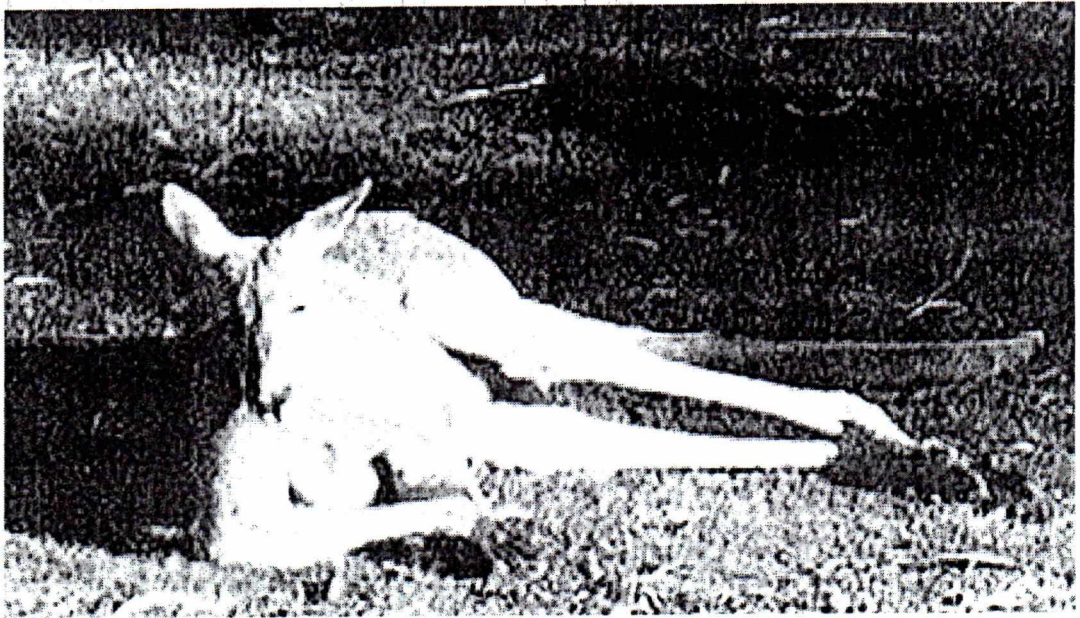


GUTHAW

3



GUFFaw 3

The GUFF newsletter is edited and published by

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It's purely accidental, of course, but it looks like *GUFFaw* is beginning to shape up as a quarterly. Which is as much of a surprise to me as it is to anyone else. Still, when you get contributors like Bruce Gillespie and Irwin Hirsh, you can't complain. And at least it has spurred me on to start writing my own GUFF report.

And this fanzine is also beginning to serve its other purpose, as a newsletter. Karen and I are announcing the start of the next GUFF race, from Australia to Europe. Next time round I trust we'll be announcing the candidates. And I'm hoping to feature something by each candidate in future issues of *GUFFaw*.

We're also after your money, of course. GUFF wouldn't survive without the generosity of fans. There will be a fan fund auction at Novacon, where I will (with luck) be distributing this fanzine, and I'll also have copies of Karen and Ian's trip report for sale, so remember our catch phrase: give generously, give often.

Eve said Australia is addictive. She was right. So now it's time for me to start dreaming of my next trip. Until next time...

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GUFF News

G'ready, G'set, GUFF

The next GUFF race is now open.

Nominations are open until Friday 14th April 2000, and the race will then run from Easter until November. The winner will attend the 2001 Eastercon in Britain.

If you want to stand in this GUFF race, here's what you do:

- You need five nominees, three from Australia and two from Europe.
- You need a platform of no more than 100 words.
- You need to post a bond of A\$20

Then campaign like mad in order to set out on one of fandom's great adventures.

For further information, or to make a donation, contact either of the administrators:

Australian Administrator:

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Photo: Maureen Kincaid Speller



▲ Fan Guest of Honour Bruce Gillespie and GUFF delegate Paul Kincaid at Aussiecon 3

GUFF

Income And Expenditure Account, 1994-1999

by Joseph Nicholas

Income

Funds passed on by previous UK administrator:		£200.00	
Donations from convention profits:	Sou'Wester	£250.00	
	1996 Eastercon	£100.00	£350.00
Proceeds from convention auctions:	1995 Eastercon	£34.90	
	Intersection	£175.40	
	UFF @ Intersection	£100.00	
	1995 Novacon	£35.49	
	1996 Miscon	£50.00	
	Attitude (1997)	£30.98	
	UFF @ 1997 Eastercon	£50.00	
	1997 Novacon	£50.00	
	1998 Novacon	£89.50	
	1999 Eastercon	£152.25	£768.52
Voting fees:	1995 Aus → Eur	£103.00	
	1999 Eur → Aus	£390.00	£493.00
Miscellaneous donations:			£60.50
Sale of a trip report (John Foyster's):			£5.00
Bonds from 1999 candidates:			£30.00
Total Income:			£1907.02

Expenditure

Intersection hotel deposit for Ian & Karen Pender Gunn:	£70.00
Presentation packs of H G Wells commemorative stamps (signed by Brian Aldiss, for auction in Australia):	£6.60
Contribution to party supplies (1995):	£50.00
Postage to Australia (for 1996 Eastercon T-shirts, for subsequent auction):	£11.60
Paul Kincaid's air fare:	£958.30
Total expenditure:	£1096.50
Balance passed to incoming administrator:	£810.52

Irwin Hirsh

Photo: Paul Kincaid



◀ Irwin Hirsh

Irwin Hirsh was the Australian GUFF delegate in 1987. Nine chapters of his GUFF report have been published to date, in fanzines as various as *Attitude*, *Banana Wings* and *The Metaphysical Review*. I am very happy to include the latest chapter here.

The Lakes, Chester, Gwynedd & Hoarey Stories

Our schedule only allowed us a flying visit through the Lakes District. Five hours travelling along the Lakes' main drag – from Keswick down through to Windermere and Bowness; five hours of picture postcard views. The scenery was fantastic, dramatic, as if someone had taken the main body of England and compacted it down to something a twentieth of the size. Where elsewhere we would pass fields which would gently roll up to the hill in the distance, in the Lakes that peak would be far closer and there'd be rougher countryside in between.

The drama of the Lake District was added to by the weather. As we travelled south we drove into a beautiful, sunny light which picked up and enhanced the scenery before us. Behind us were dark clouds, which did their bit to emphasis the austere aspect of the Cumbrian Mountains. And sometimes ahead of us, sometimes behind us, was a most marvellous rainbow. Wherever we stopped, in Keswick, on the shore of Derwent Water, at a number of spots along Lake Windermere, we would do so in bright sunshine, but soon we'd be hunted down by those clouds and the rain they brought with them. Our time to move on in the Lakes was largely dictated by having the arch of that rainbow pass over us.

We travelled on to Chester, spending the night in a B&B. The next morning we walked over the Old Dee Bridge and spent a few hours in a quick exploration of the ancient walled city. We were taken by the sense of pride in the city, and the way in which its ramparts and buildings have been preserved. My favourite building was the Cathedral: with my first glimpse of its dusty red sandstone exterior I was in its spell, and it was to be one of my three favourites of the churches we would visit on my GUFF trip. Its darker stone created a majestic, eerie effect, both outside and in, and I was particularly taken with the elaborate carving of the screen around the choir stalls.

We would have stayed longer in Chester but we had a date to make, so late morning we hit the A55. Soon after the start of the journey we crossed a national border. Wendy and I had our passports ready, but all we met was a sign welcoming us to Wales. Cheated out of the desired stamp in our passports, we have no formal evidence that we ever set foot in

Wales. Be warned, what you are about to read could be all made up.

The journey along the A55 was standard, but on the A470 we entered the Snowdonia National Park and encountered the great scenery on offer. Looking at the map we noted a small spot in the middle that wasn't part of the National Park. We were intrigued to know what it was about Blaenau Ffestiniog that had it holding out against the surrounding hordes of natural, national splendour, and quite conveniently the town was right on our route. So impressed were we with what we could see of the National Park, which contains the highest mountain in all of Wales and England, that we'd forgotten that slate was the basis of the region's wealth in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Blaenau Ffestiniog was a town built from that wealth. There were mountains of grey slate, the waste from the mines, overhanging the town, sometimes in a menacing way, which held its own splendour.

Our point of rendezvous was the town of Harlech, where we were to spend a weekend with Dave and Hazel Langford in their holiday flat. From quite a distance out of the town we could see the Castle – built by England's Edward I as he conquered North Wales in the 1280s – signifying that we'd made the correct turn-off from the A470. Arriving at the Langford's flat we knocked on the door, but no one was home (or, only a deaf person was home) so we drove up into the village. Walking around the streets, checking out the stores and the cafes, I heard a group of kids conversing in Italian.

Italian? I did a double-take, and realised that, for the very first time, my ears was hearing Welsh as it is spoke. When we met up with the Langfords I described this scene to them, which greatly excited Hazel. She told me 70% of the population of the county of Gwynedd speak Welsh as their primary language, and she was pleased that what I'd heard could indicate that the percentage might grow. "I think that's a good sign, if school kids out on their own are speaking Welsh. It shows that the language is still alive." While Dave is Welsh, it is Hazel who knows the language, and a number of times over the weekend Dave would quiz Hazel about some aspect of Welsh grammar and linguistics.

That evening, over a meal of Hazel's patented and tasty Sludge, we compared our trips into Harlech. Dave and Hazel found themselves stuck driving behind an old VW van, with CND stickers plastered all over. "We looked out for Judith and Joseph, but not a sight," Dave said. "The van didn't have a muffler, so it made a lot of noise and bangs and all that. Obviously not believers in anti-pollution."

Wendy and I mentioned that from the A55 we had noticed a building set halfway up a hill and overgrown by trees. We would have kept driving on, but there were features of this building that demanded we stop for a longer look. The building looked like a castle but was not one with a strong defensive system: it would have been hard to stop artillery attacks from either atop the hill or from the surrounding trees. Today the easiest way to scale the walls would be to climb one of the surrounding trees and drop into the castle grounds from an overhanging branch. "All part of Edward the First's plan for taking over Wales," said Dave. "Getting his men to strategically plant seeds."

Dave and Hazel had only recently taken possession of their flat; so recent that they hadn't tried out any of the town's restaurants or pubs. Dave did add that to find the best pubs would require the expertise of Martin Hoare. "He walks into a pub and within five minutes he's a regular." We discussed plans for seeing the sights of west Gwynedd, and Martin Hoare's name came back into the conversation, Dave noting that they and Martin are not exactly compatible travelling companions. "We'd be admiring some fantastic scenery, and Martin wants to leave. 'Pubs opening in half an hour... can't waste valuable drinking time.'"

Further anecdotes were related, each of which had a mythic quality. Not having met Martin I wondered aloud if he really does exist. Could he instead have been conjured as a plot

device for Dave's tales and a second voice for Dave's fannish interests? Hazel assured me that Martin is real. "Yes, I guess he is," I allowed, "You're real, and Dave uses you as his anti-fannish voice."

Wendy, who doesn't read fanzines, wasn't sure what I meant. "In Dave's TAFF trip report, the impression I got of Hazel was of someone who spent a couple weeks travelling around the USA with her mouth wide open, aghast at the horror of what she was seeing."

"But that's how I was on that trip," Hazel said. "Dave didn't have to invent any of that."

We talked about other fannish characters. Dave wondered about the impressions people would gain from the work Greg Pickergill put in as the person in charge of the well-run Conspiracy Fan Room; a job which had made Greg respectable. "It's like the worst kid in school being made a prefect, in the hope of reforming his ways. Greg's an anarchist doing the committee heavy."

Hazel programmed our sightseeing schedule, and the next morning she was guiding us through Portmeirion. The brainchild of Clough Williams-Ellis and his dream to build a village "to my own fancy on my own chosen site" the town is, as Dave had put it "the fanatic of a real architect." A wander around is very easy on the eye: buildings painted in baby blue and pink. As a lot of the features at Portmeirion were rescued from buildings being pulled down around the country there's a wide mixture of styles – Oriental and Gothic, Neoclassical and Italian – it could have been a bizarre mix, but placed within Williams-Ellis's aim of a town that enhances the local surroundings, it all works.

As they went around pointing out features we could tell that Dave and Hazel enjoy watching the reaction this place brings on. We wandered down to the town's pier, which had an old wooden boat moored off it. As we got closer, I noticed that the boat was permanently attached to the pier. And just before stepping on I realised that there was no boat at all. A skilful paint job and fittings of a deck of a boat placed on a concrete slab had created the illusion. "The best boat in the world – it doesn't rock at all," Hazel cheerfully noted.

It's unoriginal to suggest the town would make an ideal location for films and television programmes, because more than enough producers have had just that thought. It's most notable as being the spot where a significant part of the sixties TV show *The Prisoner* was filmed, and as a result in fandom terms is the site for regular Prisonercons. Enter any of the buildings and it is obvious that Portmeirion was used only for show's exterior shots. In the years since our visit I've kept an eye on the listings of British conventions, hoping to see that a Prisonercon is to be held at Ealing Studios (or wherever) but not yet.

Upon entering Six of One, the Prisoner bookshop, Wendy and I witnessed a most amazing transformation. At Conspiracy Wendy and I had decided that the only reason Hazel attends conventions is to be on hand to ensure that a daily hangover cure is administered to Dave, but here, in this shop, Hazel was being all fannish. Her eyes light up, and she adopted a Goshwowoboy stance. There was some new stuff on the shelf and she eagerly went for it, and when Max, the proprietor, indicated that another couple of episodes had been put on videotape Hazel went crazy. "Have to have it. Another one for the collection."

"But you don't have a VCR," I said.

"That doesn't matter," Hazel said, as she reached for her purse.

From Portmeirion we drove onto Porthmadog, had lunch, and walked around to the train station. Next on the Hazel Langford Tour was a trip to Blaenau Ffestiniog and back on a narrow gauge train. The railway was built to transport slate from the mines down to the port; since being reopened by a gang of train enthusiasts in 1955 it has existed for the likes of Dave, Hazel, Wendy, and I.

When the train pulled into the station Dave rushed off to try and get some first class seats

in the first class glass-roofed observation carriage – which was built for the better class of slate – but he was beaten to the punch there, so we settled down in one of the standard carriages. The train took off and soon we were chugging through some stunning scenery. The journey starts by the seaside and goes through green farmlands, woodlands, open country and into the grey slate mine territory. Over the last two-thirds of the trip the rise is quite steep but the little engine makes light work of the job, helped by the various twists and turns along the way. The slowest the train goes is at Dduallt, where the track took us through a tight spiral so we could gain a height of about 11 meters to rise above a reservoir water level.

Our carriage had rows of seats that go straight across the width of the train, leaving no aisle. This took something away from the attraction of train travel: the opportunity to wander

around the vehicle. That night I learnt of another disadvantage with the lack of an aisle. We were all writing postcards, and in a card to Martin Hoare Dave noted that the arrangement made it extremely difficult to get to the dining car for a beer.

The following morning we made a return visit to Blaenau Ffestiniog, this time by car. We saw more of this dot in the middle of a National Park than we saw of the Park itself. I guess this is symbolic of the importance of the slate industry to the area, and is reflected in this visit being undertaken so we can visit a slate mine. The town has two mines that are open to the public: The Gloddfa Ganol Slate Mine and Llechwedd Slate Caverns. The former boasts that it's the biggest in the world, but Hazel saw little merit in a visit: "I'm rather dubious about a slate mine which proclaims its restaurant and craft shop in big letters while its tours get minor billing."

After paying our entrance money, and being fitted out with hardhats, we joined the queue for the next tour. As we waited Hazel asked us if we have any problems going in caves. "No worries," we

reassured her.

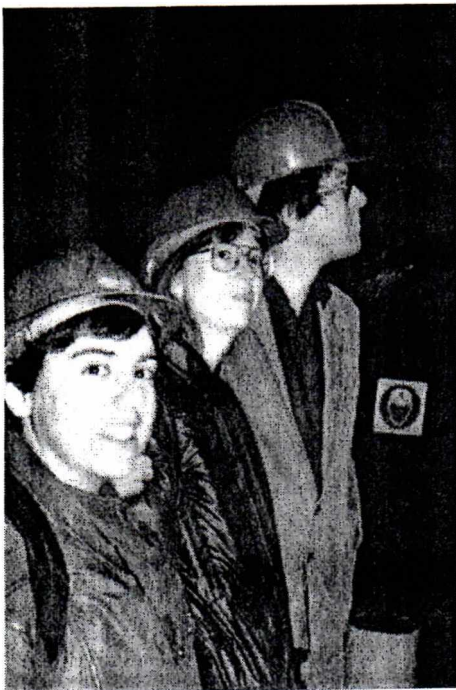
"It's us tall people who'll have the problem," said Dave, "Wendy will happily walk around upright." And with that he did an excellent imitation of Wendy's walk and toothy grin.

Sure enough Dave was right. As Wendy put it: "Every time I heard the thud of hardhat hitting stone I turned around and it had been Dave."

There are two separate tours of the mine, one involves a tramway into a mountain, the other a steep inclined railway into a deep mine. Each tour offers a different perspective; the former showing the history of the mine and how slate is worked, the latter describing the life of the miners in earlier days. Parts of the tours make use of tapes of someone acting as a 12-year-old miner from the Victorian era. The content was good, though I could've done without the chosen style of presentation. I'd much rather have straight narration, without all the added drama. This blight is more than made up for by the scale of the place, with its large chambers, a beautiful underground lake, and an excellent demonstration of how slate is split.

The tour ended and it was time for lunch. "After finding out what it's like to be a Welsh

Photo: Irwin Hirsh



▲ Wendy, Hazel and Dave in the Llechwedd Slate Caverns

miner," Dave said, "I need to continue the learning and go to the miners pub." And so he led us to The Miners' Arms.

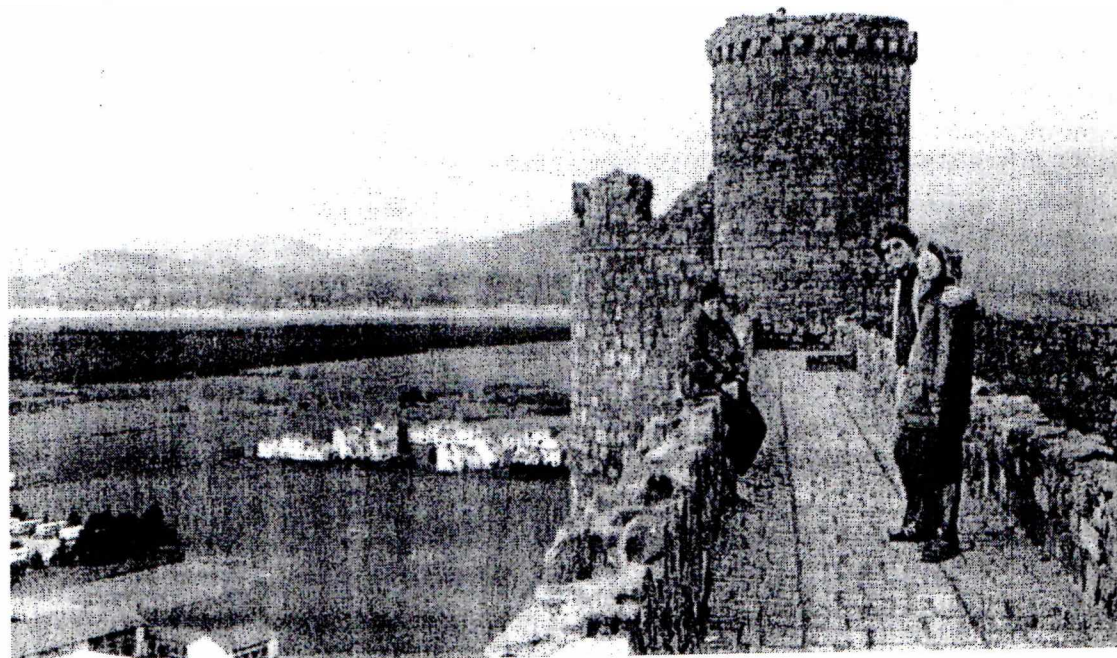
Sometime during that meal Wendy noticed Dave's quickness at drinking his pint, while I sauntered over my half-pint. "It's what comes of living in the same city as Martin Hoare since 1976," Dave explained.

In leaving Blaenau Ffestiniog we were saying farewell to a town with a most marvellous name. Hazel, particularly, took great delight in pronouncing the name, all her love of languages came to the fore as she wrapped her tongue around the Welsh syllables. Then we travelled on to Caernarfon.

In Caernarfon we spent the afternoon wandering around its Castle, another built by Edward I in the 1280s. We had a fine time exploring a selection of towers and walls, and getting a good feeling for its qualities as a fortress. As in indication of Edward's strength the castle showed how the Welsh would've had a hard time fighting back. We visited a number of exhibitions within the Castle, which emphasised the Englishness of the place. One exhibition was about the English chaps who have been given the title Prince of Wales, while another was about Edwards I's Welsh campaigns and the castles he built. I asked Dave and Hazel about Welsh Nationalism and its prospects. Hazel told me that it's not as strong as Scottish Nationalism, partly because the English have had a longer presence in Wales and partly because economically Wales is not as strong as Scotland.

The next morning we continued in the footsteps of Edward I and his conquest of Wales when we checked out Harlech Castle, which is in a most magnificent setting, perched on a crag overlooking Tremadog Bay with the Snowdonia mountains in the distance. I stood atop the Castle's western wall, looking out to the sea. As I did so I was caught by a memory of an

Photo: Irwin Hursh



▲ Wendy, Dave and Hazel atop Harlech Castle, looking down (sort of) onto 'Lego'

etching that shows the sea lapping up almost to the foot of the castle walls. This confused me, but Dave put my mind at ease: in the centuries since the castle was built the sea had receded a kilometre to the west. Scanning the land and beach below, trying to imagine them as a seabed 50 metres below sea level, I remarked that the Langford flat looks like a toy.

"That's why the people of the old town call our estate 'Lego'," Hazel told me.

Our time in Harlech was almost up and all that remained was for us to accompany Dave and Hazel to the local supermarket. Hazel had a small list of items required for that night's meal, and as we approached the supermarket she asked Dave to get an onion. Entering the building Dave surveyed the scene, and took a few steps toward the off-license.

"An onion, Dave!"

As he did an about-face, Dave mumbled something about hoping Martin Hoare doesn't hear about this.

Dave, Wendy, and I wandered around the supermarket, chatting and looking for onions. Eventually we found them in a tray that had been placed at an angle. Dave reached out and picked up an onion. And an avalanche began. There was only a slight movement at first, an onion fell to the floor, followed by another. Then three rolled forward, and all hell broke loose. Dave's hand shot back and forth across the plane in short, sharp movements, trying to stop the momentum. And it worked. Dave relaxed, only to find that this had been only a temporary halt in the proceedings.

By the time the last onion had hit the floor Hazel was on the scene. She looked around, shook her head from side to side, said, "At least you made Wendy laugh," and just kept walking.

"It was like being attacked by klingons," Dave said as we helped him clean up the mess.

It was at that point that Wendy and I bade our farewells, got into our car, and began our drive to Birmingham.

Three days later we were back in London, timing our arrival for the Wellington meet. I was standing chatting to Mike Dickinson when I heard Wendy call me. She was standing next to a chap I didn't recognise. "This is Martin Hoare," she yelled over the din. I stood there for a moment, wondering if I really wanted to go over and say hi. In my mind was the idea that to actually meet Martin Hoare would be to take something away from Dave's stories. Then I realised that just seeing the chap in the flesh has spoilt the myth. "Excuse me," I said to Mike and began mentally rehearsing my first line to Martin. But he proved that he could read my mind and beat me to the punch. "It's all lies."

Bruce Gillespie

Photo: Maureen Kincaid Speller



▲ Bruce Gillespie

Bruce Gillespie was the Fan Guest of Honour at Aussiecon 3, an honour he much deserved. He has been involved in Australian fandom since the 1960s, and his fanzines, *SF Commentary* and *The Metaphysical Review* are about as good as you could hope to get. He was one of the founders of Norstrilia Press, and is the literary executor of George Turner. And he still insists he hasn't done enough to justify being Fan GoH ... a claim he repeats in his Guest of Honour speech, which I am delighted to be able to publish here.

The Elder Ghods, The Johnny Come Lately, And The Babes In Arms

Members of the Aussiecon Three Board and Committee, fellow fans:
On a summer's day, about three and a half years ago, I received a letter from the Bidding Committee for this convention — Aussiecon III, the 57th World Science Fiction Convention. I read that letter. It fluttered to the ground from my paralysed hand. Even I was stunned into stricken silence. That piece of paper was a letter from Jean Weber inviting me to be the Fan Guest of Honour at Aussiecon Three if Australia won the bid.

My reaction then, as now: 'Why me? Surely somebody has made a terrible mistake. They've got the wrong person. What did I ever do to *them*?'

There were good reasons to ask an Australian to be Fan Guest of Honour. Our Fan Guests of Honour in 1975 were two Canadians, and our Fan Guest of Honour in 1985 was American. Don Tuck, the Australian Guest of Honour at Aussiecon I, not only didn't turn up at the convention but immediately left fandom altogether. Since then no overseas world convention has asked an Australian to be Fan Guest of Honour. It was the right time to show the local colours.

But the burning questions remain. 'Why do we have to put up with Gillespie, whose speeches set new standards of boredom, and whose last known joke was in a fanzine in 1972, and only David Grigg ever noticed he'd committed it?' I am the person for whom Garrison Keillor wrote his Rights for Shy People. There are scads of Australian fans who give funny, entertaining talks. Many others can tell you in great detail about the secrets of the universe or the secret handshake. Those people would even *enjoy* being up here instead of me.

You can't even blame the *current* Worldcon committee for the fact that I'm here. I was selected by the Bidding Committee. As soon as Australia won the bid, the Bidding Committee dissolved itself, and left everything in the hands of the Board.

However, I do qualify for this position in one important way — I'm sufficiently ancient.

I've been around fandom for thirty-two years: since the second week in December 1967. It is, after all, an unwritten rule that Guests of Honour at a World convention should have been a pro or a fan for twenty-five years or longer. Also, I've been around *continuously* for all of that time.

There remains one problem — I must have been selected by people whose sense of Australian fan history is faulty. I am not, indeed, an elder ghod of fandom, despite physical appearances. A major stream of this convention is called Fanhistoricon, during which the real story of Australian fandom will be told. Fan historians such as John Foyster, Leigh Edmonds or Chris Nelson can and will tell you that I am a mere stripling, a johnny-come-lately on the Australian fan scene. All those Australians who joined fandom after me — after 1967 — are, of course, mere babes in arms.

I've told you why I should not be here. Who, then, should be standing here? Such a person should have been around even longer than I have, and contributed far more than I have. I offer you my little list.

In making up this list, I jotted down people without whom *I* would not be here, and more importantly, without whom the first Aussiecon, in 1975, could never have been held in Australia. Who, after all, could have imagined in the 1930s, when a small group of teenagers met each other in Sydney, that one day Australia might be able to hold not just one world convention but three of them? That early Sydney group included people who are only names to me. They included Vol Molesworth, Bert Castellari, Bill Veney, and Eric and Ted Russell. I've never met them, although fan historian Chris Nelson has interviewed two of them. I've seen their faces in photos published in Ron Clarke's *The Mentor*, when Ron reprinted Vol Molesworth's 'A History of Australian Fandom 1935-1963', which is actually a history of Sydney fandom.

To judge from the photos, Bill Veney was a big, bluff cheery sort of man. Molesworth is rarely shown smiling. They don't seem to have liked each other much. *Nobody* in Sydney fandom in the early years seems to have liked each other much. They held tumultuous club meetings, full of points of order and resignations, with splinter groups stomping off into the night. This whole group, with schisms and disputes rarely exceeded ten people.

In 1940, a teenager named Graham Stone joined the Sydney group, about the time Don Wollheim and Frederik Pohl from America suggested that the members of the Sydney Group call themselves the Futurians, the same name as the main New York fan group of the same period. During World War II, it was impossible to obtain paper supplies on which to publish fanzines. Nearly all the members of the Sydney group went off to war. In 1947, five of them met for the first time in five years, and Sydney fandom was reborn.

By 1947, Graham Stone was an important part of the Sydney scene, and has remained so ever since. The Futurians still exist. Graham Stone is still alive. His fifty-nine years of continuous activity should surely be honoured.

Yet if we offered such an honour to Graham Stone, it is probable that he would not accept. Sometime during the 1950s, Stone fell out spectacularly with the rest of Australian fans, especially those in the rapidly growing Melbourne SF Group. Nobody in Melbourne can remember what the dispute was about, but Graham Stone will still can. He will not reveal why he still considers Melbourne fandom as a dreadful conspiracy against him. But the barrier was set up, and has never been removed.

When in the 1960s Melbourne became the centre of fan activity in Australia, Graham refused to have anything to do with that movement or *Australian Science Fiction Review*, the magazine that created that movement. In 1970, when Syncon I took place, the first Sydney convention for many years, Graham Stone did not attend, although some of the Futurians

did so. The Futurians still meet, and probably always will. But no news of their activities escapes south of the Murray River, or indeed anywhere north, west or south of Sydney.

A couple of years ago Elaine and I attended the birthday gathering of a non-fannish friend of ours. We were talking for about half an hour to an archaeologist named Tim, who lives in Fitzroy. We mentioned our interest in science fiction. He said: 'My father is very interested in science fiction.' Tim's name, it turned out, was Tim Stone. He is Graham Stone's stepson. We mentioned that his father had a reputation throughout Australia as being one of our most disputatious fans. Tim looked shocked. 'That can't be,' he said. 'My father is the most gentle of men. Totally devoted to science fiction, of course.' What is the real truth about Graham Stone? Only Ron Clarke, another Sydneysider who won't venture south of the Murray, could tell us. Whatever the truth, all hail to Graham Stone's nearly sixty years of SF activity.

The second name on my list is Mervyn R. Binns, known everywhere as Merv Binns. Fortunately, he has received the A. Bertram Chandler Award, but the fact remains that he should have been selected as a Worldcon Fan Guest of Honour many years ago. Since 1954, he has been vitally important to Australian fandom. He should certainly have been treated better than being denied an entry in the recent so-called *Australian Science Fiction Encyclopedia*, since much of the rest of Australian science fiction activity could not have happened without his efforts.

I first became aware of Merv in the early 1960s. With my eleven shillings pocket money per week, I haunted the book shops of Melbourne in search of science fiction magazines and books that I could afford. I quickly realised that only one shop, McGill's Newsagency, had the really good stuff. Not only did it have the full range of British publications, but it even sold some American books. One of these was a very cheap copy of the American hardback edition of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, which had just won the Hugo Award. I still don't know how ten copies were sitting on the counter at McGill's, but I bought one of them, and it is still one of my most precious possessions.

For many years, every SF book sold at McGill's contained a little slip of paper advertising the Melbourne Science Fiction Club. I couldn't attend because meetings were on Wednesday nights and I was commuting from Melton, and later Bacchus Marsh, and the last train home was at 6.20 at night.

It didn't take long to realise that the manager of McGill's, the rather abrupt and not always cheerful man behind the counter, was the person who put those slips of paper inside the books. At the time I did not realise that he, Merv Binns, also controlled a much greater empire than McGill's. It was the Melbourne Science Fiction Club.

In 1966, Merv also began to sell at McGill's Newsagency duplicated magazines that I recognised as fanzines only because I had been reading Lin Carter's column about fandom in *If* magazine. In August 1966, I bought *Australian Science Fiction Review*, No. 2. It cost 30 cents, and I had to think carefully before spending such a large amount on a fanzine. From then on for a year I bought *ASFR* every month at McGill's. When the publication schedule of *ASFR* began to falter, I complained to the manager. After two years I wrote to the editor of the magazine.

As I became more and more involved with fandom itself, I discovered the importance of Merv Binns to everybody in Australia interested in science fiction. He was one of a group of people, mainly teenagers, who formed the Melbourne Science Fiction Group in 1954. The leader of that group, Race Mathews, has written a lively account of those early days of what became the Melbourne SF Club. At various times, other members of the club were more active than Merv, but most of those people disappeared during the fifties and sixties. Some of

them, such as Race Mathews and Dick Jenssen, have rejoined fandom during the last five years or so. Race Mathews is best known these days as a distinguished politician. Dick Jenssen (or Dr Martin Ditmar Jenssen) is remembered in the Ditmar Awards, which are hotly disputed year after year. Bill Wright, who dropped out during the 1980s, has recently returned to vigorous fanzine publishing.

During the 1950s, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club kept moving premises. Editors of *Etherline*, the Club's magazine, came and went. Although there were Australian SF conventions in the early 1950s, first in Sydney and then in Melbourne, none was held between 1958 and 1966. During that lean time, Merv kept the Club going.

During the 1950s, much of the appeal of the Club was that it was one of the few places in Australia where SF readers would obtain supplies of their reading matter. During the War, the Australian Government stopped the importation from America of all non-essential supplies, including magazines and books. The only American SF that arrived here was in British editions. The only authentic American SF magazines in the country arrived here as ballast in ships. I've been told that Mr Franklin from Franklin's Books in Melbourne bought these at Princes Pier. In turn, the American magazines gravitated to the Club, where members could read and swap these rare treasures. The Government ban on spending American dollars lasted until 1959.

I've asked quite a few members of the Club when it moved to its most famous quarters, 19 Somerset Place, where it occupied the upstairs bulk store of McGill's itself. The answers I received ranged from 1955 to 1965. Nobody, not even Merv, could remember the right date. John Foyster says 1962. New Zealander Mervyn Barrett, who was living in Melbourne at the time, remembers the date as April 1961. Whatever the truth of the matter, the move to Somerset Place took place long before I joined fandom.

As I've said, the Club room was originally a McGill's bulk store. It had a high ceiling and was very roomy. There Merv created a haven for all those people who sought solace from football-crazed, six-o'-clock-swilled suburbanised Melbourne. The Club rooms contained the Melbourne SF Club library, accumulated since the early 1950s; a duplicator, ink and duplicating paper; a table tennis table, cooking facilities, a chess set, comfortable old leather theatre seats, and projection facilities. You entered the place by riding on one of the last hydraulic lifts in Melbourne. The lift had broken down by the time I discovered the club. By then the only access was a very narrow wooden staircase.

At the end of 1970, one of the members of the Club became concerned that the Melbourne Fantasy Film Group was regularly showing 1930s and 1940s films on nitrate stock. Nitrate stock was notoriously unstable. If any one of those films had spontaneously burst into flame, nobody could have escaped alive from the Club rooms. The Club member reported this to the Melbourne City Council, and the Club was closed immediately.

For once in his life, Merv did not despair. He had already been thinking about leaving McGill's and setting up his own shop. In early 1971, with the help of a loan from Ron Graham from Sydney, he set up Space Age Books in Swanston Street. For the time being, the Club's library was moved to a flat rented by Paul Stevens and John Breden. Today, Merv is best remembered for that heyday of Space Age Books, which lasted until 1985. It was one of the first specialist SF book shops in the world, and for many years probably the largest. Many of us were quick to point out the unwise business practices that Merv made at Space Age, especially in the matter of security. For the first and only time in my life, I stole a book. I took it from the shelf, meant to pay for it, then discovered it in my bag when I got home. Next day I went back and slipped it back onto the shelf. Nobody had noticed.

We also remember the value of Space Age Books as a centre of the best years of

Melbourne fandom. If somebody can resurrect the first Aussiefan film, made in 1972 by John Litchen, you will see both the interior and exterior of the first Space Age Bookshop at 317 Swanston Street, plus pictures of many Melbourne fans as they appeared then — slim and sporting a lot of long hair.

How, then, does Merv's long fan career form a connection between 1954, when a few teenagers met in each others' homes, and this convention? The short answer is: by being there. The long answer is: by selling *Australian Science Fiction Review* at McGill's. That's the fanzine that I began to buy regularly in 1966 and is the reason why I became an SF fan rather than merely a reader. *ASFR*, as it was always called, was edited by John Bangsund, and during its first year much of it was written by John Bangsund as well as John Foyster and Lee Harding under their own names and various pseudonyms.

In *ASFR* No. 2, the editor described himself and his lifestyle:

Last weekend my wife and I moved from our flat at Coburg to my old place at Northclump, salubrious suburb, sometimes called 'New South Rome' by the cynical, situated on the slopes of an extinct volcano and bounded by the noble Merri Creek and mighty Yarra River, a suburb called 'home' by the illustrious Bernard O'Dowd, the great Joe Fogg, and now, once more, by myself. In the rapture of my homecoming I managed to mislay some letters which should have appeared here — or they may be irretrievably lost in the wildernesses of Western Victoria, where I spent the last four days conning humble shopkeepers into buying my employer's publications and the last three nights typing stencils in motels en route. (At a guess I'd say I'd be one of the few reps on the road who travels with an electric typewriter, a pile of sf, and selected volumes of Hardy, Peacock and Hazlitt in the boot of the car.)

John Bangsund was a man of wit and perception, I thought. Better still, although his magazine is devoted to SF, he and his writers read much besides SF. This was somebody I would like to meet. The other contributors to the magazine also sounded interesting. I would also like to meet the other writers, including such mysterious figures as K. U. F. Widdershins and Alan Reynard. They were personalities, not merely reviewers or critics. *ASFR* was not only serious about science fiction — treating it as a branch of literature instead of some ghetto artifact — but also had that special quality, which I later could be called 'fannish'.

In 1966 I was a bit more serious about SF than I am now. A strength of *ASFR*'s reviewers was that they had not met the writers whose books they reviewed. Since every famous SF writer was fair game, many of them began to send letters to the magazine. In 1968, Samuel Delany wrote to John Bangsund:

The Review — a number of people around here have started referring to it simply as 'The Review' (indicating that there is no other, perhaps?) — has become one of the more intriguing voices in the dialogue of current SF.

In No. 10, George Turner, a new contributor, put himself on the map by laying a depth charge under Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man*, one of SF's sacred icons. *ASFR* gained Hugo nominations in 1967 and 1968. And in 1968, John Bangsund drew a cartoon of the spire from the Melbourne Arts Centre on a letter he was sending to Andy Porter in New York, and scribbled as a bit of an afterthought, 'Australia in 75'. Andy Porter took the



Photo: Paul Kincaid

John Bangsund ▲

suggestion seriously. So did many other Australian and American fans. During 1970, the Bid was on to gain the right to hold the 1975 World Convention in Australia.

When I actually met John Bangsund, I suspect I appeared to him as that ultra-enthusiastic fool whose articles he had agreed to publish. I was surprised because John Bangsund in person turned out to be diffident, even rather shy. In person, Lee Harding was more like the John Bangsund I expected. During 1968, John underwent a year of increasing emotional and financial difficulties. *ASFR* was about to fold. Lee Harding, John Foyster and Leigh Edmonds put an enormous amount of work into producing the first two issues of my magazine *SF Commentary*. John Bangsund taught me how to use a duplicator, and for a time I tried to emulate some of the best features of *ASFR*. Not even the Second Series of *ASFR*, published during the 1980s, could do that.

For many overseas fans, John Bangsund disappeared from sight in the early 1970s. However, he continued to publish in various apas. Australian fandom would have been entirely different without him. And he should be standing here instead of me.

But what about John Foyster, you might say? Why wasn't he chosen as Fan Guest of Honour at the convention? He seems to enjoy giving talks such as this. He's good at humour, which I'm not. Also, he's been around much longer than I have, and is the link between all the people I've mentioned so far.

John Foyster learned about fanzines and fandom from John Baxter — the same bloke who today writes film biographies and lives in France. Foyster met Baxter at Baxter's family home at Bowral, a New South Wales country town. During the same weekend they both met Damien Broderick, a teenager who was at the time training to be a priest. As John writes:

On the Monday morning John Baxter and I set off to catch a train to Sydney. We were about halfway to the station when the ground began to vibrate wildly. When the earthquake was over, we ran back to the Baxters' house to see if there was any damage. There was, as I recall, relatively little damage — a crack or two of a very minor nature. And so we turned back for the station and took the train to Sydney.

How better to start your fannish career than with an earthquake!

By the mid 1960s, John Baxter had stopped publishing fanzines, even as John Foyster began publishing them. His early titles included *Satura*, *The Gryphon* and *The Wild Colonial Boy*. Soon after, John Foyster met John Bangsund and Lee Harding, which led to the publication of Lee Harding's fanzine *Canto 1*. John Bangsund was not much interested in science fiction, but he gave the impression that he might enjoy publishing his own magazine.

In Easter 1966, John Foyster organised the first Australian convention for eight years. Held at the very crowded Melbourne SF Club rooms in Somerset Place, it generated the feeling that Australian fandom had undergone a renaissance. Kevin Dillon was so moved by the fannish significance of the event that he walked down the aisle and placed in John Baxter's hand a twenty pound note in order to set up the next Australian convention. Twenty pounds would be worth about \$400 today.

The most important event of the 1966 convention occurred during the Business Session. It was decided that Australia needed a new national magazine. John Baxter said at the time:



Photo: Paul Kincaid

John Foyster ▲

'What we're thinking of is an amateur magazine, circulated amongst people who are interested in science fiction, and probably containing articles and reviews and stories, perhaps.' Lee Harding named John Bangsund as the person who should edit it, and John said yes. Lee Harding and John Foyster joined the team that would produce it monthly. It was, of course, *Australian Science Fiction Review*.

Although the idea of Australia in 75 was hatched by John Bangsund in Melbourne and Andy Porter in New York, it was John Foyster who led discussions about the Bid at both the first Syncon in 1970 and the Easter convention of the same year. John had picked a committee to investigate the possibility of holding a world convention in Australia. During 1970 and 1971, every fanzine publisher in Australia churned duplicators in order to raise interest in the idea. In 1973, Australia won the bid.

I find it difficult to catalogue all of John Foyster's many achievements within fandom. In 1966, after a detective pilgrimage, he discovered the true identity of Cordwainer Smith just a week before the news came that Dr Paul Linebarger had died, and that Dr Linebarger had written SF as Cordwainer Smith. John's tribute to Cordwainer Smith appeared first in *ASFR* No. 11, and has been reprinted several times since then. John's two critical fanzines *exploding madonna* and *Journalist of Omphalistic Epistemology*, featured writers such as Samuel Delany, James Blish, Sten Dahlskog, Brian Aldiss, George Turner and many others, although its print run was only 15 copies per issue. His many other fanzines have included *Chunder!* and *Norstrilian News*, which gave Carey and me the idea of calling our small press Norstrilia Press.

In August 1970, John began the Nova Mob, Melbourne's SF discussion group. It took the entire first meeting to decide on this name. The Nova Mob has kept going, with one or two lapses, ever since. The format has remained the same: one person will give a paper on some aspect of SF, but the rest of the evening is social. No dues are paid; we depend on the good graces of the people at whose homes we meet. Our Thirtieth Anniversary is next year.

John was also the Chairman of Aussiecon II during its early stages. In 1986, he gathered together a collective to publish the Second Series of *Australian Science Fiction Review*. In 1987, he moved to Adelaide, where he began Critical Mass, the Adelaide equivalent of the Nova Mob.

The trouble with reducing a person's career to a catalogue is that it gives the impression that John Foyster is a paragon of virtue. Not so. I have at home a photo of John, taken in 1963 before he grew a beard. The beard masks a sardonic smile. John prefers the role of devil's advocate because occasionally he doesn't mind siding with the devil. He has, for instance, spent the last thirty years denigrating most of my own fanzine efforts, which has only made me more determined to keep going. However, on the day when I was most deeply in trouble, in late 1975, it was John Foyster who turned up that day at the door and sat down at the same table for a couple of hours, saying little, but providing just the support I needed at the time.

Let John Bangsund say it best, as he always does:

There is a certain daunting aspect to John Foyster, in person and in print. He does not suffer fools gladly — not from any malice or lack of essential humanity, but simply from having more important things on hand. This shows itself in a certain abruptness of manner — perhaps aloofness would be a better word — which is easily misunderstood by lesser mortals, i. e. most of us. In his writings he expects you to make the necessary logical leaps from one thought or sentence to the next ... — and if you don't do this, that's tough cheese and you should be reading something else. Foyster the merciless is well known in fandom — perhaps more so overseas than here. [However] John's fandom is the pure old-time 'just a goddamn hobby' kind. Not the crass commercialism of those who charge money for their fanzines; not

for him the sad hang-up of those who have nothing else in life except fandom. . . It's just lucky for us that John's way of life, in its enviable totality, includes a deep involvement with fandom. We are richer for it.

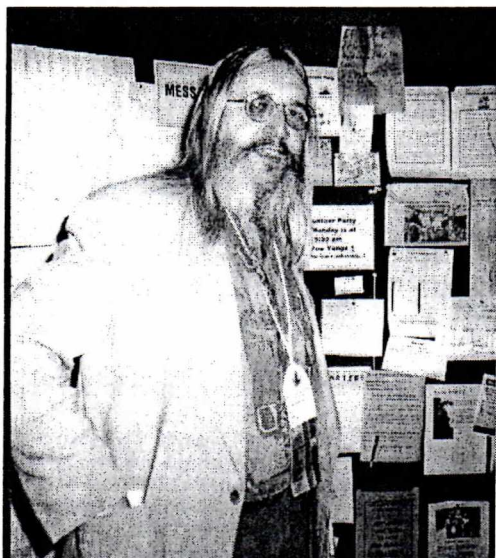


Photo: Paul Kincaid

▲ Leigh Edmonds

In describing some of the people who should be here instead of me, I realise that I have still left out many names. 'What about...' I hear you cry!

What about Leigh Edmonds? He has to be on the list. Leigh began ANZAPA, the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary last year. He published several of Australia's best fanzines, especially *Rataplan*, *Fanew Sletter* and *The Notional*. *Rataplan* was nominated for a Hugo in 1985. Leigh Edmonds was my co-organiser on the only convention for which I was ever responsible. It was called Bring Your Own Con. It had no program, and no guests of honour. Each day took place at a different venue, including the Botanic Gardens and the huge back yard of my parents' then residence at East Preston.

Leigh enjoyed fandom back then, and was one of our few producers of fannish fanzines, but in recent years has given the impression it is rather less important than his career. A pity. I'd give a lot to see a new issue of *Rataplan*.

What about Ron Clarke? Ron Clarke is one of the few remaining Sydney fans. He began publishing fanzines in the early 1960s, even before *ASFR* began. Ron was still at school when he published the first issue of *The Mentor*, and it has kept going ever since. John Foyster extols the virtues of *The Mentor* more enthusiastically than I do, but I wouldn't be without it. Over the years Ron has published much valuable material, especially long-running columns by Bert Chandler, Buck Coulson and Mae Strelkov. He was one of the last fans in contact with Peter Singleton, the famous British fan who wrote from all his columns and letters from a mental hospital.

What about...? What about...? The cavalcade of names goes on.

What about Robin Johnson, perhaps not the only native Tasmanian with a pukka British accent, but a startling figure to meet at an Australian convention in 1968. During the early seventies Robin was famous for being able to hold a conversation, listen to the phone, type a stencil, listen to a music tape and watch television — all at the same time. No wonder he called his own fanzine *The Butterfly Mind*. After he moved to Melbourne, he became Chairman of the committee to run Aussiecon I, and did a brilliant job. This brilliance took its toll. Towards the end of the last day of the convention Robin was found wandering down the middle of Bourke Street. He says he does not even remember that last day.

What about the women fans, you might say? Where are they on my list? I joined Melbourne fandom at a time when the only women who turned up at conventions or club meetings were the wives or girlfriends of male fans. The situation had been so one-sided in the fifties in Sydney that there was a bun fight when a woman actually asked to join the Futurians. By the late 1960s, there were plenty of women SF readers out there, but the Melbourne SF Club rooms frightened them off. The three SF widows of the time, Diane

Bangsund, Carla Harding and Elizabeth Foyster, none of whom now married to the fans of the same surname, gave a theatrical presentation at the 1971 New Year's convention. This was a wonderfully rude picture of the lives of SF fans at the time.

There were certainly famous women fans in Sydney fandom in the forties and fifties, including Norma Heming, who died young, and Norma Williams, who was writing to fanzines as recently as the 1980s. Only one woman, Margaret Duce, is remembered as having joined the Melbourne Science Fiction Club during the fifties. She disappeared during the sixties, then reappeared during the 1970s with a new name, Helena Roberts. She was the official photographer for Aussiecon I, and also photographed Aussiecon II. She still has large albums of those photos. After her husband Kelvin Roberts died, she began to rejoin fandom, and two years ago she married Merv Binns, to our great rejoicing. It would have been quite right if Helena had been chosen to be Fan Guest of Honour this year.

However, it was Shayne McCormack who became the first female fannish recruit of the 1970s. She and Sabina Heggie attended the 1970 Easter Convention. They were the first *Star Trek* fans to make contact with the mainstream of fandom. Sabina disappeared after a year or two, but Shayne began to publish some excellent fanzines. With Bob Smith, she organised Syncon II in 1972. It was the first hotel convention held in Australia, and was a great success, showing that a world convention could be held in Australia. By 1975, about half of the members of Aussiecon I were women.

And there's another name. Bob Smith. I could talk for half an hour about his contribution to Australian fandom, especially his famous carousing expeditions to Melbourne from Puckapunyal Army Camp during the early sixties. And what about Paul Stevens, who invented the Paul Stevens Show and the Golden Caterpillar Awards and wrote some of the funniest pieces that have appeared in Australian fanzines? The list of distinguished elder ghods of Australian fandom is impressive.

I've left one candidate to last. His name is also Bruce Gillespie, although he often appears as 'brg' — that's small letters, not capitals. He bears little resemblance to the person you see in front of you, although he inhabits the same body. When he sits down in front of the keyboard, he is debonair and literate and all powerful and even sometimes slightly witty. None of the dullness and shyness you see before you. As the Gillespie fingers begin clicking across the keyboard, the magic essence of fandom descends through him. Editorials and articles pour through the keyboard onto disk. The contributions from great fannish correspondents from all over the world begin to form a glorious pattern on the page. A fanzine takes shape. It might be *SF Commentary*, which began in 1969, has been a bit sick lately, but will be resurrected Real Soon Now. It might be *The Metaphysical Review*, which began in 1984, never features a word about metaphysics, but is powered by a great enthusiasm for music and books and fannishness and travel and joy and sorrow — what I call 'personal journalism'. It might be little magazine called **brg**, for the members of ANZAPA, or it might be *The Great Cosmic Donut of Life* for the members of Acnestis. It might be a letter, or more often these days, an email. Whatever it is, it's the product of the Bruce Gillespie you can only meet on paper, the one who loves publishing as much now as he did when he typed his first stencil in that blindingly hot summer of 1968 when George Turner said he'd send me some reviews and John Bangsund gave me the *ASFR* files and John and Leigh and Lee duplicated and collated the first issue, and the letters poured in and they've kept pouring in ever since, and... Thank you, everybody. Thanks to you and the Aussiecon Three Committee for putting up with my ravings tonight. It's been a wonderful and very short thirty-two years. Enjoy the rest of the convention.

Paul Kincaid

Photo: Justin Ackroyd



In its short history, *GUFFaw* has already printed extracts from the GUFF reports of Eve Harvey and, earlier this issue, Irwin Hirsh. Now it's my turn, with Chapter One of my own trip report. At this stage, I've no idea how many chapters there will be in total, but be warned, Chapter One only just gets me as far as Australia.

◀ Maureen Kincaid Speller and Paul Kincaid

The Coriolis Effect**1: Horror Stories**

Dave the plasterer arrives first, bang on 8.00. 'Morning. Packed yet?' Then Clive the carpenter. 'Lovely day. Done your packing?' A little later Peter the painter turns up. 'All packed, are you?' Terry, the labourer, doesn't say much. He doesn't need to.

Yes, of course we've done the packing. Last night. Most of it, anyway. There's still a mass of stuff cluttering the bed, with no immediately obvious way of getting it all into the bags available. But that's the least of our problems. There's the trip to Sainsbury's, for a start, to buy 66 cans of cat food, enough to keep the brutes fed for three weeks. Then Richard turns up. He's the building contractor, so he's nominally in charge of all the work that's going on, the work that's going to keep going on while we're away, isn't it, Richard? Of course it is, he promises, he's not going to take any of the men off this job just because we're not around. 'Captain Laptop'. That's what his men call him behind his back, because he'd rather disappear into his office and play with his computer than come out on site and pretend he really knows what he's talking about. He's also afraid of Maureen because she knows what things like soffits and fascias are (her father was in the building trade), only she's a girlie so she's not supposed to know stuff like that. Our conversation, therefore, has a peculiarly triangular shape. Richard talks to me. I look to Maureen, because all of this is like a foreign language as far as I'm concerned. Maureen answers. Richard addresses his next remark to me.

In among everything else, there are three big, disruptive, messy jobs that we want doing while we're away: the skylight at the top of the stairs needs to be replaced, a new skylight needs to be fitted in Maureen's study, and the unsupported chimney and fireplace at the back of the house need taking down. Now, these will be done before we get back? Of course. We try to feel confident. Anyway, assuming he'll be true to his word, all of this means in turn that we must hurriedly load all our philosophy books, nut books, comedy books, travel books, maps, etc into a seemingly endless supply of banana boxes and heave them up to another room, out of the way. Then I need to go into town to get cash for the taxi. And Maureen has umpteen Novacon letters to write, and an apa contribution, and lord knows what else. And I

need to disinter a stack of addresses for postcards and stuff and feed them into my PalmPilot. And help, there's still this pile of stuff waiting on the bed, needing to be squeezed into cases that look smaller every time we go back to them. We shove things into every stray corner of every bag, then we unpack it all again to start over. How on earth am I going to fit any copies of my fanzines into the bag? And we've lost the hotel confirmation. And somehow it all gets done and ten minutes before the taxi's due we've got bags lined up and coats on.

In the few minutes it takes to drive through the back streets of Folkestone to get to the motorway our taxi driver has discovered that we are on our way to Australia, and has told us in turn all about his time in the army (or was it the airforce) and how he nearly went on to serve in the Australian army (or air force). As we come up to the motorway junction we notice that someone, apparently overnight, has either cut or painted a white horse onto one of the hillsides overlooking the town. That changes the subject for a moment, then he's off again: how the Witnesses prove the truth of the Bible through exhibits in the British Museum, how he used to enjoy *The Eagle* and Dan Dare when he was a kid, Morgan cars. It all seems connected at the time. By the time we pull into Heathrow we're promising to find out for him exactly how the Australians regard Indonesia.

We're early. No, that doesn't quite do it justice. We have time to return home, unpack, repack, travel all the way to Heathrow once more, and still make the flight with time to spare. The flight is at 10.30. We have arranged to meet Claire, Dave and Mark sometime between 7 and 7.30. It is now 5.30. When we flew out to America for Maureen's TAFF trip we left on the busiest weekend of the year and the computers had just gone down, so there were long queues outside the terminal. Now the building seems virtually empty, a great long barn of a place with chrome railings set in little maze-like patterns here and there to control non-existent queues. A TV screen tells us which check-in desks we'll need, so we trundle our luggage off in search of the right place. That doesn't take long. We find a little row of seats more or less opposite where we'll need to be and colonise them. Then we take it in turns to explore. Terminal Four at Heathrow is long and narrow, so exploring consists of walking in one direction as far as you can go (you pass a money exchange, a small branch of W.H. Smith, lifts, a café – an exciting array) then turning round and walking back. Feeling daring, I go on past where Maureen is sitting to see what lies in the other direction. There is a booth for taking passport photos (seems a bit late to me) and an area roped off for first class passengers. Returning to Maureen, she sets off to find out if I missed anything. I sit and stare at the usual to and fro of an airport for while, then Maureen comes back and I set off once more. Well, I *could* have missed something. But I hadn't. I browse for a while among the books at W.H. Smith, and buy myself a Coke. Then Maureen goes off. And so the hours pass. At last I hit on an infallible method of conjuring up our travelling companions: I start making notes for my trip report. As if by magic, Dave Langford appears.

This at least gives us an opportunity to natter for a while, until Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer show up, bang on 7.30. Ah, now we can start making moves towards Australia. We descend en masse on the check in. The poor girl on the desk seems to be new to the job and having some difficulty with her computer, which appears to be running extra slow. Nevertheless we get our bags weighed (mine barely scrapes in under the weight limit – bloody fanzines) and fortunately they accept that the small fido (which, believe me, seems to weigh as much as all our other cases put together) really is cabin baggage, honest guv, and we collect our boarding passes and we're away.

Going through to the departure lounge, the first thing you hit, inevitably, is the duty free shop. Claire and Mark emerge with a bottle of whisky, I emerge with some films for my camera. Then it's time to find out what else is on offer, which isn't much until we happen upon a

Wetherspoons pub. It seems a reasonable idea to squander the last of our English money on a meal and a pint or two. As we eat, and listen to the usual run of airport announcements – ‘Will Mr So-and-so please report to Gate 8 where your flight is waiting to depart’ – Dave confesses his terrible secret. He is endeavouring to smuggle quince jam into Australia. We sit back in alarm, look anxiously around lest anyone might have heard. This is a heinous crime indeed. We have all heard the stories of the ruthless efficiency of the Australian customs. I have even had to get my doctor to give me a note saying I really do need to take these anti-inflammatories to help my bad knee get better, because otherwise they are liable to rip my bags apart in order to confiscate such horrible drugs. It takes another pint to calm our nerves after this dreadful revelation. Fortunately, by the time we’ve finished they are calling us to our gate, though it goes without saying that we then have to sit and wait for ages before they finally get around to letting anyone onto the plane.

The plane! It’s a Boeing 747, a big bugger to say the least, and it’s going to be our home for near-enough 24 hours, our cosy den. So why does it feel so cramped? Maybe when the usual scrum of people shoving things into overhead lockers and squeezing past each other and failing to find seats and all the rest of it has died down, maybe then it will feel a little better? Well, the scrum does finally settle down. The pilot announces we are all set, except for some final bits of freight which should be loaded in the next minute or two. He tells us this several times. Half an hour late or so, a little after 11pm, the plane starts to move (accompanied by an unmistakable and very worrying reek of kerosene) and my knees are still jammed against the seat in front of me, and it is still impossible to bend down and reach anything on the floor. At one point I consider taking my trainers off for the flight, but if I did I’d never be able to get them on again. We are further encumbered with pillow and blanket and pack containing blindfold and oversocks and toothbrush, toothpaste, comb. It’s all meant to make us more comfortable, but it just takes away a little more of our all-too-little space. The first announcement the cabin crew makes is to tell us that sleeping in the aisles is forbidden. That does not seem especially reassuring.

Our little gang is in line abreast: Mark, Claire, Maureen and myself in the four seats in the middle of the aeroplane, Dave across the aisle from me, so we don’t even have a window to peer out of. The video screen is on a bulkhead only about

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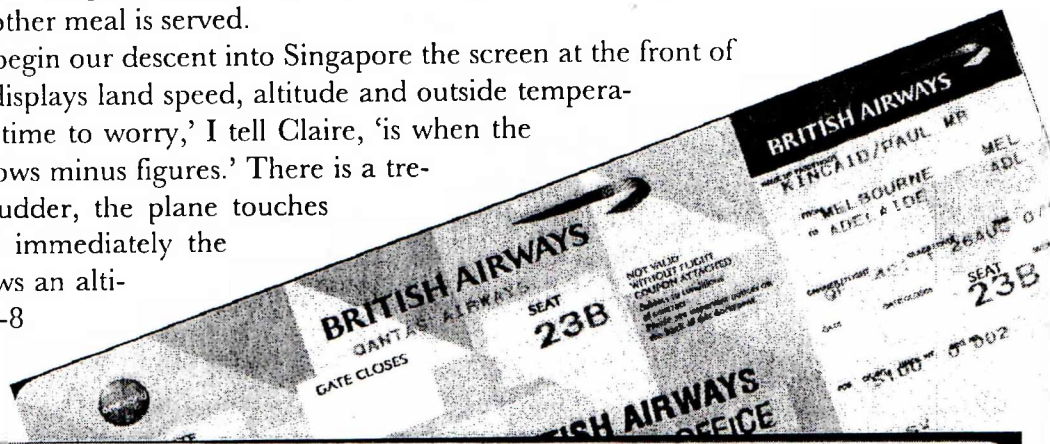
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LONDON	BA	6041	0150	1000		OKYK2	
LONDON	BA	911	1350	1545		OKYK2	

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FARE BASIS: L60076

DO NOT WRITE IN THE WHITE AREA ABOVE

half a dozen rows in front of us, but a quick survey of the magazine tucked into my seat pocket reveals that neither of the two films on offer is one I want to see, nor do I particularly want to listen to any of the 12 radio channels. Dinner follows. Meals are a big production on a long-haul flight like this, I suppose because they help to fill in the time, but I still couldn't tell you what it was we ate. A film is shown which I don't watch, instead I try to read, though without any great success. At last I give up and go to sleep. Or try to. The seat is too narrow, too close to the one in front, doesn't recline very far. I twist and turn. I pull the blanket over me because my shoulders feel cold, then push it away because I am too hot. I put the blindfold on, but it makes me sweat so I take it off again. Even in a quiet plane there is noise, the susurrus of the engine (even now building pressure in my ears), coughs, a child crying, conversation soft and far away and all the more infuriating for that. I keep my eyes resolutely closed, but after two hours I am still wide awake. So is Maureen. We talk for a while, try to cuddle but discover that whether we raise it or lower it the seat arm is always in the way. At last, though, I get to doze, lightly and for no more than a couple of hours. By 5.30, UK time, I'm awake again. There is a slab of pain or tiredness or both squeezed behind my eyes, no chance of getting back to sleep. I'm not the only one, I sense movement, hear conversation, all around me, and outside, wherever it is we are flying over, it is broad daylight. Yet for more than an hour we sit in sullen darkness, anxious for the daylight outside but forbidden to raise the blinds, our eye drawn hungrily to the only light in the cabin, the little glowing TOILET sign. Every so often someone will raise a blind and we lean towards it as if towards a magnet, but quickly the light must be extinguished leaving nothing but a vague impression of formless white. At long last, at 7.00 UK time, Qantas in their wisdom decree that the day may begin. Abruptly, shockingly, the cabin lights flicker on, the blinds are now raised. Another meal is served.

As we begin our descent into Singapore the screen at the front of the cabin displays land speed, altitude and outside temperature. 'The time to worry,' I tell Claire, 'is when the altitude shows minus figures.' There is a tremendous judder, the plane touches down, and immediately the screen shows an altitude of -8 feet. Howls



QANTAS BOARDING PASS				QANTAS			
Carrier	QANTAS AIRWAYS			Carrier	QANTAS		
Name	KINCAID/PAUL MR			Name	KINCAID/PAUL MR		
Flight	QF 491	Date	26AUG	Flight	QF 491	Date	26AUG
Seat	23B			Seat	23B		
From	MELBOURNE	To	ADELAIDE	From	MEL	To	ADL
Service Information				From	MEL	To	ADL
Boarding Time				From	MEL	To	ADL
Class	2	Class	Y	From	MEL	To	ADL
Class	2	Class	Y	From	MEL	To	ADL

of laughter from the middle of the plane.

As we taxi to a stop the captain instructs: 'Crew to disarm doors.' They apparently do this by speaking into a telephone handset. I try to imagine them murmuring sweet nothings: 'You really are a very nice door.'

We have an hour or so to kill in the Departure Lounge at Singapore's Changi Airport; not, I must confess, a prospect that fills me with delight. I imagine identikit duty free shops in the style of Heathrow. Initially, there is nothing to disabuse me of the notion. Our gate is at the end of a long, featureless corridor, glassed-in seating areas to one side, the usual posters for the usual transnational companies to the other, and between them a succession of moving walkways. This could be anywhere. At a window I press my forehead against the glass to be able to peer out at the gathering dusk. It is raining, I see an empty road, a short stretch of pavement, a little area of grass. It hardly seems tropical, exotic, foreign. When we reach the end of the corridor we find an array of shops, just as expected, but one that is well laid-out, one that has a spacious, quite comfortable feel about it. Inevitably we descend, like locusts, upon the bookshop, though the stock is curiously familiar. Rather more interesting, I find, is the computer software shop right next to it, and both Maureen and I spot things we plan to pick up on our homeward stopover. Then we decide to explore a little more (and, perhaps more importantly, to stretch our legs after so long cooped up on the plane), so we move on past the broad open stairway that curves up towards a balcony above us, past a waterfall like a silver curtain, past what appears to be a row of security desks, past what appears to be another row of security desks, past a waterfall like a silver curtain, to the foot of a broad open stairway curving up towards a balcony above us. I'm looking around for Alice and the Red Queen before we work out that the airport really is arranged in wings that mirror each other precisely. We decide to head back towards our gate before we lose track of where we are. Then someone notices the sign that says Cactus Garden. We follow it and find ourselves stepping out onto a roof, out of the sterile, cool, conditioned air and into something so hot and damp and clinging that I hardly recognise it as air at all. All across the rain-sodden roof there are cactuses, huge beasts, phallic beasts, creatures of obscene sinuosity and disturbing colours. It is remarkable and vivid and exciting, and seems totally out of place. Cacti flourish in dry deserts, a notice informs us as rain dribbles down our necks.

And then it is back onto the plane, and more meals, and another film I don't want to watch, but at least this time Maureen and I both manage to catch a little sleep.

There was a suggestion that representatives of Melbourne fandom might be there to greet us as we passed through en route to Adelaide. So it is really cheering, after passing through immigration and customs, to find the smiling face of Dave Langford there to meet us. Or, to put it another way, my case is about the last thing to emerge on the baggage carousel. As we stand there waiting for it, and I contemplate the prospect of three weeks in Australia without a change of clothes or indeed my fanzines, Dave has a fit of nerves about his quince jam-smuggling plans. He decides, instead, to go through the red channel and confess all. So there he is to greet us when we finally emerge from the customs hall ourselves. Nobody had been interested in his quince jam. Nobody had demanded to see the doctor's note that explained my drug dependency either. And they hadn't even sprayed us before we got off the plane. After all we'd heard about the ferocity of Australian customs, it seems a bit tame. I'm rather miffed: where are all the colourful anecdotes I was going to use to flesh out my GUFF report?

Secretly, this was the part of the journey that worried all of us the most. We had less than two hours to disembark from one plane, pass through all the immigration procedures, and catch another plane from a different part of the airport. Would we find the right way? Would

there be any hold ups? What were the chances we'd arrive just in time to see our next plane disappear into the dawn? We needn't have worried, the whole transfer goes remarkably smoothly, we are through immigration, baggage claim and customs in less than half an hour, so we're in plenty of time for our onward flight to Adelaide. We even have time to stop for a coffee. This is reassuring. When I went to the bank to get some Australian money I was handed a little stack of brightly coloured paper with clear plastic bits inset into it. Now, I'll be honest; I still have lingering doubts that, due to some appalling clerical error, I was given notes from a peculiar Australian version of Monopoly. But no, a café latte and an orange juice come to A\$5.60 and the woman happily takes my Monopoly money and gives me real genuine coins in exchange. Then we're free to sit down, relax, and marvel that an airport café is actually open at six in the morning.

While we marvel at the universality of airport announcements – 'Mr so-and-so, please go at once to Gate 11 where your flight and your fellow passengers are ready to depart' – we exchange horror stories about the flight. Mark told us about a young woman who was sitting just across the aisle and a row or two behind him on the flight to Singapore, and who spent the night alternately throwing herself upon, then fending off an older man she was sitting beside and apparently hadn't met before the flight. Every so often she would get up to adjust her clothing. The next night, on the flight from Singapore to Melbourne, Mark was kept awake once more by a different woman sitting across the aisle from him who talked non-stop in a penetrating Liverpoolian accent, mostly complaining about the antics of woman the night before though occasionally spicing up the monologue by discussing her separation from her husband and also her daughter, Maureen. Dave, meanwhile, had been sitting beside a gnome of a man who seemed to be escorting a vast extended family to Australia and clearly felt the only way to do this was to patrol the entire length of the plane every 5 minutes.

Onto another plane and I've realised that the thing I really don't like in all this flying business is taking off. Maureen loves it, can't get enough of it, sits there with her nose glued to the window and a big grin plastered across her face, then she starts to get guilty because she's not supposed to enjoy it as much as she does. Me, I sit back in my seat, grip something hard, close my eyes, and wonder when it's all over. And I'm undergoing my third take off in less than two days. The one in London was accompanied by a pervasive and very worrying stench of kerosene, this one is accompanied by a banshee screeching like a coven of demented sirens. I am not reassured. And for the first time this trip Maureen has a window seat. She turns to me and with incredible satisfaction pronounces: 'I have ground!'

There is more food, of course, and I actually manage to read a little, and all the while Maureen is joined in unholy union with the window. 'Oh look,' she exclaims every so often, pointing out sea and river and mountain and plain and habitation and green and brown and all sorts of shades in between. Only a short flight, thankfully, less than an hour indeed and then we're descending and I'm trying to see something, anything, over Maureen's shoulder. This is Australia, I'm trying to get a picture of the place. But the view from the air really gives you no clue about the real place. And we land, join the chaos of disembarkation. My case is, naturally, the last thing on the baggage carousel, so Claire and Dave and Mark are already there when we emerge from baggage reclaim, and there are three people with them. John Foyster we've met before, and we're introduced to Damien Warman and Juliette Woods.

Australia begins to seem real.

A GUFF Record

Many thanks to Irwin Hirsh for compiling this record of GUFF winners and trip reports, and for letting me reprint it here.

- 1979 **John Foyster**
Seacon, Brighton U.K., 1979 Worldcon
Trip report: 'Stranger in Stranger Lands' (1996)
Other Contenders: John Alderson, Eric Lindsay.
- 1981 **Joseph Nicholas**
Advention '81, Adelaide, NatCon
Trip report chapter:
Ornithopter 10, Oct 82 edited by Leigh Edmonds
Other Contender: Malcolm Edwards.
- 1984 **Justin Ackroyd**
Seacon 84, Brighton, UK, British Eastercon and Eurocon
Trip report chapters:
(a) *Rataplan* 31, Aug 85 edited by Leigh Edmonds
(b) *Larrikin* 3, Aug 86 edited by Irwin Hirsh & Perry Middlemiss
Other Contenders: Jean Weber, Roger Weddall, Shayne McCormack.
- 1985 **Eve Harvey**
Aussiecon Two, Melbourne, 1985 Worldcon
Trip report chapters:
(a) *Wallbanger* 12, Mar 86 edited by Eve Harvey
(b) *Wallbanger* 13, Aug 86 edited by Eve Harvey
(c) *Wallbanger* 14, Nov 93 edited by Eve Harvey
(d) *Wallbanger* 15, Feb 96 edited by Eve Harvey
(e) *GUFFaw* 2, Aug 99, edited by Paul Kincaid
Other Contender: John Jarrold.
- 1987 **Irwin Hirsh**
Conspiracy '87, Brighton U.K., 1987 Worldcon
Trip report chapters:
(a) *Larrikin* 16, Jun 88 edited by Irwin Hirsh & Perry Middlemiss
(b) *Larrikin* 19, Dec 88 edited by Irwin Hirsh & Perry Middlemiss

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- (c) *Sikander* 15, Mar 89 edited by Irwin Hirsh (reprinted, in French, in *Yellow Submarine* 61, Jun 89, edited by Andre-Francois Ruaud.)
 - (d) *Empties* 12, Nov 93 edited by Martin Tudor
 - (e) *Attitude* 9, Oct 96 edited by Michael Abbott, John Dallman & Pam Wells
 - (f) *Thyme* 119, Jan 98 edited by Alan Stewart
 - (g) *Banana Wings* 9, Mar 98 edited by Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer
 - (h) *Weber Woman's Wrevenge* 52, Jun 98 edited by Jean Weber
 - (i) *The Metaphysical Review* 26/27, Jul 98 edited by Bruce Gillespie
 - (j) *GUFFaw* 3, Nov 99 edited by Paul Kincaid
- Other Contenders: Valma Brown, Jean Weber.

1989 **Roelof Goudriaan**

Swancon 14, Perth, NatCon
Other Contenders: Linda Pickersgill.

1990 **Roman Orszanski**

Confiction, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1990 Worldcon
Trip report chapters:
(a) *doxa!*, 24 Aug 90 edited by Roman Orszanski
(b) *doxa!*, 7 Nov 90 edited by Roman Orszanski
(c) *doxa!*, 28 Mar 91 edited by Roman Orszanski
Other Contenders: Larry Dunning, Mark Loney & Michelle Muijsert.

1992 **Eva Hauser**

Syncon '92, Sydney, NatCon
Trip report: 'Australisky Denik', *Interkon*, 1992
Other Contender: Bridget Wilkinson.

1995 **Ian Gunn & Karen Pender-Gunn**

Intersection, Glasgow Scotland, 1995 Worldcon
Trip report: 'Oh, to be in England, In the Summertime, With my Love' (1999)
Other Contenders: LynC, Kim Huett.

1999 **Paul Kincaid**

Aussiecon Three, Melbourne, Australia, 1999 Worldcon
Trip report chapters:
(a) *GUFFaw* 3, Nov 99 edited by Paul Kincaid
Other Contenders: Steve Davies, Julian Headlong