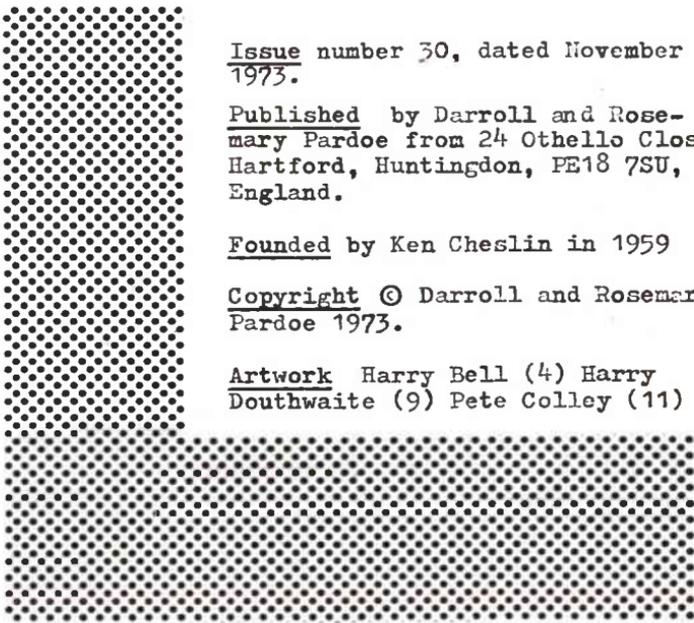


# LES SPINGE 30



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Artwork Harry Bell (4) Harry  
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The first weekend in November we went along to NOVACON, which this year was the usual relaxed, informal occasion, although it is showing a tendency to spread sideways from the weekend into the Friday and Monday and turn into a full-length convention.

Keith Walker gave a talk on fmz, which was very interesting, as much for his opinions as for the front covers which he held up in great numbers for our inspection. I was intrigued to hear that Keith's personal 'golden age' of fanzines was the PaDS era of the mid-sixties, which included such magazines as Xeron, Proteus and Crabapple. He readily admitted during questioning at the end of the talk that this was the time when he entered the field, and that these fanzines were therefore the first ones he saw. Thus they made a great impression on him. I think this is true of most fans. My own favourite fanzines, for instance, include many from the 1960 period when I first discovered fandom: famous names such as ORION, APORRHETA and (of course) HYPHEN. But I don't deride present day fanzines in comparison with them. At the present time there are quite a number of fanzines being published which can compare on equal terms with the great names of the past. Unfortunately there are some people who look back nostalgically at the fanzines of their personal 'golden age' and miss no opportunity to knock current publications in comparison. Keith, I'm glad to say, isn't one of these. His views seemed to me to be refreshingly realistic, I suppose because he's interested in old fmz and has read many issues from all periods.



All this talking about old fanzines has made me realise that LES SPINGE is now the respectable age (for a fanzine) of fourteen years. There are only three fanzines currently being published in Britain which are older: V.GARY, ERG and SCOTTISHE. All these three have a style of their own which has hardly altered since they began. SPINGE has changed a lot more over the years, partly I think because it has had several editors with diverse ideas as to what it should look like. In its present form LES SPINGE is largely a personalzine (although one or two people haven't realised this yet). With this issue I'm reverting to litho reproduction. Using this process I can use the 10z overseas postage rate and save more money on postage than the extra costs of litho printing. Litho as a medium allows me more freedom than conventional mimeography: I enjoyed

producing the litho issues I did in America in 1968-9.

We went to see the film version of Jesus Christ Superstar when we happened to be in Cambridge the other week. This film is excellent entertainment: the music, the settings and the acting are all good, and the costumes have been carefully designed to look casual, but they aren't really. Apart from this, I was surprised (and pleased) to find that the theology underlying the film was very much to my taste. The film deals with the latter part of Jesus' life, from a little before the entry into Jerusalem and continuing up to the crucifixion. It sticks quite closely to the events as recorded in the gospels, but without the supernatural elements. Jesus is depicted as human (and as a real complex human being, not the simplified one well known to many christians). The fundamental conflicts in the story are brought out strongly. Jesus' struggle to get over to his disciples what he is really talking about; the growth in his following worrying the Jewish leaders and forcing them to take steps for his suppression; the final clash between the weak Roman procurator and the Jews. Pilate in the film is presented as giving in to the power of the Jerusalem mob. First he sends off Jesus to Herod Antipas in an effort to shift the case off his responsibility. Herod in the film is overplayed, perhaps deliberately, but his 1920s-style song and dance routine comes off successfully. Herod of course just bounces the case back to Pilate, who then gives in to the demands of the mob, has Jesus flogged and finally sentenced to crucifixion. This must have been very much the way Pilate did behave.

He was a blundering incompetent all through his career as procurator: he went on from mistake to mistake until AD 36 when some Samaritans were massacred and he was recalled to Rome to stand trial. Having Jesus executed because of the possibility of rioting in Jerusalem was right in character.

The film continues with a scene sung by Judas and a collection of angels, which it is made obvious is not a supernatural event, merely in Jesus' mind on the way to Calvary. The film ends with the crucifixion. There are none of the usual post-crucifixion trimmings, no resurrection or ascension. Neither are there saints walking the streets of Jerusalem. This is the real story, purged of its accretions. Jesus is shown to be a man, not the divine being that later christianity made him into (and which he would certainly have repudiated: he was after all a Jew). An example of this is the way Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene is played as a close one with much emotional content. Such an idea is unthinkable to many modern christians, who can't visualise Jesus as other than a total ascetic.

He may have been influenced by the Essenes, it is true, but I don't think he was one himself. Why shouldn't he have had a sex life?

The film appeals to me for its presentation of the old story freed from the supernatural element. But it's superb entertainment, even if you just sit back and enjoy it without worrying over the theology.

Alan Garner's new book Red Shift came out in September. It's a ghost story, formally, but really is not easy to classify. It is without a doubt Alan Garner's best book so far. The publishers have presented it as a book for children (our copy was displayed by the bookshop in Chelmsford where we bought it in the childrens' book department) but this is a thing which it most certainly isn't. After reading it twice I'm convinced that nobody younger than about sixteen would have any idea what it was all about. It's a deep book, and needs a lot of thinking about to be properly appreciated. It's the kind of story that I label existential; that is, it deals with people and their relationships with each other, rather than subordinating such things to the demands of a plot line. I'm glad I read it.

But in some ways I found it an irritating book, largely because of the manner of its construction. There are three separate stories intermingled with one another. A few pages will deal with one story, then one of the others will put in an appearance for a while. It's annoying to suddenly have to switch from one to another, and probably have to leaf back through the book to find where it left off and refresh one's memory. The main story is the important one, set in the here-and-now; the others are bound to it by place but are earlier in time and linked to it by a number of things: the name Tom, a stone axehead, the constellation Orion, Barthomley church (called a 'stone forest' by the Roman soldier), the castle on How Cop (seen by the seventeenth-century Tom although not built until 1750) and (of all things) the blue and white livery which British Railways sports on its carriages nowadays. This last, Rosemary suggests, may be one reason for my irritation with the book. The importance of it only became clear to her on the last page of the book, but I picked it up the first time blue-and-silver was mentioned. That's what I get for being a railroad buff of such long standing. I don't think I was meant to. And the way the three stories get mixed up at the end is to say the least confusing. Disentangling them was too much like hard work, as was unscrambling a whole page of dialogue not equipped with any means of telling at a glance who was saying what.

And I was a bit depressed by the ending. The relation-

ship between Tom and Jan comes to a complete stop at the end, without hope of continuance. Hence the title 'Red Shift' - the whole book is the story of how Tom and Jan drift further and further apart from one another, although they try hard (too hard) not to. I don't like love stories that don't have a happy ending (an irrational feeling, I know, because heaven knows many relationships do come to a downbeat end. I've had my share). I was convinced that the ending of the book was a final one: but then I worked out the coded message written on the book's flyleaves (I tell a lie actually: Rosemary was the one who worked it out one day while I was at work) and I was no longer certain that it really was. The coded message leaves a lot of loose ends flying and gives room for speculation as to what might have happened in the end.



It's a very powerful book and I have no hesitation in recommending it. Rosemary commented that it provoked me to more discussion than any other book I've read this year. I'm sure I shall read it again before long. And I hope you will read it too.

Several fanzines have come in since the last issue. The pleasantest of them to read was BLUNT-2. Blunt is a fanzine which apparently sprang into being fully-grown, the result I think of its editors having been fans for some time before venturing to publish, and hence knowing what our mad microcosm is all about. I was interested to read the 'artist's moan' articles from Messrs Rowe and Stephenson, and much of what they said was all too true. It's not a new problem, the lack of recognition of the artist by fandom (and especially fmz editors) - in fact in 1966 I published a couple of articles by Terry Jeeves and Martin Pitt making exactly the same point as these present two. The remedy is one not confined to artists, but a truth to be learnt by any fan: that is, to do only in fandom what you enjoy. Once fanac stops becoming wholly pleasure and turns into a chore, then you have to call a halt and take stock.

The measure of the success of Blunt is in the letter column of this second issue, which is flourishing and in

danger of acquiring a momentum of its own (the mark of all successful letter columns). Blunt is a true faanzine, and that is a fine thing to be.

Another recent fanzine was NO-14 from Ruth Berman. This is a fanzine which ranges widely on topics with a leaning towards fantasy, and Rosemary generally collars it for the BFS library when it arrives. This issue there is something rather rare: a critical article on the fan poetry in MYTHRIL. Fan poetry is much maligned, but rarely subjected to constructive analysis, so this was a welcome surprise. I must admit that MYTHRIL seems of a higher standard than average, though, and so offers a larger scope for such examination. Also in this issue is a lot of response to Harlan Ellison's article in a previous one which dealt with the distinction between amateur and professional writers. The main error people make, of course, is to equate amateur/professional with bad/good. A lot of people write very well, but don't make a living from it, and some full-time writers have churned out some really bad stuff at times. The question of motivation is far more important. The best writers write because they want to: in many cases because they have to. There's something inside them which forces them into putting what they feel down on paper. A lot of professional writers are just hacks; they may have started by writing things with a lot of personal meaning, but somewhere along the line this has got lost, and they have to write things with no particular significance to themselves, in order to make money and stay alive. In a way the amateur has a great advantage: he can write what he likes and not feel the bank manager looking over his shoulder all the time. But equally, a professional writer who writes for himself can produce great things. For example, there's Alan Garner's new book which I discussed above. In this case, we can learn a lot about Alan Garner by reading between the lines of the book, and this must be because Garner becomes heavily involved with the words he commits to paper. The act of writing must mean a good deal to him.

Rosemary published her second Royal Arms booklet last week; this one deals with Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire and we're sending out copies to libraries as before. The BNB got quite worked up over the first one. They sent us a card asking what the selling price was (we hadn't put one on so decided to settle on 10p which is actually below cost). No sooner had we sent that one off than a card came asking for her full name (the booklet just said Rosemary A. Pardoe) and (of all things) date of birth. The booklet still hasn't appeared in the weekly BNB though.

# CRY OF THE WILD GIBBS

Terry Jeeves: 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE

After all these years I still find myself looking at that title and thinking 'Who is this chap Les Spinge?' I suppose you're right that FLAWOL can never be 100% true. Although I have been a fan for more years than I can remember, at least 25, I do have other hobbies and interests, and long ago formed the philosophy of doing with a spare moment just what I felt like doing with it, irrespective of what ought to be done. I refer to hobbies only here of course. Analog 4 is moving slowly along: I ought to do it, but no, I potter with ERG. Now and then I make a bit more of the set for my next Con movie: I ought to spend more time on that. How about FIWIMI: Fandon is what you make it.

Glad you holidayed in North Wales. I love that part, and have lost count of how many times I've been there. Criccieth alone, I have visited four times. I have some nice film of Portmeirion, too, including that lovely Campanile at the entrance porch. That coast isn't so good further up the estuary, though. Barmouth is pretty bleak. The Fest-iniog Railway you mention actually starts its journey in Portmadoc; where Portmeirion is situated at one end of the town, the FR is at the other. Pile coincidence on coincidence: not only do I have film of the place you mention, I also have the sound effect of the airlock doors from 'Journey into Space' on tape. In case you think I'm a bit kinky recording such a sound, I used it in the making of my own tape play, which won a prize at the local tape club way back when. My play was called 'Journey in to Void'. Dick Barton I'm afraid I just couldn't whip up interest for when it was on: Fu Manchú at times from Luxemburg, and Salty Sam, but not Dick B.

Taking the coincidence a bit further. I also have some film of punting at Oxford. I must run it again to see where they stand. One point about this pushing the stern right and bow moving left; I fancy that in practice what happens is that by pushing the stern right you head the boat on a new line which is of course to the left of the old one. The push would only move the bow marginally left physically - easily checked by trying it against a dockside or other fixed object. The actual left movement would come from the forward line having altered. Don't you think?

Letters of comment. I mailed out ERG-44 almost two months ago. So far not one LoC has come in other than a combined LoC and book order from one good and true fan. So from over 160 copies mailed out (nearer 130 actually) the response has been on the poor side. On the other hand, I have had a crop of trade fmz, and of that 180, to be fair, 25 went to OMPA and 70 to FAPA, so those haven't triggered response as yet. Even so, one reply from the remainder is all I have to date. I hope you'll do better with SPINGE.

Meanwhile, gotta go. I have another set of concrete blocks to make for the garden wall (just another goddam hobby).

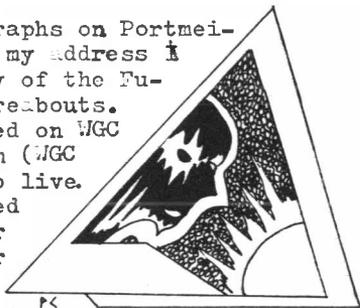
(++ Total LoCs to IS-29 to date, five. I don't regard it as too bad though, since over half the 100 copies go overseas, and most of them won't have reached their destinations yet.)

Jill Bridges: 31 Great Dell, Welwyn Garden City, Herts

Have

you ever considered the problems of being a radio listener in 1973? To start with, if you have got bad eyesight you will find it impossible to read the so-called Radio Times. It ought to be called the Viewers Weekly. If you don't like phone-in programmes or pop music there is very little else for light listening except five-year-old plays (yes, I can remember the plots) repeated at least once in a week. I possess a nineteen-year-old radio with no VHF so my listening is restricted to Radio 4, 1+2 and London. If you think I have complaints, what about the younger listeners. My two for instance. There is listen with mother now at 2.45 in the middle of the afternoon nap time. Is the Beeb trying to get rid of it? Or there's Radio London's listen children at 11.20 for ten whole minutes. Most children go to play groups in the mornings, and of course there's no children's hour. We do not possess a TV or ever will, I hope.

I read with interest the few paragraphs on Portmeirion, for as you must realise from my address I live in Welwyn Garden, 'Garden City of the Future'; Ebenezer Howard 1919 or thereabouts. All the new towns were roughly based on WGC and Letchworth. Nearly all of them (WGC included) are very lonely places to live. The Semi with its front door slammed shut against the people with better furniture or those who are not your equal in material possessions. The new towns however beautifully designed have a far higher suicide rate among young (under 40) mothers than anywhere else. When you make the acquaintance of a fellow Garden Citizen you enquire about names, then the question: 'How long have you lived here? Then what do you think of the place?' It is my opinion that 50% of the inhabitants don't like the place and refuse to integrate. The conclusion is that however beautiful a place is people can make it a living hell, for themselves and for others, by refusing to integrate and being snobbish (for want of a better word) about material possessions.



To a more cheerful subject, my family creeper. I must admit that all I have ever heard about my family's history is unchecked, but I have no reason to doubt my relatives' word. My mother's maiden name was Keyse. Very little is known about her father's side of the family except that her grandfather Keyse owned and then drank half of Bermondsey. My grandmother claimed to have seen family papers that proved descent from a Keyse in the court of Elizabeth I. Certainly, one of Lady Jane Grey's sisters married a Keyse, noted for his unusual spelling of the name. My maternal great-grandmother remembered moving home from Willmote (near Stratford-on-Avon) to live in Greenwich Naval College. This residence was part payment for her father, a Captain Baker, for being injured at the battle of Trafalgar.

My father's family has very little to offer except a very complicated history that started and nearly finished with my grandfather John Thomas Mason who was born in Wigmore Street. His father, so the story goes, was a disinherited younger son who married a millowner's daughter. Back to J.T.Mason Esq., owner of the New Century Laundry of Hornsey and Birchington, Kent. He married young a certain Miss Constable, a relation of the painter. They had three children, two sons and a daughter. His wife died, and he married again. His new wife had been married before twice. She was her second husband's second wife, so when she married all her children of

previous marriages came with her, as did her second husband's children by his first marriage. She and my grandfather had fifteen sons to add to the collection before she died.

My grandfather obviously liked this breed of woman, because for his third wife he took the daughter of his second wife by her second marriage. This third wife, a Miss Elizabeth Wakerly, was my grandmother. She bore nine sons by my grandfather before at a goodly age he died of diabetes. By now you may have realised some odd facts about my grandfather: (1) he sired 27 children of whom 26 were boys. Of all his grandchildren only five were girls and I am one of them. (2) My grandfather was also my great-grandfather because he was married to my great-grandmother and my grandmother. The sons of his second marriage were half-brothers of my grandmother, thereby making them the uncles of his sons of his third marriage. Are you with me? Good. Now I have a cousin who is deaf. His brother died of Parkinson's disease. His father (my father's full-brother) married his cousin, his mother's brother's child. Yes, you have it. His mother's brother was his own brother. So not only was his bride his cousin but also his niece. My cousin has real problems explaining about his ancestry.

One last point.

When my younger brother was born he was born 100 years after his grandfather, and his cousins by grandfather's first three children already had grandchildren of their own. So you think you've got problems!

