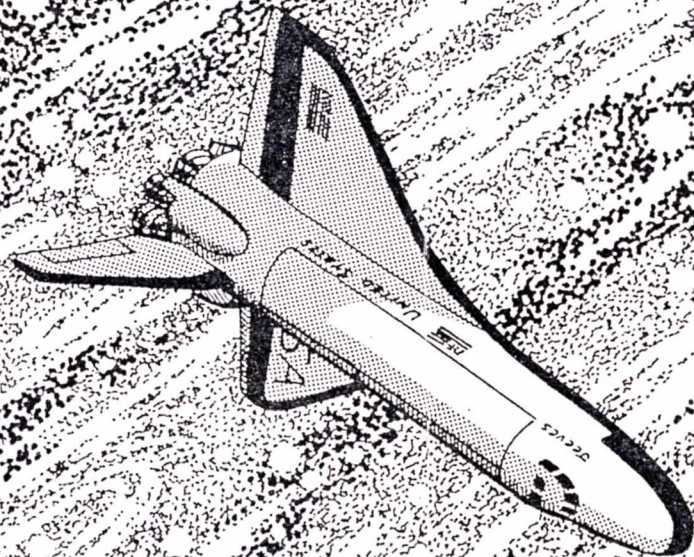


# ERG 116

JANUARY 1992



NOW IN ITS 33RD YEAR

E R G 116

JANUARY 1992

B. T. JEEVES  
56 RED SCAR DRIVE  
SCARBOROUGH  
N. YORKSHIRE YO12 5RQ

Phone (0723) 376817



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ERG — NOW IN ITS 33rd. YEAR

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Greetings Ergbods,

ERG appears if and when I feel like it. IF you enjoyed this issue, please pay for it by sending me either THREE, second class stamps, or a dollar bill. That pays for this issue. When I produce the next issue, then you'll be sent a copy on the same terms. If I don't hear from you, I'll assume you don't want any future issues. Sorry if that sounds mercenary, but ERG was getting costly with too many copies being mailed into Limbo. I hope that many (most) of you will accept this new system, and of course, I shall still treasure your LOCs. A cross in the top left hand corner indicates this must be your last copy - unless you DO SOMETHING.

#### =====

#### MINI-ERGITORIAL

I was amused by a short piece in the Sunday Times for October 20th. It announced that "Up to 20 wind farms housing 200ft turbines will be announced next month as part of a plan to provide 20% of Britain's electricity from 'renewable sources' by 2025." "The plan includes building at least one barrage across an estuary to create wave power, using the tides to drive turbines, installing small turbines on river banks and tapping methane released by rubbish dumps."

Why was I amused? The article ended, "Conservationists fear that 'green' energy will harm the environment and ugly turbines on windy ridges will ruin protected areas of countryside."

Talk about wanting one's cake and eating it. Conservationists are always howling for more wind and wave power, but when they get it, they complain that it will harm the environment! Another giggle is that by 2025, our power demands will have risen by more than the 20% to come from 'green' energy.

Happier note. Cambridge scientists recently got their fusion reactor to run for two minutes and produce 1Mw of power - there's hope yet. One snag is the start-up power required, if we don't master fusion soon enough, current power sources may expire and we'll not have enough left to kick-start a fusion plant. Remember that Eastern seaboard blackout in the USA in 1966? Some plants were re-started with car batteries. Oh well, I live in hope (that the 'antis' will shut up.

TJ

## FUTURE TIMES

by Terry Jeeves

# FUTURE TIMES



When collectors and bibliophiles gather in their secret enclaves, they often speak in hushed tones of those rare SF magazines which appeared but briefly on the newsstands before lapsing into a well-earned obscurity.

Cosmos in its 1953/54 digest size, saw but four issues. Its 1977 'bedsheet' version did no better. Dynamic Science Stories managed only two, as did International SF and SF Digest - which in its UK version only saw one edition!

You can't get much lower than ONE issue ... or can you?

If the Guinness Book Of Records ever establishes a category for the shortest-lived (most unsuccessful) SF magazine that never was, then FUTURE TIMES must

be in with a head start. It lasted but six weeks, never saw a single issue, and all that remains in its memory is a bettered 'mock-up' of what its first issues might have been like.

Before doffing our hats and shedding a silent tear, let's start with a bit of fannish history. Way back in the fifties, Eric Bentcliffe and I were publishing a fanzine called TRIODE. In addition, in my spare time, I gave several lectures to local societies, on the possibility of space travel. One of these resulted in a write-up in the local paper. In addition to paraphrasing my



4.  
comments on this crazy 'rocket idea', the reporter also mentioned that as a hobby, I was co-publisher of an amateur SF magazine.

A few days later, the telephone rang. It was a Mr. James, a printer by trade, who wanted to publish a marketable SF magazine and thought it might be a good idea to start by converting the established amateur publication, TRIODE, into a commercial product. Eric Bentcliffe was due to come over to Sheffield at the weekend, so it was arranged for Mr. James to come round to discuss things.

He proved to be a small, rather quiet chap who knew little about SF and less about publishing. However, he did have a print shop and it just so happened he had written a science fiction story or two. He thought these might appear in the new magazine. His proposal was that the three of us should shovel money into a kitty. Eric would edit the magazine, I would do the cover and interior artwork, whilst he would print future copies of TRIODE and put them on the market. Oh yes, there was one other proviso, each issue would have to include one of his stories.

Eric and I liked the idea of having our hands on a professional magazine, but didn't want to see TRIODE lose its fannish background and connections. Our proposal was to create a completely new magazine aimed squarely at the commercial market. After a bit of haggling we settled on a title. The new rival to ASTOUNDING was to be called FUTURE TIMES. The size was to drop from the Quarto-size of the mimod TRIODE to that of a slim 7"x5" paperback. Mr James went away to produce some sample pages of one of his stories so we could see what the magazine would actually look like. In the interim, I lashed up a lino-cut for the cover illustration.

A couple of weeks later, our 'angel' returned with about thirty copies of the first two pages of his epic tale, 'Never Trust A Machine'. In addition, he brought along his wife. She proved to be

## NEVER trust a machine

EL PASO (Texas)

An air liner temporarily out of control flew upside down with 48 passengers aboard over El Paso today.

The pilot righted the plane, belonging to American Air Lines, and it landed safely on the airport here.

The automatic pilot had been adjusted, said the pilot, but the plane kept climbing. As he fought to right it, the machine executed the first half of an outside loop, and, flying upside down, headed back east towards Dallas. The air liner came down to 3,000 feet before it was righted.—B.U.P.

The news item made little or no sensation. It was such a small thing—an automatic pilot suddenly going "temperamental" and causing a few minutes' danger to 48 people, who were not even British anyway. The despatch was briefly reported on the front pages of the national Press, and forgotten.

History can appear insignificant in the making.

ENIAC and ACE had been discarded several years previously, and the earlier forms of these computing

machines were now in the industrial museum in St. James's Square, London.

ENIAC—Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer—was a crude machine, containing only 18,000 valves. It took half an hour to do work

for which the human brain would require 3½ years. But it was cumbersome, and required several hours to "instruct".

ENIAC—an American machine first publicised by Lord Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India, in the latter part of the year 1946—was superceded almost before it was completed by ACE—Automatic Computing Engine—the British version.

ACE could multiply two ten-figure numbers in 2.000th of a

by  
**ALFRED JAMES**

second and tackle simultaneous equations with 50 or 100 unknown factors. It worked at many times the speed of the American machine.

Built by the mathematics division of the National Physical Laboratory, the first ACE cost £150,000 and took three years to prepare.

By 1960 every country had its computing engines. They were used initially to deal with the accumulated mass of statistics which it had fallen to the lot of the various Civil Services to prepare.

It was found that two ACEs could do the work of 700,000 Civil Servants. So the Civil Servants

## FUTURE TIMES

found other work—still within the Service—and in time this, too, was taken over by the computer. And so the machine's sphere of activities, and its capabilities, grew and grew.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, computing engines came to be within the reach of every family's purse. They had shrunk in size to the dimensions of a suit-case, and had astounding utility.

An up-to-date model by a reputable firm would be found capable of dealing with every query which could enter the mind of man. In what year was Jerusalem sacked by Nebuchadnezzar? Every computer before it left the factory had been primed—by other computers—with all known historical facts, and the answer—598 B.C.—would emerge in a 35.000th of a second, flashed in blue letters on the tinted background of the machine's "brain" screen.

Other forms of computing engines—"specialists"—was their nickname—were designed to issue radio orders to automatic pilots, or to control the minute movements of a surgeon's scalpel operating on a human brain.

Gone were the days when writers of historical fiction searched through libraries to find whether top hats or bowlers were worn in 1579. Gone were the days of historical fiction, in fact, since the need for human research or endeavour had ended.

Printing had decayed and died. Other arts were lost, too.

Music? Describe a scene, a mood, a poem, to one "specialist," and a setting or a symphony would emerge. Painting? Open the camera shutters of another engine, press a button indicating water, colour, oils, line, or other treatment, a second button to indicate dimensions of canvas, and flawless culture would emerge.

Fiction had been a little more difficult. There the completed work needed to cover a wide range of mood, from first chapter to last. It was necessary to press 23 buttons to produce a full-length work of any quality.

Manual work, strangely, was the last form of industry to disappear.

To make a motor car, for example. By the 70's production had been largely mechanised: the drawing office and planning departments disappeared; office staffs, too, were superceded. Other computers took charge of the casting, forging, machining, finishing, assembling, and cellulosing. It became a question of feeding iron ore, sand, silica, and coal (from which rubber could be computed) into the factory at speeds sufficient for the controlling machines.

Manual feeding finally ended in 1983; auto-excavators dug the ores; auto-pilots flew them to the factory; auto-feeders disposed of them. It was unnecessary even to control the speed of output or to arrange for free weekends or bank holidays, since all relevant factors could be capably considered by a factory-parasite, as these sub-control specialists were termed.

The last hour's work was done in Britain by a 70-year-old man in 1987.

He was too old to realise that his tools were no longer needed, and finally, after there had been several complaints that he was still turning up at his factory for a 22-hour-week, he was certified insane and humanely removed.

Francis Bradley was an official of the Ministry of War. Old customs die hard, and, although Francis was unpaid, and had no official duties, he was still technically classed by the manpower statistics computer, as a

5.  
the holder of the purse strings. It also became apparent she didn't like SF, wasn't enamoured of TRIODE and didn't go a bundle on shoving money into a new magazine. Events proceeded like a geriatric tortoise before grinding to a total halt.

Mr and Mrs James vanished from our lives, leaving behind them, the batch of thirty or so neatly-stapled copies of pages 1 and 2 of our unborn magazine. Sadly, I attached the cover rough before filing the mock-up on my memory shelves, where it has been gathering dust for some 35 years. A quick glance at the epic opening yarn, shows it to have been a Gernsback-like 'lecture story': longer on telling the background than on telling the story. It does have one prophetic note however -- the prediction of desk-top computers available to everyone.

Who knows, had Mr. James prevailed over his better half, and had his business acumen proved as accurate as his forecast, FUTURE TIMES might well be up there as a regular HUGO winner -- although reading the rest of his tale, I wouldn't have bet on it.

On the other hand, it does leave me with a unique property -- the only copy of a magazine which never existed. You can't get much rarer than that.

Bill Bowers heard of Future Times and asked me to write about it, as he thought the readers of his excellent magazine, 'Outworlds' might be interested to hear the story. Since I didn't think there would be much overlap between the readers of Outworlds and those of ERG, I thought it might be a good idea to run the account in ERG so you can all see what you missed.

T.J.



## HAPPY WANDERINGS

On our first morning in Boston, we breakfasted in a local eatery, one of the Brighams chain. As well as endless coffee and cream, our meal consisted of, 'Home Fries' (a sort of fossilised chip), two eggs, bacon, toast, jelly and butter -- all served on the same plate!

In 1980, the exchange rate was \$2.40 to the £. That meal cost us \$2.15c, or around 91p each. Naturally, we took a lot of our meals there.

After breakfast, we visited Val's Church and its famous 'Mapparium Room'. Imagine a huge, transparent, globe of the World, some forty feet in diameter, with seas, continents, islands, time zones etc., all carefully detailed on stained glass and illuminated -- then imagine yourself ON THE INSIDE OF THE GLOBE! You walk through it on a central catwalk which is cunningly situated so that as you cross over, your head traverses the exact centre of the sphere. At this point you experience a most weird effect. Suddenly, all the whispered comments of people elsewhere in the huge ball are reflected back and focussed in your ears, so clearly, it seems that they are talking directly to you. I reckon it has St. Paul's' Whispering Gallery beaten six ways from Sunday.

We moved on to visit the 'Prudential Tower' where from the 50th. floor we got a marvellous view across Boston. From here we went to the 'John Hancock' Building, a skyscraper entirely faced in reflecting glass. We were told that this was insured with Lloyd's of London for some \$600 a pane. It must have cost 'em a packet, as the first lot all had to be replaced when wind flexure caused many of the panes to shatter.

Leaving the Sheraton Complex, we plunged into the dark bowels of the Earth - Boston's underground transit system. We invested 50c each to buy plastic tokens from a prisoner confined within a barred and gridded cage. I don't know how or when they fed him. These tokens then had to be shoved into another machine under the watchful eye of an armed guard whose function was to ensure that we didn't try to use old trouser buttons instead.

In an inferno-like temperature, tracks ran across dirty floors and seemingly platforms had not yet been invented in Boston. We scrambled aboard the first train to arrive, jammed ourselves in among several thousand other unfortunates and after a thankfully short ride, disembarked, clawed our way to the surface and found ourselves on Boston Common.

From here, we mooched around Faneuil Market, inspected a bevy of stalls offering candy, fruit and toys, before visiting an art show and tottering around the largest department store I have ever seen. I tried on a variety of caps before finding one which fitted me, even if I didn't like its design. After I'd bought it, I found they were all adjustable.

Booths, stalls, cafes, fresh seafood, and everywhere a lively, bustling atmosphere. As our legs started to give out, we spotted a Brighams, so popped in for lunch. It was served to us by a friendly, cheerful, but utterly dreamy, 'Brenda'. We ordered a salad for the main meal, and a 'Five Flavor Sampler' of ice cream to follow -- Naturally, Brenda brought that first, so we were able to watch it melting slowly away as we drank lashings of coffee and consumed our salads.

Lunch out of the way, we threaded the back streets. Flower-power teenagers mingled with shoppers. Kibitzers gawked at buskers and saffron-robed 'Buddhists' chanted their mantras. Towering above the crowds, an armed policeman on horseback surveyed what was happening on his 'manor'. I got him on cine film, along with a clown doing a magnificent balancing act on a tower of chairs. Moving on, we saw the State House, and a multi-slide show presenting Boston and attractions too numerous to list. Finally, we re-entered Dante's Inferno for a train back to our hotel.

On another day, we took a coach trip to Lexington and Concord, places which loom large in American Colonial history and are famous for all sorts of things. At one stop, the driver-guide informed us that, "This is where the Americans licked the pants off those Limeys". When he realised we were British, his face was a treat to see.

As seems inevitable wherever Val and I travel, there was a snafu. We left a historic house, drove some ten miles and disembarked at a bridge in Concord where some battle had been fought. At this point, the driver discovered he had left two passengers at the previous stop. "Hang on here, go see the bridge, I'll nip back and get them". He leaped into his coach and scorched away. Barely had he vanished from sight, than a young woman came running back from the river bank.

"Where has the coach gone? My baby is on the back seat!" Nothing could be done, so we all waited. Half an hour or so later, back came the coach with a chastened driver. He had discovered the baby when it started crying, and on picking up his two missing passengers, had handed it on to them for the return journey. Nowadays, he'd probably be up on a kidnapping charge.

Incidentally, the Sheraton had a large swimming pool, 5 floors up on top of the complex joining the two towers. We lounged in the Jacuzzi for a while, had a swim, and relaxed for an hour or so -- and chaos struck again. Val ordered two ices from the poolside vendor and mishearing the price, tendered her remaining 45c for ices costing \$1.50. A minor brouhaha ensued before she was able to charge the cost to our hotel bill.

Refreshed and cooled down, we set off in search of an evening meal. This time we chose to eat in the Sheraton's 'Kon Tiki Ports' restaurant. Addicts of 'Hawaii Five-Oh' will be able to envisage the



place when I say it was in the Polynesian style, Hollywood variation. The entrance to the Kon Tiki was guarded, as are most American eating places, by a sign saying, 'Please wait here for escort'. A civilised practice, as it prevents two groups of people both making frantic dashes for one coveted table.

We waited - all of ten seconds - then our escort arrived. Hoo boy! Our escort turned out to be a tall, slim, black-haired young lady wearing a cheong-sam with the longest side slits outside the Arabian Nights. She needn't have said 'Please follow me', I was already running on the spot.

Val pushed my tongue back into place and we followed the vision across a bamboo bridge over a goldfish pool and into a dimly-lit interior which looked like the set for a Hope-Crosby 'Road' film. Brushing aside the tropical palms and the occasional stuffed macaw, we followed our guide through a tangle of hanging lianas and palm fronds to arrive at a table shadowed by the statue of a multi-armed deity. I suspect they had a slight mix-up in their cultural heritages, but it was still quite a sight.

Once seated at a superb corner table with an excellent view of the decor and the various cheong-sams, a young Oriental served us with a carafe of ice-water and a huge chunk of carved ivory. On closer inspection, this turned out to be the menu. The range of dishes was as exotic as the place itself. With the aid of a blindfold and a pin, we settled on the 'Kon Tiki Kau Kau' followed by 'Beef Hong Kong' and 'Shrimp Luau'. Dish after dish was ferried in by a convoy of Oriental waiters. Thanks to numerous Hollywood and TV epics, we managed to cope with everything - who says TV isn't educational? The lack of more than one knife and fork proved a bit tricky until we discovered that some of the dishes were to be handled with the fingers. It was an excellent meal, and cost only \$40.00 including tip, for the two of us.

Staggering out under a load of food, I tried ringing Logan Airport to confirm a flight to Detroit which had been booked for me for the next day. This proved to be one of those things which sound simple in brochures which say, 'Just ring us to confirm', but prove difficult in practice. I first had to master the American phone system, no mean feat in itself. Following this, no matter whether I dialled British Airways, American Airlines or Logan Airport Enquiries, I ended up with answering machines which asked me to hold the line whilst they played an endless series of commercials.

Eventually, I contacted a human being with my query, "Any change in timing for American Airlines. Flight 319 to Detroit at 11-30am tomorrow?". There was a pause, then back came the word, "That Flight left this morning, buddy". My reply was, "Well, I've got a ticket for tomorrow, Flight 319".

Another pause, "Oh, Flight 319, that goes to Chicago." Quelling



my incipient heart-attack by sheer mental power, I tried again, "Well I have a ticket to Detroit, on Flight 319". My distant friend consulted his computer once again. "Oh yes, there's been a sked change. You're on 381 at 12-50, Gate 26." I thanked the nice man and rang off. Naturally, the hardened traveller gets used to such minor contretemps; one day, I might even get used to them myself.

Next morning, Val came to see me off, we caught a taxi out to Logan Airport, then after a cup off coffee, I bid her farewell and headed through the Security check to Flight 381. My bag and camera went through OK, but when I stepped through the induction loop of the metal detector, bells began to ring like crazy. Security guards limbered up, one would-be Wyatt Earp practised his lightning-draw and another jangled his handcuffs. I was puzzled, as I had walked through the Heathrow gate without a hiccup.

"Would you mind putting your coins and keys in here sir?" asked Wyatt Earp, handing me a plastic tray. I duly did so, and added my pen-knife for good measure. Smiling nonchalantly, I again stepped through the hoop. Clang-clang-clang! The bells began ringing again and the cordon closed in around me. "Your watch, sir?" hazarded the guard. Hesitantly I removed my metal-cased, metal-strapped, 97 function digital wonder before braving the gate for a third time. Success! The disappointed guards re-holstered their guns and drifted away as I reclaimed my ironmongery and moved on.

Flight 381 departed on time. A light but filling lunch was served as we overflew Niagara Falls. Finally, we let down into Detroit's Metro airport, narrowly missing a Learjet on its climb-out was we did so. Having only cabin luggage, I was one of the first to emerge in the concourse. Waiting for me was Lynn Hickman with whom I had corresponded for many years. Waiting with him was publisher Howard DeVore as well as SF writer, Tom Sherrad, his wife Mary Lou and their daughter Deena. We had a few beers before seeing the Sherrad's off on a plane to Boston where they would also be attending the Convention.

Then it was into Lynn's car for the drive out of Detroit, 'The Motor City', through Toledo and down to Wauseon in Ohio. After sinking a couple of hamburgers, we headed for a downtown pool hall. Although it was sunny outside, within its tightly shuttered gloom, a band of stalwarts boozed and talked to the background glare of a juke box.

Typically Starsky and Hutch country, complete with a lady bartender and a pool table where I expected to see Paul Newman and Minnesota Fats locked in combat.

Lynn set out to teach me how to play pool. In my younger days, I had been an avid snooker player - but anno domini had intervened since then. Not only did the pockets seem smaller, but the balls were much more hazy around the edges. In other words, I played badly.



This didn't really matter, as the other players were experts who knew not only all the obscure rules, but also every bump, tear and slope of the table. Still, I had fun, and since Limeys were rare birds in Wauseon pool halls, I was made more than welcome.

Then it was back to Lynn's home for more beer, chat and an inspection of his collection of pulp magazines. No wonder they are scarce these days, he has 'em all cornered. My bedroom was hidden away at the end of one of the dark corridors which wound their way through the caverns of piled up magazines. I finally managed to read my way through to bed by 2-30am.



Tuesday morning dawned bright, early and much to soon. Bleary-eyed, I staggered downstairs through the pulp caverns to a breakfast of bacon and eggs incinerated by Ray Beam.

Ray had strong ideas on the best way to commit arson on innocent food. Lynn had already sizzled the bacon and eggs for ten minutes. Ray turned down the heat and gave 'em another hour or so before prying the results free of the skillet and dumping them on my plate. The eggs resembled overdone hamburgers, whilst the bacon had a dismaying habit of shattering like Prince Rupert's drops whenever a fork touched it. Maybe that's why so many Americans wear spectacles.

Leaving Wauseon around 9-15am, we headed South to the Neil Armstrong Space Museum at Wapakoneta where he was born - and if I got that spelling right, chalk up a victory over the Indians.) We inspected a jet plane which Armstrong had flown, then turned to the museum proper. From the front, it looked like something out of an SF movie. A large central dome housing a planetarium was flanked by two long display wings. Inside, the plane on which Neil soloed was hanging on the wall (American museums aren't small!). Elsewhere, we saw his bicycle, school books, flight helmet, goggles, used chewing gum and a host of other memorabilia collected by the proud townsfolk.

A glass showcase held a miniature Air Force of models. Behind it a ramp led to a display of spacesuits, photographs and a beautifully detailed model of the Saturn V launching complex. A movie screen above the hall displayed a continuous film of the history flight.

From here, we passed through the 'Infinity Room'. This was crossed by a catwalk taking us through three-dimension maze of one-way glass with mirrors beyond that. The result was that no matter which way you looked, you couldn't see your own reflection, but an endless array of tiny star-like lights receding off to infinity. The eeriness was compounded by 'space music' and the whole effect has to be experienced to be appreciated.

Then came the planetarium housed in the dome. It featured a programme depicting the mission of Apollo 11, a particularly striking feature being the way in which a projection of the command module kept orbiting the Moon during the LEM's descent and return. The scene was enhanced by three large screens displaying shots of various phases of the flight. The final hall held cases of scrolls, keys to various cities, plaques and a wide range of souvenir items.

Leaving the museum, we stoked up on hamburgers and French Fries at a nearby MacDonalds. Since this was to be a rendezvous point for my next host, Mike Banks, we parked and went inside to eat. Had we wished, we could have used the 'drive-through' facilities whereby you stop by a cash desk, place your order via a microphone, hand over cash, then collect the food at the next window - all without getting out of your vehicle. People in a hurry load up with the food which comes handily packaged for eating on the move. The coffee cups nestle into non-spill (in theory) racks. As a result, the interiors of many American cars tend to resemble rubbish reclamation centres for wrapping paper, plastic rays and discarded coffee cups. Oh well, when in Rome, be a Roman candle.

Half way through our meal, we were joined by Mike Banks and his young son, Mike Jr. We had corresponded for years, so the meeting was both warm and pleasing without any awkward pauses as another 'paper person' assumed living, breathing and very friendly, life.

Eating over, we climbed into cars and headed off down the road to the United States Aerospace Museum in Dayton. If Wapakoneta was large, this place was VAST!. If you have any love for aircraft, then this place must be your Mecca. Outside on the hard-standing were literally hundreds of aircraft, the first and foremost being the predatory supersonic bomber, the B-70 'Valkyrie'. Just beyond it was the B-29 'Enola Gay' which dropped one of the atom bombs on Japan. Ranged around like playthings of some giant infant were guided missiles and rockets enough to start a major war. Atlas, Bomarc, Redstone, Snark, Minuteman were all here to be seen walked round, touched and even photographed.

Inside the building were sets of models, posters, memorabilia, dioramas and many more full-size aircraft. To list everything would take a king-size catalogue. Exhibits included the fabulous, B-29 dropped X-15, a B-36 (Yes, they actually had one of those monsters inside) and a B-24 Liberator. I peered into a charred and pitted capsule which had been into space and back, stuck my head into the first supersonic X-1 and in general behaved like a little boy turned loose in a candy store. I could have spent days there, it was a wonderful experience and if I ever get the chance, I'll do it again.

Eventually, we staggered out of the air-conditioned buildings into the blazing sun. We waved farewell to Lynn as he headed back to Wauseon, then set off to Mike's trailer home in Milford, a suburb of Cincinnati. We were greeted by Mike's wife Rosa and their daughter Susie, both of whom greeted me as if I'd lived there for years, a delightful trait which every American seemed to have. Wherever I have travelled in the USA, the people I met have invariably proved most friendly and hospitable..

Much nattering took place before we headed off to a local eatery in search of more food. I particularly liked the system of ordering food and paying for it at the counter, then sitting at a table until it is cooked and delivered to you. That way, it arrives fast and piping hot. Once again, the meal was followed by late into the night chatter. I don't think I had a normal bedtime for the whole of my stay in the USA.

Next issue, we fly rockets and visit Niagara Falls





KEITH FREEMAN, 269 WYKEHAM RD. READING RG6 1PL

Reproduction this issue is better, but still far from good (in my 'umble opinion) - the print seems "fuzzy" and I don't know whether its cause is the matrix printer or the photocopying. I say this because many of the illos have the same fuzzy appearance as the basic script (eg large headings I can see the 'stepping' from the matrix printer).

Explanatory notes. 1. The slight fuzziness on print probably stems from my use of 'Emphasised' and 'Double Strike' together for a blacker image. On ART in SF illos, it's probably the number of steps - First, they're printed in pulp mags, then I photograph

the pages, I get photocopies from my photos, make these into paste-ups which go to the printer who then re-copies them and finally prints 'em. I reckon the result is pretty good after all that. The 'stepping' on large print is the fault of the FONTSTYLE program I use for larger letters. I won't disagree with you over the 'Golden Age of Illustrators' - but can you explain why, today, so much of the illustration (both colour cover and internal mono) is so uninspiring? Have you seen the new Amazing with its internal colour? What do you think? Personally, I understand some of the reasons behind the new size, but still find it extremely awkward to hold while reading, I don't give it long. I don't know why we have such gloomy covers, and I don't like the new Amazing. Not only is the size awkward, the stories are tripe and I HATE 'extracts of novels' which are really only advertising plugs saving money on stories. I'm astounded at the number of books you cover in a few succinct phrases. I haven't got time to read that number of books, let alone make comments on them. I tend to look at titles and authors and only read those where I've either read the book (or another in the series), or where the author's name rings a bell. Being retired helps me, and I too, only buy authors or series I like.

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD SOUTH, WALLSEND NE28 7RE

I was surprised that your article on animation contained no mention of the work of the Andersons, from Four Feather Falls, up to Captain Scarlett. This employed a most ingenious system known as 'Supermarionation'. The puppet heads had a system built in that moved the lips in synch with the words. I concentrated on stop-motion animation. Thunderbirds etc are really only extended puppet shows akin to Punch and Judy, and as such were outside the scope of my piece. Re the article on lifting bodies. I believe that our own version of the Dean Drive is the subject of a highly secret research project by British Aerospace and Edinburgh University. It may well be we may see the day of the king-size firecracker over. I'll believe the Dean Drive when I see it work. I rank it alongside cold fusion, eternal razor blades and the water into petrol pill.

PAMELA BOAL, 4 WESTFIELD WAY, CHARLTON HEIGHTS, NANTAGE, OXON OX12 7EW

I particularly enjoyed the animation article, for me it was redolent with memories. One of the abiding memories of my first Con, was your film, 'The Burglar'. Possibly the most useful (in that it had so much potential for fun) bit of junk I ever hung onto from my childhood, was a wind-up gramophone. We only had one record which got so badly scratched that we heated it and turned it into a fluted dish. The turntable was the centre of many an experiment. I rediscovered it when cleaning out after mother died. As our eldest child was only six, you can be sure it had many more years of use. With a suitable grid around it and the right thickness of poster paint, we made some interesting spun patterns, but it was most successful when used as a zoetrope.

ALAN HUNTER, 1186 CHRISTCHURCH RD., BOSCOMBE EAST, BOURNEMOUTH BN7 6DY

Many thanks for ERG.115, that number alone must set a record for a personalzine. The high spot for me, as you might guess, was the Art in SF feature. Although brief, it did a good job of encouraging an appreciation of Hubert Rogers art. I must admit that although I have admired his cover paintings, his black and white interiors had completely passed me by. I had always considered him purely a colour artist. No doubt this is due to the fact that he was far more successful and striking in his colour work.

XEN LAKE, 115 MARKHOUSE AVE, LONDON E17 8AY

Anyone interested in any aspect of animation should visit MOMI, the Museum Of The Moving Image, on London's South Bank, in the same building as the National Film Theatre. The area merits a good day out - train or tube to Waterloo, or if fine, go to Embankment tube station and walk across the walkway by the railway bridge. A lovely view and you see the South Bank Complex as an entity. MOMI is an eye-opener, its exhibits starting with the zoetrope and other early gadgets you mentioned - but think of what we missed too. To me, one of the greatest attractions of SF is the alternate world literature where the author has exercised himself to think up inventions that just might have turned up, had history been different.

VINCE CLARKE, 16 HENDOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT DA16 2BN

ERG 115, the printing vastly improved, in fact it's difficult to know how it can be bettered within the present compass. Nice to read the 'Animation' feature. I've struggled through a few (professional) explanations, but this is by far the clearest. Verran's 'THE MINER' followed the old Campbell requirement of 'Tell it like it is - in the future'; effective for its length. Re remark to Kench on costs of stuff then and now, paper, ink and stencils haven't altered a lot in real terms (in fact I could make out a case for them being cheaper now except for postage. Paper for ERG.1 in 1959 was about 8/- (40p) a ream, nowadays its over £4.00, ink is up from 40p to £3.00 or so. Roughly a ten times increase in 32 years, (postage from 1p to about 30p!! How do other prices compare? If you want a more professional job, you have to pay for it. You're the one who's chosen to go offset; most of ERG's content could be produced on a hektograph. I went offset to save the chores of stencil cutting, electro patching, dupe cranking, messy ink, and collating. But I disagree that ERG's art could be produced on a jellybed, let alone copy it to a hekto master.

KEN CHESLIN, 10 CONEY GREEN, STOURBRIDGE, WEST MIDLANDS DY8 1LA

The animation article was interesting, there must be few folk who haven't tried the old drawings-on-the-edge-of-the-page. Computer animation seems to have great possibilities. I wonder if this might have pitfalls, I can imagine someone getting photos of folk and making films of them doing something criminal.  $\Rightarrow$  That was once just an idea in SF, but it looks more and more possible, current animation levels are incredible and I suspect will eventually oust the drawn variety.  $\Rightarrow$  I think Graham Stone answers Ken Lake's "Can't understand what anyone can see in Doc Smith". I don't think you can judge Smith out of the context of the time he was writing.  $\Rightarrow$  True, how many read Dickens, Chaucer or even Shakespeare for pleasure these days?

ALAN SULLIVAN, 20 SHIALEY RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 4NY

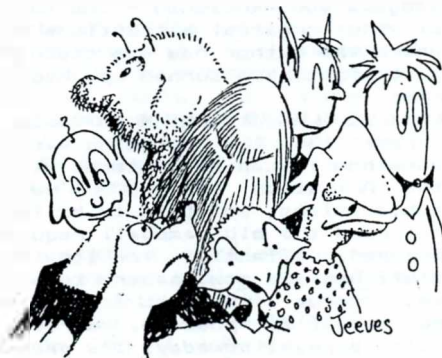
Animations: Some of the history I already knew in broad terms, as I did a first year projection the cinema industry's early days. However, I didn't really cover the specific techniques of film-making. I know what you mean about some of the 'cut-price' methods used to reduce the number of drawings - many a time I've spotted the use of 'stock footage', too. Considering the potential of this particular film-making method, it seems odd that it is so under-rated. In Japan it is apparently treated with the same full seriousness as live action filming, although the subject matter sometimes verges on the bizarre (animated pornography, yet!). The recent series of 'Aardman' adverts, some music videos show what you can do with a little imagination and a lot of effort - plus a willingness to take a slightly different approach to the project.  $\Rightarrow$  The trouble is, it always comes down to the bottom line - cost. However, I suspect computer animation will bring a whole new ball game.  $\Leftarrow$

PHILIP WILTSHIRE, 2 CHILTERN VIEW RD, UXBIDGE, MIDDT UB8 2PA

I mean to write earlier but saw your article on animation. That set me off on a tangent. There was Walt Disney animation for computer going cheap, I got hold of it, it's great fun. I must sort it out as there is no instruction book with it. Now that pixilation, didn't they do that for 'Lord Of The Rings'  $\Rightarrow$  Dunno, haven't seen it.  $\Leftarrow$

I looked it out and watched it, very good too. Then I thought I could use the video camera and do animation on one of the kid's toys. I opened the girl's cupboard and of course everything fell out on top of me and the toy was right at the back. I started the film, first there was a title page to be done and an end. It turned out quite well.  $\Rightarrow$  Who says ERG isn't inspirational?  $\Leftarrow$

Yes, the new publication of ERG is a bit easier to read. I enjoyed the story by James Verran, did he write anything else?  $\Rightarrow$  Well apart from winning an LRH 'New Writers In SF' Award, he has another polarised piece in this issue.  $\Leftarrow$



James Verran sent in this little DIY project for those who dabble in electronics or need to check the polarity of low voltages

## BE

## POSITIVE

I call this gadget a 'Polarity Tester' and the idea came from a standard circuit in an electronics handbook. I have simply replaced a 1N4148 diode with a second LED (Light-emitting diode, Ed.) and presto! .. we have a passive device that indicates which contact is the positive output. Whichever probe tip touches the positive DC source causes a corresponding LED to light, and if it is an AC supply, both illuminate.

It is invaluable to model train enthusiasts for checking polarity and continuity of the track layout. It has many other uses, one of which is to check the polarity of those power pack plugs used for low voltage DC recorders and the like. It often helps if one knows if the plug is centre negative or not before connecting to expensive and sensitive equipment.

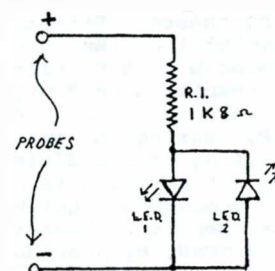


FIG.1

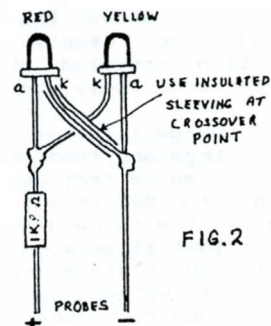


FIG.2

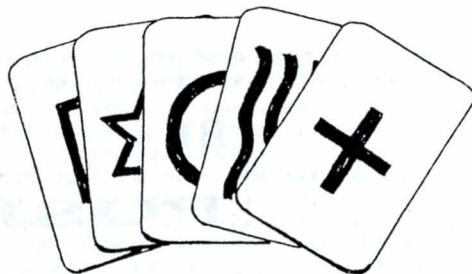
The circuit shown in FIG.1 is safe to use on power sources from 3 volts to 30 volts only, hence the 1W resistor, but not recommended for more than momentary use of 2 to 3 seconds duration. FIG.2 is probably the simplest illustration and a configuration that lends itself to younger enthusiasts. The finished project may be mounted in a thin, clear, plastic pill bottle with the probe leads protruding from the cap. One probe (-) might best be a sheathed alligator clip, and the other (+) a copper wire point, or if the budget allows, a factory-made probe tip. All up cost is within a youngster's pocket money range, so there it is.

James Verran ... Australia

Editorial note .. Take note of that 2-3 seconds momentary use. I hooked some LEDs to my variable power pack and ran it slowly up to 28 volts to see what lighting range the LEDs had. I burnt 'em all out, so be warned, just use a quick touch on the higher voltages. (TJ)



## E.S.P.



Many years ago, Professor J.B. Rhine of Duke University in the U.S.A. put Extra Sensory Perception on a more respectable footing by commencing an officially approved program of research. The results he obtained have caused considerable argument, but among other things, he produced several books and what is probably better-known, a set of 25 standard ESP testing cards.

These cards were divided into five sets...5 circles, 5 squares, 5 stars, 5 crosses and 5 cards bearing wavy lines. Various systems were used with these cards, depending on what Rhine hoped to be testing. Probably the simplest way is a straight test for telepathy. One person shuffles the cards, then looks at each in turn. The one being tested, cannot see the card, but records what he thinks the other is seeing. At the end of the run a check is made to see how many 'hits' were made. Chance says this should average out at a score of five, but Rhine claimed some people to score as high as twenty - way above that demanded by chance. Strangely, he also discovered some people getting everything wrong -- until investigation revealed they were guessing with a regular lag behind the actual card. Duly corrected, their results scored high.

If you want to test your own ESP, making a set of cards, shuffling them and finding a partner willing to spend time gazing at the things, can be tedious. To simplify matters, I have re-designed the cards for BBC computer graphics to produce a light-hearted game in which you try to read the mind of the computer. Purists will say (correctly) that since a computer hasn't a mind, my program tests, not telepathy, but clairvoyance. That is, the ability to name a chosen, but as yet undisplayed card. True, but it is still fun to see how many 'hits' you can score in a standard run of 25 cards. Chance says you can expect 5 correct in such a run...with significant results only if your average score over many runs, exceeds this number.

The game can be fun; but if you want it for more serious research, then further programming is required. As it stands, there is no provision for limiting the computer's random choice to five repeats of each number. In theory, chance could throw up 25 squares in a row. To some degree, this is offset by the fact that the player probably has his own bias for a particular shape - unless he keeps a count and thus defeats the whole object. Play the game for laughs and see which member of the family can outfox the micro.

The program itself is quite straightforward. Lines 80 to 120 define the graphic symbols used - circle, square, plus, three lines, and a bar. Lines 130 to 170 print these out, along with a number. Variables S and T (line 50) keep respectively, your score and a count of tries. Line 200 greets a correct answer with a high note and Line 220 responds to a wrong one with a raspberry.

Line 290 may shock the 'anti-GOTO brigade', but since this sequence is not repeated elsewhere, a GOTO takes up less typing, and time is not important. The time delay is set by lines 230 to 250 and is easily varied if you wish a different response time.

Finally, at the end of the game, your score is displayed and you are given the option of playing again. Try it, and if you repeatedly score 20 or over. I'm sure Duke University would like to hear from you.

```

10 REM ESP
20 REM COPYRIGHT 1991 BY TERRY JEEVES
30 MODE2
40 COLOUR3
50 COLOUR 129
60 LETS=0
70 FORT=1 TO 25
80 N=RD(5)
90 PRINTTAB(4,2);"E.S.P."
100VDU23,255,60,66,129,129,129,129,66,60
110VDU23,224,255,129,129,129,129,129,255
120VDU23,225,24,24,24,255,255,24,24
130VDU23,226,0,255,0,0,255,0,0,255
140VDU23,227,0,0,0,255,255,0,0,0
150PRINTTAB(4,6);CHR$255;PRINTTAB(4,8);"1"
160PRINTTAB(6,6);CHR$224;PRINTTAB(6,8);"2"
170PRINTTAB(8,6);CHR$225;PRINTTAB(8,8);"3"
180PRINTTAB(10,6);CHR$226;PRINTTAB(10,8);"4"
190PRINTTAB(12,6);CHR$227;PRINTTAB(12,8);"5"
200PRINTTAB(0,12)"GUESS WHICH SHAPE I HAVE PICKED."
210PRINTTAB(0,14)"ENTER ITS NUMBER AND PRESS RETURN"
220PRINT
230PRINT"    SCORE= ";S
240 INPUT G
250 IFG=N THEN PRINT "RIGHT":SOUND1,-15,200,20
260IFG=N THEN LET S=S+1
270 IFG<>N THEN PRINT "WRONG":SOUND1,-15,10,20
280 FINISHTIME=TIME+80
290 REPEAT
300 UNTILTIME=FINISHTIME
310NEXT
320 CLS
330PRINTTAB(0,4);"YOU SCORED ";S;" OUT OF 25"
340X=INKEY(300)
350 PRINTTAB(0,6)"DO YOU WANT ANOTHER GAME? Y OR N?"
360 INPUT G$
370 CLS
380 IF G$="Y" THEN GOTO10
390 IF G$="N" THEN SOUND 1,-15,10,20
400 IF G$="N" THEN CLS

```

REMEMBER - This program is for a BBC Computer, you will have to modify it for a different micro. Have fun, Terry



## DESPERATE DESIGNS

The Spitfire, Mustang, Me 109 and the Japanese Zero are the fighter names of WW2 which are familiar to just about everyone; but there were others which might have got into the history books had they appeared earlier, been more practical - or reached the production stage.

Let's start with the Yokosuka 'Ohka' (Cherry Blossom) suicide, anti-shipping, piloted bomb shown in the heading. It was to be air-launched from a twin-engined Mitsubishi and the pilot would then make a rocket-assisted glide to the target. Some 600 were built, but the Mitsubishi towing aircraft were so slow that virtually all of them were intercepted and had to release their missiles well away from the target. Later versions were to have a turbojet, but only 50 were built.

Certain German designs, whilst not strictly 'suicidal', were not far removed from that category. The Henschel Hs.132 was proposed as a ground attack and dive bomber. It was to have a jet engine, a prone pilot, carry one 500Kg bomb and have two 20mm guns, later versions were to have two extra guns or a 1000Kg bomb.

The pilot's recumbent position was intended to give a small frontal area, thus making it a difficult target for ground gunners. It is doubtful if any were completed, let alone flown.

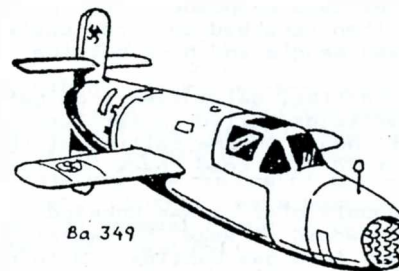


Then there was the Heinkel He.176. Only one of these was built. It had a fixed tricycle-undercarriage, but could reach a speed of 435mph using a liquid-fuelled, Walter rocket motor. It was the first aircraft to fly using a rocket engine (earlier experiments had used solid rockets), but was considered too dangerous a machine and was not followed up. Instead, the

Heinkel He.178 V1 was built. It had a retractable undercarriage, but its top speed was only 393mph. Nevertheless, it was the first machine to fly on turbojet power, (August 1939). Its follow-up, the He.178 V2 was built, but never flown and once again, the project was cancelled.

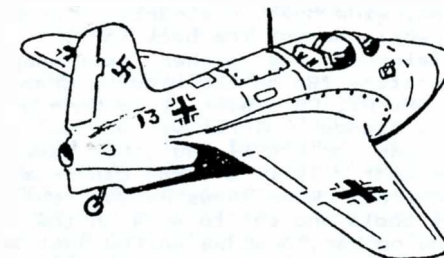


Probably the most unlikely fighter ever, was the Blohm and Voss, BV.40. This was an unpowered bomber interceptor! Ugly in design, it was to be towed behind a Bf.109 fighter and released above a bomber stream to make a diving attack using two 30mm cannon mounted beneath the wing roots. The pilot lay prone in a well armoured cockpit. For take-off, a jettisonable trolley was used and landing was on skids. Only a few were built and despite successful testing, the project was abandoned.



The Bachem Ba.349 'Natter' was a rocket-powered bomber interceptor, launched from a vertical stand (see W&W.9). It had a top speed of 540mph and carried 24 rockets in the nose. After firing these, the pilot was to parachute to earth. Some 36 were built, but the solid-fuel launching rockets proved unreliable. The first test killed the pilot; subsequent flights were successful, but the programme was cancelled. Not surprising, as with a flight time of just over two minutes, launch time and interception would have had to be very accurate.

The most successful of these unusual machines was the Messerschmitt Me.163 'Komet'. Ground-launched by solid boosters, it was then powered by a liquid fuel rocket motor. Armament consisted of two 30mm cannon and 12 rocket missiles - the latter could be replaced by four upward-firing rockets for use when flying beneath bomber streams. Capable of over 600mph, an altitude of 39,000ft. and with a flight duration of nearly 8 minutes, the Me.163 was a formidable weapon during its nine months of active service. Unfortunately, there was a strong tendency for unused fuel to explode when the machine landed on its single skid.



### REFERENCES

GERMAN AIRCRAFT OF WORLD WAR.2 K.Munson Blandford  
JAPANESE AIRCRAFT OF WORLD WAR.2 B.Collier Sidgwick & Jackson  
KOMET: THE MESSERSCHMITT 163 Jeffrey L.Ethell Ian Allan



## LIFESTYLES

My grandparents lived in poverty. As a Chief Inspector of Police, in Sheffield's Brightside Division at the time of the notorious street gangs, he retired on what was then, a good pension, but it wouldn't run to all the things now considered so essential to a full life. Indeed, he had never even heard of most of them, and didn't realise his living standard was what is now classified as 'well below the poverty line'.

William and Emma, lived in a terraced house with but a single cold water tap over the stone sink in the kitchen. Hot water was either boiled up in an iron kettle, or scooped from a dank abysmal 'copper' beside the coal fire in the Yorkshire range which heated the living room. All cooking was done over this fire or in its oven, apart from what could be fried in a pan over the kitchen gas ring.

Grandmother had no washing machine, but used a 'posher' to pound clothes in a galvanised tub. They were then scrubbed on a corrugated board, squeezed out through a hand-cranked mangle and hung outside to dry.

Baths involved getting down the coffin-like, galvanised iron bath from its peg by the back door. Water had to be boiled in kettles to allow a shallow dip in the unheated kitchen. Anyone calling at the kitchen door during this process was told to come back in ten minutes.

The house had no central heating, double glazing was unheard of, and in Winter, a bedside glass of water would freeze by morning. Electricity hadn't arrived, so light was from gas mantles. With no refrigerator or deep freeze, food was kept cool on a stone slab in the cellar alongside the coal and firewood.

The unlit, unheated toilet across the back yard regularly froze in Winter. Next to it stood the dustbin housing all the fire ashes. The fire had to be cleaned out and relit every morning before any warmth was available. The dustman called once a week, he would empty the contents of the bin into a large tin bath for carrying them to the waiting, wide open, dustcart. A process which inevitably left a trail of debris across the back yard.

Entertainment was either self-supplied from the piano, or by putting scratchy 78s on the wind-up gramophone. No radio, TV, Video Recorder, Hi-Fi, CD player, telephone or electric fire. Grandma had no toaster, blender, microwave, vacuum cleaner, kitchen detergent, package foods or any of the other essentials of modern living. The milkman brought milk in a large can from which he would ladle out the amount required. When shoes needed repairing, Grandfather got out his box of tools and set to work on the 'hobbing foot'.

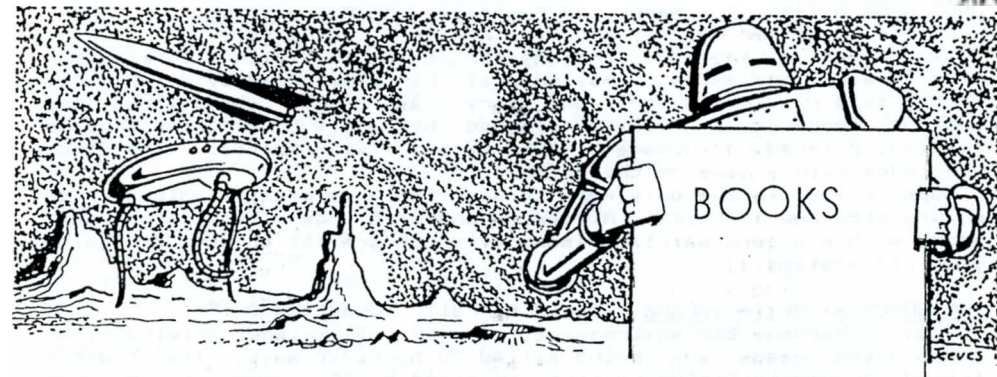
Having no car, Grandpa walked just about everywhere, including a regular round trip of four miles to work on his allotment. He had never been abroad or heard of package tours. The furthest he had ever travelled was the 100 miles back to his birthplace in Arlesey.

Illness was ever a problem. Medication was scant, could be costly and wasn't that effective. When he developed a physical disorder, it killed him. When I developed the same trouble some sixty years later, a quick operation cured it.

Even so, my grandparents shared a long and happy life, and produced some ten children, but only five survived to maturity. Despite their hardships they never thought that judging by possessions, their life style was way, way, way below that of today's poverty line.

On the other hand, I suppose they were lucky. Some people having much more, never know when they're well off.

TJ.

SOUL RIDER Jack Chalker Roc £4.50

Part 2 of this trilogy sees Cass, as 'Sister Kardi', a powerful magician and head of the Reform Church seeking to overthrow the corruption of the old regime which had ruled the land of Flux power. Her enemies, the rulers of the region called Hell, aim to seize her daughter, 'Spirit' as a hostage to defeat her and re-establish their rule. An unusual blend of magic, science and the inevitable conflict between Good and Evil.

ONE RAINY NIGHT Richard Laymon Headline £4.99

In the small town of Bixby, black youth Maxwell Chidi has been brutally tortured and burnt to death by a biker gang. Following this, gigantic claps of thunder herald the fall of a strange, unexplained black rain. Those caught in it are driven to commit ghastly acts of violence and mayhem. Laymon pulls no punches as he throws in rape, gore, brutality and horror. If you enjoy stories on such topics, then you'll go for this one in a big way.

THE OTHER SINBAD Craig Shaw Gardner Headline £4.50

Humble porter, Sinbad meets the Sinbad of legend. He joins the great man and his servants on a trip to re-stock his depleted financial coffers. Also aboard ship is the beautiful (but never seen) Fatima and her bodyguards. In the sea is a nymph with designs on the porter. It turns out there were some never told aspects to the legendary voyages. To complicate matters, there's a Djinn hit-man who can't decide which of the two Sinbads he has to kill. Less a plotted story than a series of light-hearted amusing incidents in an Arabian Nights setting.

THE EYES OF DARKNESS Dean R Koontz Headline £14.95

A year after Tina Andrew's son Danny is killed, the words 'NOT DEAD' appear on a chalkboard in his room. Weird poltergeist phenomena and computer messages follow. Aided by her lover Elliot, Tina sets out to solve the mystery. The pair find themselves the murder targets for a corrupt secret agency of the Government. The trail takes them to Reno and on to an experimental laboratory in the Sierras where Danny is being held for ghastly experiments. An exciting, fast-paced manhunt where the baddies hold all the aces, yet lose out in the end. Some loose, unexplained ends and complete with plenty of sex and the inevitable blazing building on the jacket.

ONCE UPON A TIME: A Treasury of Fantasies and Fairy Tales

Edited by Lester del Rey and Risa Kesler Legend £9.99

Ten tales of fantasy. Dragons abound, Asimov tells a lovely yarn of a fireless one and a clumsy prince; he is balanced by a laborious Cherry tale of a Welsh one. One story has dragon changelings and another concerns a village plagued by one. Other tales include fairies, princes, princesses, unicorns and flying horses. The book concludes with a note on the authors.

Superlative is the only word to describe this massive volume, nigh on Qto size and 1" thick! Michael Pangrazio has illustrated each story with a superb painting (some of which are fit to hang alongside your old masters).

THE COVENANT OF THE FLAME David Morrell Headline £4.99

People harming the environment, corrupt politicians, criminals, or corporation heads are being killed in horrific ways. Tess Drake's friend, Joseph is killed by fire, so aided by Policeman Craig, she investigates - and the pair find themselves pawns between two factions which follow ancient gods. This synopsis doesn't do the yarn justice. Not strictly SF, but a real world, real-time cliff-hanger which holds you throughout. An excellent read.

OTHERSYDE J. Michael Straczynski Headline £4.99

Now in paperback. Teenagers Chris and Robert have their school lives made miserable by gangs and bullies. (Apart from the four-letter words spraying like bullets, if American schools are like this, I pity the pupils.) Then Robert contacts the 'Othersyde' which enables him to wreak revenge on anyone he wishes. The power's grip escalates in a taut, frightening fantasy of uncontrolled evil.

HEADS Greg Bear Legend £3.99

In an underground Lunar laboratory, William Pierce seeks to reach absolute zero. Then his wife, Rho, brings in the heads of a large number of 'corpsicles' hoping to access their frozen information. One of the heads is the founder of an off-beat religious society. This precipitates a bitter power struggle with the sect. Events reach their climax as William achieves his goal. A well-written tale, but the ending is a bit flat.

MYTH-NOMERS AND IM-PERVECTIONS Robert Asprin Legend £3.99

Another pun-filled tale of Magician Skeeve. This time, he travels to dimension Perv in search of the demon Aahz. Aided by the invisible Djin, Kalvin, and Edrik, driver of a two-lizard cab he encounters the usual mix of weird aliens, strange customs, menaces and near misses before his mission ends. Crammed with all the off-beat humour and atrocious puns that any Asprin/Skeeve lover could want.

ISLE OF VIEW Piers Anthony N.E.L. Hardcover £14.99 Paper £7.99

The 14th novel set in the magic land of Xanth which is populated by winged centaurs, ghosts, ogres, humans and others. Prince Dolph must choose between marrying for love or statesmanship and when Che, a young centaur foal is kidnapped by goblins a massive hunt begins. Jenny the Elf falls into Xanth, frees Che and the two run for their lives, experiencing sundry adventures before all is resolved. A light-hearted fantasy where even the baddies never really frighten. Presented in 16 alliteratively-titled chapters - plus an Author's note at the end.

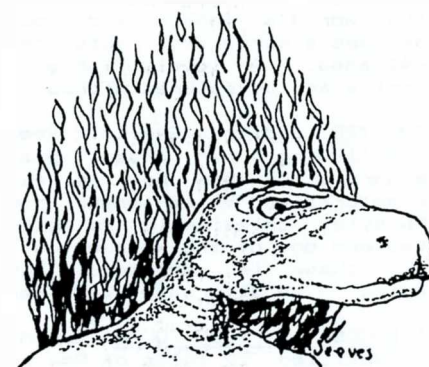
HALO Tom Maddox Legend £7.99

The Hi-Tech, 21st. Century. Disabled and dying, Jerry Chapman is interfaced with the giant Mechanical Intelligence, Aleph, which runs the L5 space settlement, Halo City. The SenTrax combine calls on his former lover, Doctor Heywood to try and cure him. To check on her, they also bring in Investigator, Gonzalez. Then Aleph becomes a true artificial intelligence and takes over. A gripping tale, with a smoothly and credibly depicted future setting.

MORTAL MASK Stephen Marley Legend £8.99

Fantasy not being my thing, I'll quote the jacket. "Chia Black Dragon - powerful, sexy, lonely. A Goddess who walks among mortals.

Chia killed her brother, murdered his immortal spirit because that spirit was evil. But sometimes the dead don't lie down... Chia is under attack. Something is luring - forcing - her to a remote bay, a decaying community of hermits, mad monks and whores. A haunted place, terrorised by the unseen evil that has settled there."

ROBOT ADEPT Piers Anthony N.E.L. £6.95

Second in the trilogy which began with 'Out of Phase' in which the robot 'Mach' from the scientific world of Proton changes bodies with human, 'Bane' of the magic world Phaze. Mach falls in love with Feta, a shape-changing unicorn and Bane with the amorphous Agape. But the exchange is disturbing the two worlds, so Mach agrees to return to Proton - and finds himself enmeshed in intrigue. A bit twee and complicated for my taste, but ideal for Piers Anthony fans.

SUMMER OF NIGHT Dan Simmons Headline £4.99 Now in paperback

When Central School closes, a pupil vanishes, classmates investigate and horror begins. A long-dead teacher is seen, the caretaker dumps dead babies, a WWI soldier roams the town, strange furrows appear in the ground and an evil force is abroad. A local bully adds to the growing terror. An excellently crafted tale which avoids explicit sex or gore, but builds its menace in the best way - by leaving much to the reader's imagination.

ALBION John Grant Headline £14.95

Mariner Terman is shipwrecked on the strange shore of Albion where the people have only short-term memories, so are cruelly ruled by the more normal House of Ellon and its Despot. Terman brings memory back to the people, his son has the same power and starts a revolt which is carried on by his daughter, Anya. Their cause is aided by the all-powerful Wind, musician Rehan, the magic-wielding Alyss who was born of a tree and Joli, whose dreams assume terrible reality. A well-crafted fantasy without Dark Lords, stolen talismans, princesses and draggy quest. I enjoyed it. Minor quibble - If Terman's descendants could recall memory, why couldn't those of the women raped by the soldiers of Ellon?



THE DAY IT RAINED FOREVER Ray Bradbury ROC £4.50

Bradbury's 'picturesque speech and patter' style is not my cup of tea, but if it's yours, here are 23 of his short stories. There's a harp player in a drought, Picasso on the sea-shore, anachronistic dragon killers, man into space, a shared suit, a creature which becomes what it is called and a host of others. Poetic, mercurial and lightweight, so if you're a Bradbury fan, now's your chance.

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA Ursula Le Guin ROC £3.99

Another chance at this 1968 'goody'. This is the saga of Ged 'Sparrowhawk', the goat-herd who showed magic skills and was sent to be taught in a school for wizards. Following an argument, he splits the world's fabric and looses a deadly power. In due course, he becomes a sorcerer, fights dragons, but is haunted by the evil he released. A lovely fantasy which takes you gently into strange worlds and adventures without hunting lost princesses etc.

SHIFTER Judith & Garfield Reese-Stevens ROC £4.50

Following a car crash, playboy Galen Sword regains suppressed memories of how he was exiled from an alternate world of strange creatures and extra-sensory powers. Aided by paralysed scientist Forsyte, telekinetic Ja'Nette and the enigmatic Ko, he seeks to capture one of the werewolves which can lead him to his home world. His chase is successful, but his captive isn't quite as expected. First in an alternate world fantasy series.

I SHUDDER AT YOUR TOUCH Ed. Michele Slung ROC £4.99

Subtitled '22 Tales of Sex and Horror', this collection gives you an accidental superwoman's revenge, a mermaid killer, nostalgic fantasy, murder, violence, a ghostly lover, hauntings, vampires, a weird sideshow, a beauty salon, strange lovers, Russian Roulette, metamorphosis, mental power and others. A really mixed bag of terror tales which has something for everyone.

DARKNESS TELL US Richard Laymon Headline £14.95

A bunch of college teenagers play with a Ouija board and contact a mysterious 'Butler' who promises them treasure. They set off on a back-packing expedition into the wilds - where they encounter a machete-wielding maniac, discover the truth about Butler and meet a horrifying climax. A gripping, if totally implausible yarn, but spoilt for me by the gutter language, continual voyeurism and regular, explicit sex scenes.

THE DOOR TO DECEMBER Dean R Koontz Headline £14.95

Laura's three-year old daughter Melanie was abducted by the father. Six years later, he is found brutally killed along with evidence that he had been cruelly brain-washing Melanie. The child is found wandering and autistic and taken to a hospital, where a hit man sent to kill her is also slaughtered. Other killings follow and gradually the terrible truth emerges. An excellent, taut tale of horror and violence, but without the needless inclusion of explicit sex and gutter language. I couldn't put it down.

A BAD DAY FOR ALI BABA Craig Shaw Gardner Headline £14.95

Second in the trilogy of three 'lost tales from the Arabian Nights'. This time it's Ali Baba's turn to get the inimitable tongue-in-cheek Gardner treatment as he tangles with the forty thieves. He gets lumbered with the still living though cut into six parts, bits of his brother. Aladdin is one of the thieves, so we also get his story. What more do you need to know?