

ETA

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WHITE HORSE TO BE DEMOLISHED

The White Horse - the pub that hosted the Thursday night gatherings of London fans in the immediate postwar period, and the ancestor of the current first Thursday meetings at the Wellington - is being torn down. The pub, on Fetter Lane, is across the road from the 'Daily Mirror' building and the Chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers, Robert Maxwell, has bought the site for redevelopment. According to staff, demolition was originally scheduled for May 1988 but due to various contractual problems it is now probably not coming down until mid-1989. When it does go it will end an association with British fandom that stretches back over 40 years....

At The Pub of The Universe



Resident Manager Lew Mordecai in a familiar pose

The White Horse Tavern

FETTER LANE, HOLBORN, E.C.4

(2 minutes Chancery Lane Tube Station)

Science fiction personalities meet every Thursday throughout the year. When in London, make it a date at the "White Horse"
5.0 — 10.30 p.m.

A MEUX HOUSE

The now traditional Thursday night gatherings of London's SF fan/pro community were started in February 1946 by E.J. 'Ted' Carnell and G.Ken Chapman. Held monthly at first, the meetings were transferred to The White Horse in April 1946.

(continued inside.....)

CHUCH & ATOM IN HOSPITAL

The Xmas/New Year holiday period has not been a kind one for two of British fandom's elder statesmen, the famed double-act of Thomson and Harris. (I've yet to figure out who's supposed to be the straight man.) First to be struck down was longtime fanartist Arthur 'ATom' Thomson, who was admitted to Dulwich Hospital in the early hours of 26th December with respiratory problems. ATom, who suffers from emphysema, was diagnosed as suffering from a bronchial infection that had aggravated his existing condition. It is hoped that he will be well enough to return home soon.

Chuck Harris was the next to fall - literally. While visiting relatives in Slough on New Year's Eve, Chuch tripped when walking the family dog. He fell awkwardly and broke his leg. He was

admitted to Ashford Hospital, in Surrey, where he underwent surgery. A plate was fitted to help the fractured femur to knit back together properly. It's not known how long Chuck will be hospitalised. Our best wishes to both men for a speedy recovery.

WILLIS: TRIP REPORT III Following his recent trip to the USA, where he and Madeleine Willis were GoHs at TROPICON VII (held in Ft.Lauderdale, Florida, December 2nd - 4th), Walt Willis is hard at work on a report, which will be published by US fans Joe D.Siclari and Edie Stern of Florida. Siclari is perhaps best known over here for his fanzine FANHISTORICA, and for publishing Harry Warner Jr's history of fandom in the 1950s, A WEALTH OF FABLE. Though he protested beforehand that he wouldn't be doing one the news that he's putting together a trip report comes as no surprise to those who recall those that resulted from his last two trips to America....

Walt's first visit to America occurred in 1952 and was the result of a fund-raising campaign by that group of contemporary US fans who called themselves Sixth Fandom. Willis set sail for America on 18th August 1952, and over the next six weeks travelled all over that vast land, meeting local fans and taking notes for a monumental trip report, 'The Harp Stateside' (first published serially in various US fanzines and then, in 1957, in a collected edition), that rightly came to be regarded as one of the classic fannish works and set a standard for all later travelling fans to aspire to.

In 1962 fans in New York set up another fund to bring Walt over, this time with Madeleine along. This time the report was titled 'Twice Upon a Time', and though never completed it remains a superb example of its type. Both this and 'The Harp Stateside' were reprinted in WARHOON 28, the anthology of Walt's writing that appeared a few years ago.

On Friday 18th November 1988, I took a day off work so that I could see Walt and Madeleine off on their journey (they had an overnight stop-over at Gatwick). So it was that Avedon, Vinç, Owen and I spent a very enjoyable day of drink and conversation with the Willises. Naturally, we asked Walt if he intended writing a report, and if so could we have it for PULP? Nothing could be further from his mind, he assured us. Hah! Of course, back in '62 Madeleine also wrote a report on their trip (one I'd dearly like to read if anyone has copies of the Bruce Pelz fanzines it originally appeared in and access to a xerox machine). Hey, Madeleine, I don't suppose there's any chance.....?

STU MOVES! To the amazement of those who can't imagine New York without him, Stu Shiffman moved from the Big Apple on 3rd December to set up home with 'significant other' Andi Shecter in Boston (and having moved jobs as well he can no longer open conversations with the ever-popular ; "Hi, I'm in ladies' underwear"). Helping Stu move were the cream of NY fandom, many of whom discovered in the process that they were getting no younger, as a rueful D.Potter reported in a recent letter. Anyway, the happy couple's address is:

16 Lakehill Avenue, Arlington, MA 02174, USA.

The White Horse In effect these meetings were friendly out-of-the-office continued..... affairs, an opportunity for those involved with NEW WORLDS magazine (which made its first appearance in July 1946) to socialise and talk shop. However, shortly after the meetings started Ted Tubb learned of them and spread the word among the capital's fans. Seeing in the meetings a chance to recapture the pleasant atmosphere of the prewar Thursday night gatherings at the Flat and the Red Bull (the first pub London fans ever met at), they began turning up as well, and in rapidly increasing numbers. Soon these Thursday night meetings were being held weekly. By the end of the year those turning up at the meetings also included Arthur C. Clarke, A. Bertram Chandler, and John Wyndham, and the group had started calling itself the London Circle.

On Saturday 15th May 1948, the upstairs room of The White Horse played host to WHITCON, Britain's first postwar convention. It was organised by John Newman and attracted 50 or so, a quite respectable number for those days. Chandler was GoH, British Interplanetary Society Chairman Arthur C. Clarke gave a speech on astronautics, and con Chairman Ted Carnell put an interesting proposition to those present. NEW WORLDS had gone to the wall in October 1947, after only three issues, but since this was due to the publisher folding rather than to any flaw in the magazine (which had over-sold its final issue by 3000 copies) Carnell proposed forming a company to re-launch it. So was born Nova Publications, a wholly fan-financed project (shares in Nova were sold to fans at £5 a time) that started NEW WORLDS on a long and successful run.

In 1953 Arthur C. Clarke started writing a series of tall-stories set in a pub called 'The White Hart' where they were narrated by his character Harry Purvis. Collected as TALES FROM THE WHITE HART a few years later (and dedicated "To Lew and his Thursday night customers") their setting was actually a thinly-disguised White Horse, as were a number of the supporting characters such as the barman, Drew, who bore more than a passing resemblance to the White Horse's Lew Mordecai.

At the end of 1953 the pub's Thursday night regulars discovered that Lew was being transferred to the Globe, a pub a hundred yards or so away in Hatton Garden, and decided that their loyalty was to him rather than to the pub. The final Thursday night meeting at The White Horse took place on 3rd December, the first at the Globe on the following Thursday, the 10th. The Globe was to be the venue for the meetings for the next twenty years. This was not the end of fandom's association with the White Horse, however.

Early in 1959 the London Circle, having gone through a number of changes (see forthcoming THEN #2 - the story of British fandom in the 1950s), decided to start holding their 'business sessions' there on the third Friday of every month. This arrangement lasted a mere seven months, before being abandoned when the London Circle itself dissolved in acrimony in October. That was fandom's last connection with the White Horse until sometime in the late-1960s when Frank Arnold tried to organise a new series of meetings there for oldtime fans, a sort of domestic version of First Fandom one assumes. There was only one meeting, however, and Bill Temple, who was there, recalls that it was sparsely attended.

Early in 1974 fandom learned that the Globe was to be demolished so in March a contingent of fans, led by Frank Arnold, set off from the Globe to suss out a couple of alternative venues for the first Thursday meetings. One of the pubs they considered was The White Horse. However, the pub was much-changed since it had last played host to fans. As Rob Holdstock reported in RITBLAT #2 (April '74), the pub was small, cosy, and respectable, with 'cool' bar staff. Gone was the scruffy ambiance that Arnold remembered. They gave the pub the thumbs down, and from 4th July 1974 the monthly meetings were held at The One Tun on Saffron Hill.

Which brings us, more or less, to the present. In October 1987 I was researching the early history of British fandom for THEN #1 and had turned up the interesting fact that the first meeting of the first British fan group had taken place on 27th October 1930. We now had a date for British fandom's birthday and Owen Whiteoak suggested we meet at the White Horse to celebrate what he termed our 'Heinz Anniversary' (Ouch! - it was 57 years since that first fatal meeting). It was the first time Vinç Clarke had stepped inside the pub in almost 30 years. The White Horse was full of 'Daily Mirror' staff and didn't look to be very promising as the venue for regular meetings, but the idea of a regular meeting in Holborn, the heart of London fandom for 50 years, was one Owen wouldn't let go. On 26th November a number of us who had been at The White Horse in October met at the nearby Sir Christopher Hatton for the first in a series of meetings that continues to this day. Thus was the Hatton Group born. The White Horse was not about to let us go that easily, however.

On a few occasions over the next few months the Christopher Hatton would close an hour early, for no apparent reason, and we would find ourselves spending the final hour of the evening drinking in The White Horse. And lo, the pub was a lot less crowded than in October, perhaps indicating that the crowd on that occasion had been a fluke. By November 1988 the habit the bar staff at the Hatton had of turning the volume on the jukebox higher and higher during the evening, until we had to shout to be heard above it, had become too much and we vowed never to darken their bar again. Which put us back in The White Horse.

Unlike the White Horse that Frank Arnold, Rob Holdstock and co., found too respectable in 1974 the one we drink in is unbelievably shabby with torn upholstery, threadbare carpets and the like. So shabby was it in fact, that we originally considered it only a stop-gap until we could locate somewhere more salubrious. Then, on 29th December, we discovered that she was under sentence of death and decided that maybe we'd stay with the old girl until the end after all.

The exterior of The White Horse is unchanged since its glory days, so anyone sentimental enough to want their picture taken outside gets authenticity, but the inside is totally different. The barman tells us that though the building is being demolished Maxwell is retaining the license so there will almost certainly be a bar there after redevelopment, presumably one of those you so often see at groundlevel in new buildings these days. It may even be called The White Horse...but it won't be the same.

LETTERS: With the research necessary for something like THEN #2 almost every surface in my office is covered with notes and moldering piles of fanzines from the 1950s on loan from Vinç's fanzine library. This being so I've only managed to uncover the following few LoCs. Apologies to anyone whose LoC I've misplaced:

Harry Bell: "As you might expect, various members of the Gannet Rump (still meeting, every Saturday, venue variable but usually the Duke of Wellington in High Bridge) also received the MARPHI flyer about the Super Colossal No Holds Barred Shake 'Em To The Roots Scientifiction Festival, but I guess we were no more thrilled than Vinç. Ian Bambro, being the most active fan around here was entrusted with the task of replying to 'ol MARPHI, but I understand more pressing business has prevented from doing. Like drinking beer or picking his nose...."

Incidentally, sometime next year Gateshead is also having a SciFi Festival, organised by the Borough's Art Dept. Bambro has involved himself in that, partly because he works for the Council, partly because he knows the woman with responsibility for it, and partly because he doesn't want it to be too big a disaster. However, after volunteering information such as how much Chris Evans would love to come up, the only concrete programme proposal they have is a lecture on Mary Shelley (!). Shall I book your seats now or will you take a chance on getting in?"

I think we'll take our chances, Harry. Live dangerously, that's my motto. For some reason MARPHI's plan attracted the most comment. Not all, tho'....

Mike Glicksohn: "I'm one of those fans ideologically opposed to fannish bail-outs, at the very least until I've heard an accurate summary of what necessitated the bailout in the first place. If CONSPIRACY lost that money through incompetence and mismanagement (and heaven knows there were enough inter-committee communication problems to make that a possibility) then I think bailing out the con is a very bad thing to do because of the very wrong message it will send to other groups considering running for a Worldcon when they lack the experience and ability to run one should they win. Since I've yet to read any explanation of just where CONSPIRACY's debts come from I'm not yet willing to help bail the con out. (Perhaps the powers behind the Tyneside International SF Festival ought to be informed of what happened to CONSPIRACY. It might help them adopt a more realistic attitude. Their scheme sounds like the SF EXPO that was scheduled over here a few years ago and actually flew Bert Chandler in from Australia before folding just before folding just before it was to take place. Enthusiasm may be a wonderful thing but enthusiasm tempered with experience and a little historical awareness is probably a hell of a lot safer for the pocket-book.)"

Can't argue with that. There was a 'Science Fiction Day' in aid of the CONSPIRACY Bail-Out Fund at London's Cafe Munchen on Saturday 17th December in which a number of Britain's top SF and fantasy pros donated their time and material for auction. According to the flyer for the event, those participating included Jim Burns, Rob Holdstock, Geoff Ryman, Brian Aldiss, M. John Harrison, Lisa Tuttle, Michael Moorcock, Iain Banks, Clive Barker, Dave Langford, Gary Kilworth, and Terry Pratchett, in a day of readings, auctions, signings, raffles, drinking, and partying. Due to still more work being done on our house that day

(we hope to have it entirely habitable soon) I wasn't able to attend, but by all accounts the Cafe Munchen was fairly solidly packed out so lots of tickets were sold. More to the point, enough money was apparently raised to clear the debts owed to the Metropole Hotel and Brighton Conference Centre, thus avoiding bankruptcy. However, money is still owed to a number of other people and it's hoped to discharge the debts owed to them soon also.

My curiosity was piqued by your mention of the SF EXPO, Mike, tho' there seemed little chance of me finding out more about it...until the following missive arrived from Seattle....

Jerry Kaufman: "The smash giant event you talk about, the 'Science-Faction Festival', reminds me of the SF EXPO that was nearly held in New York in the mid-70s. It was to be a massive event, too, but the organisers couldn't get a venue to host them, and ended up stranding a number of world travellers in New York. The organisers then went on to hold another event, more of an SF con in the classic mould, in order to pay off their debts. The con was held at the Playboy Resort in Great Gorge, New Jersey, a real novelty; it drew so few attendees that it drove the organisers even more deeply into debt. To properly write the history of this group, I would need the combined resources and memories of Ben Yalow, Gary Farber, Gene DiModica and a few dozen others. Might make quite an amusing cautionary fable, but none of the people who could learn from it would ever read it.

I look forward to the next THEN. You're doing a real service to SF fandom, and you're doing it well enough to keep me, for one, entertained and interested. Do you have copies of #1 left? How may US fans obtain them? I'd like to plant a plug here and there, and will do if you tell me the details to include.

Hmm. Let's say \$2 (seamail) and \$3 (airmail) - bills only, please as foreign checks are fairly useless to me. Although it'll be considerably longer (the draft currently weighs in at about 40 000 words - around 70 quarto pages) I'll let the same rate apply to THEN #2, which is provisionally scheduled for publication in March. (And since, to my great surprise, you included a \$5 bill with your LoC on THEN #1 yours goes by air, Jerry.)

WAHF: Harry Bond and Sid Birchby.

This has been ETA 3, and was brought to you by Rob Hansen, address below.

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