used to it, kinda conditioned. I don't doubt for a moment, if we looked in the trade papers which deal in builders and property dealers business, we would find many advertisements of this kind, but it does surprise me that you never see any mention of these articles in any of the adverts put over on our commercial channels. In the States it is done in the name of 'public service', or so the station announcer tells us. I take this to mean that it is a free plug. I'll tell you what they don't have in the States, at least, I didn't see any of them, and that's commercials for the armed forces, as we do. For a long time I assumed that these too were part of a 'public service', but, on making enquiries I found that the War Office, or whichever dept is responsible for this kind of thing, has to pay a hefty sum for the items shown. Draw what conclusions from this you want to.

I know Harry Warner doesn't much care for discussions of TV programmes in fmz. I believe he imagines it means we have run out of other things to discuss. It aint necessarily so, Harry but, I would like to talk for a few minutes about two Saturday night programmes that have hit Britain recently. One, on ITV, features Bernard Braden and no-one else; the other, THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS (henceforth called 3T3W), has a gang of brash youngsters headed by David Frost, before this an unknown to us. It makes for heart burn in some households, mine among them. Times of showing clash. If you favour one over the other, as I do, too bad.

3T3W is loud, brash, and selfconsciously daring. They have an enormous team and, after a session with them I feel physically exhausted, they do so much dashing around with ghod knows how many costume changes during one

seated in front of a tremendous gimmick-ridden desk, and he sits there just talking in his quiet, humorous way about anything that comes into his head or that has caught his attention during the past week. Sometimes he makes acid comment on what catches his eye; most often he leaves the obvious stupidity involved to make its own comment. The bludgeon and the kid glove is the comparison I make between the two programmes.

You can't open a newspaper, magazine (except sf), read an article on satire without hearing 3T3W mentioned as an example of what they are trying to say. I have noticed, in the past, that when a radio or TV programme gets this kind of attention it begins to deteriorate. I hope sincerely they don't 'discover' ON THE BRADEN BEAT. Braden has long been a favourite of mine; ever since he and his wife, Barbara Kelly, came to England from Canada. I don't know if you in the States know the Bradens? If not, you have missed something good. I will long remember his Uncle Gabby, one of his more loquacious characters.

Yes, I have watched 3T3W, often. We have a working agreement here that Fred gets to watch it one week, the next week I get to watch Bernie. We both watch the others preference so, I assure you, I know of wot I talk. I won't deny they have some good gags on 3T3W, but I don't much care for the underlying taste of malice I seem to find there.

While we are on the subject of TV programmes; a series has just finished over here (2nd series, actually), that I can heartily recommend to you if sold in America. I speak of STEPTOE AND SON. Some of the slang used might be incomprehensible to you, but that shouldn't spoil your enjoyment in it any. It's about a father and son who are junk dealers, a dying race here, now. There is a mixture of love and hate there that at times is stomach-turning. Harold, the son, is always trying to better himself. Dad, on the other hand, is quite content as things are. Anything Harold picks up on his rounds with the cart that has the least smell or taste of 'Culture' about it, he keeps for himself. He is very proud of his cocktail cabinet. This is, in fact, an old sideboard he picked up long ago, in it he has a series of old bottles into which he pours the dregs from any bottles of drink he picks up. It makes no difference what the brand or quality; if the bottle he has says sherry on it, he has a bottle already half full of sherry into which he pours the dregs from the empty ones he brings home, and so on. Dad, with his magpie nature, fastens on to almost anything 'Arold brings home, for his own collection of junk. There's no denying, they bring home a load of stuff but they never sell any of it, which is what they are supposed to be doing.

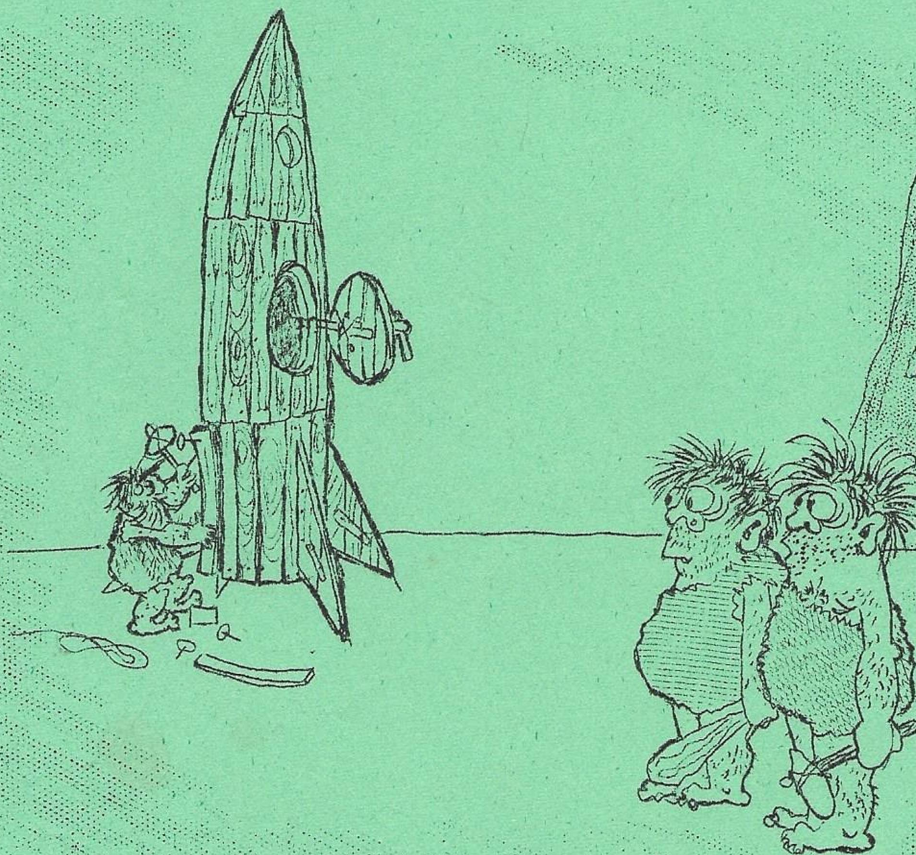
It is quite an 'earthy' programme, but, I'm glad to say, the BBC do seem to have admitted recently that they do have an adult audience and are bent on giving us something we can enjoy. The characters as played by Wilfred Brambell (Dad) and Harry Corbett ('Arold) are true to life, not, as we have come to expect from the TV, caricatures. This is one programme I make sure I stay home to watch, no matter what. Now that the series has come to an end I have only Braden left as my ideal of entertainment. I used to favour TONIGHT on the BBC, but, since it came back from the last long break, I don't know what's gone wrong, it isn't nearly as interesting as it once was. I feel, maybe, the team they have working on it are becoming stale and have lost a lot of their own interest in what they are doing. It used to be obvious, if you watched them regularly, that they enjoyed their work, not so now.

That, you will be pleased to hear, is the end of this little dissertation.

See you!



# COMPACT



" I see it - but I don't believe it!"

ATOM

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