

# ***LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 7***

**LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 7**, October 2021, is an issue of a mailing comments apazine published by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122. Produced only for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association).  
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This fanzine acknowledges the members of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is produced in Hawthorn, Victoria, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I've moved away from Dante and taken up Mark and Claire's suggestion of Georgia. It's got a nice look to it. Though I'm still trying to get used to it. Hopefully it will grow on me.

And back to a blue background to keep you all on your toes.

## **GOINGS ON IN THE GROVE**

It's been a quiet couple of months in the Grove.

The major source of activity has been the weekly bin collection on a Wednesday and the various house renovations that are going on. The house two doors to the north (so, number 28) was sold some time last year and since the new owners moved in they have been renovating one way or another.

They have a free-standing outdoor room (which probably could be used as a workroom or study) situated down by the back fence that they started on. And then stopped. They took the roof off first and then covered it with a blue tarpaulin which stayed there for a number of months. Our immediate neighbours to the north speculated that it may have been lined with asbestos and they may have been waiting for the right workmen to come and clean it out. In any event one day I heard a lot of banging from their back area – it is only about 10 metres from our side fence – and later that day discovered that the tarpaulin was gone, the roof was off, and the walls had been stripped back to the wooden frame. I think the idea that asbestos was present seems like a viable explanation for the delay and then massive plan change. Anyway, it is all finished now, and a smart looking shed/workroom it looks.

Apart from that work they appeared to be doing a lot of renovations inside the house as well, though I have no idea what they are up to there.

And then there is the garden. Luckily for me, Sophie next door is rather inquisitive and likes to know what is going on. It does impact them a lot more than us as they have a mutual fence line with the new residents. From what I can gather the garden is getting a total makeover. It must do as it has been going on since January. Originally scheduled to cost around \$50,000 the final cost has blown out to over \$100,000, and I'm still not sure they have actually finished. This may sound like a huge amount but when you spend around \$4.25 million on the house and land an extra 100k on the surrounds doesn't seem so much in comparison. If they wait a few years I'm sure they will get their money back. And then some.

And before you ask: no, our house isn't worth that amount. Our block is a good deal smaller than theirs, and the house is also smaller and in a lesser state of repair, even before the renovations.

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So that's number 28 Elphin Grove.

One street to the west, Haines Street, and a few more houses north, it looks like the owners are putting on an extra story. I noticed a new frame going up at the end of August. Their blocks are smaller again; about the same width but half the length of ours. The only option they have is to go up.

It's a fun time in the Grove watching the neighbours. Not much else to do.

Cat update: the cat is still there on the front verandah. Luckily for it the house faces East and the worst of the weather in these parts comes from the south-west. It is sheltered enough for most of the time. Just not sure what we'll do if the front verandah floods – which it tends to do once every couple of years in a severe thunderstorm – or if the rain starts sweeping in from the East; a very rare occurrence. Time will tell.

### Comments on Mailing 322

#### **Chez Ashby 2 – Derrick Ashby**

Gawd, what a story! I hope the future instalments are much less “exciting”. Apart from the actual physical problems it appears that communication breakdowns have made matters worse. I hope it works out for you. •

I can see myself getting to ***Dangerous Visions*** in the next year or so. As you say a number of the stories in that anthology were on awards' ballots so David Grigg and I will have to read them for our Hugo Time Machine episode on the podcast. I may well be the same as you in that I can't positively say that I have ever read the book from start to finish. •

If you liked **This Is How You Lose the Time War** then I can recommend **Time Was...** by Ian McDonald, also at novella length but better in my view. •

#### **Quoz 78 – Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer**

**Claire** – William Breiding was in touch with me as well, but as I'm also putting out a similar fanzine a blanket request for a contribution was only going to mean I would be diverting something from my own fanzine to his. And the major thing I was working on at the time he contacted me was my large survey of short Sf in 1965, and that was most definitely going to be mine. I did ask if he had a specific set of subjects he wanted covered but didn't hear back. I rather think that's what I would need in this regard, a specific topic or subject to concentrate on. I am looking forward to seeing what he finally comes up with in these fanzines. There might be some ideas I can steal. •

I did like your use of sticky tags in your books. I do the same thing but tend to not be near my tags when I'm reading so I've taken to “pre-sticking” a number of them on the bookmark I'm using. I don't lose that so tags are always at hand. I think you may well use more than me however. The forest of tags is very impressive. •

ReYctoMe: The Hugo nominated novellas really weren't that flash this year. There was too much of a sameness to them, which I put down, partly, to the fact that they all had the same publisher. As I may have stated in the latest **Alien Review** I don't believe this is a healthy thing for the field. Not Tor's fault of course, but the voters'. •

**Mark** – ReYctoMe: I take your point about Jane Harper's *The Survivors* not being quite so “Australian” as her previous books. Though I did see enough of Australia in that book to be

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satisfied she was still on track. •

Notes on retirement: I'm sure Carey Handfield or Irwin Hirsh would step in and correct me if I am incorrect in anything that follows, if they were current members of course.

Basically, every working Australian contributes, as part of their salary package, a certain amount of money from their wages, expressed as a percentage, to a nominated superannuation fund. (I think the current amount is 10% per annum – since 1 July 2021. This will increase by 0.5% each year until it hits 12% in 2025.) This system was introduced back in the early 1990s as a way to fending off a massive Australian Government social security debt which would be due if everyone of pensionable wage received a government pension. Now you get one or the other, a government pension or the proceeds from your super fund. From the age of 60 it is possible to enter a period known as “transition to retirement” where you can start to draw down on your super funds. Effectively it mean you could start to retire from this time, funded by your super. But you won't get any government pension until a designated age, which was recently raised from 65 to 67. I decided to retire in February 2020 when I was 64.5 years old. At that time I could start drawing on my super but would not have been eligible for a pension until I was 65. Well, as it happens, I will never be eligible for a pension. Robyn and I have too much in superannuation balances for that to happen, which is exactly what the government intended when this scheme was introduced.

This is by way of commenting on your intention to retire at 60. It would be possible to do that here just so long as you could live off your super fund. And that hasn't been too bad over the past 10 years or so in Australia. The fund I'm in is one of the bigger industry funds with very low fees, and doesn't pay large commissions to its agents, and has averaged over 10% earnings per year. The financial year 2020-21 (1 July to 30 June) saw returns of around 20%! I'm drawing on my super yet the balance kept on rising during this past year. Fun times.

**The Fiery Participle 46 – Leigh Edmonds** – ReYctoClaire: I well remember the problems involved in actually getting people to sign off on documents. The paper would be written, circulated, reviewed, discussed, amended, re-circulated, re-reviewed, discussed again, agreed to, and distributed for signing. And there it would sit, in people's electronic in-trays until I found the time to wander around to their desks and harass them to sign the bloody thing. And people used to get annoyed that I did this! “If you would just sign it, I'll get out of your hair.” “Hmm, maybe I should just read through it again.” No, just no. You said you'd agree to it so just sign it. I'm so glad I'm out of that part of the rat-race. I was either criticised for being too aggressive, or not aggressive enough. •

My only problem with having unsorted books on the shelf is that I can't find the book I want when I know for sure I have a copy of it. I went looking for the Scottish crime novel *Laidlaw* by William McIlvanney recently when I heard that Ian Rankin will be competing one of McIlvanney's unfinished manuscripts later this year. I knew I had a copy, bought well over twenty years ago and unread. I couldn't find it under the Mc section and so forgot about it for a few days. Then I was looking for something by RA Lafferty (couldn't find that either) but I did find the McIlvanney novel sorted under “L” for, yes, well... And I can only put that one down to my fault. Something to remember next time. •

I also remember hearing the story about Forry Ackerman and Metropolis. I have no firm idea who told me about it though I have this feeling it was ex-US and then Adelaide fan Paul Day. •

ReYctoBruce: Yes, I have reviewed books on the podcast that I had borrowed from the local library. I try to keep the number of books I purchase down to a minimum, at least in paper form. I have been reliably informed by “she who knows all” that we have too many books now. New ones can only come into the house if old ones leave. Hence my reading of the old paperbacks which, when finished and reviewed, are deposited into a large box for later donation to charity or to a deserving fan such as Don Ashby. It seems to placate herself somewhat. Though at the rate I'm

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going I suspect it might not be until 2050 that I actually make much headway. •

ReYCtoMe: Why didn't we invite the cat inside when we first saw it? Because we didn't want the cat inside is the basic reason. I'm happy enough for it to be on the front verandah and to provide it with a bowl of water each day, and a cat bed in which to sleep, but that's about it. Feeding? No. Vets? No. •

Spreadsheets are the way to go for storing this sort of information. If I need to know, for example, which Zelazny book I've read since about 2012 then I can just search for it easily. If it was in a grided work book I'd have to scan each page and also try to decipher my own writing, which is becoming worse each year. •

Good luck with the CZUR scanner. Once you get it up and running you'll see how easy it is to use. •

**Rhubard 61 – Diane Fox** – I make that a very respectable 16 books in the two months between mailings. And a very diverse range of books as well. Some of them look very interesting indeed and I would definitely like time to be able to get to them. Alas, not for a while. •

ReYCtoMe: As I get to this time of the year and check back over my reading totals against the projected targets I suddenly realise I'm dragging my feet in some areas. Non-fiction is certainly one of them and am now attempting to rectify that situation by reading a number of books I've had lying around for ages. •

**John Fox** – I've also received my two A-Z shots. Realising that all politicians were starting to talk about a "vaccine passport" I decided I really needed to get my act together with the myGov app and align it with my Medicare record so I could readily access my vaccination history. Well, the myGov stuff worked okay but I am having no luck connecting it with my Medicare record. No explanation in the error messages just a note to say that no match was found. So it looks like a visit to Centrelink for me to get my Medicare details checked, and hopefully corrected, so I can align the two. It's not as if there are many Perry Middlemisses living in Elphin Grove in Hawthorn. More on this next time I suspect. •

**brg 117 – Bruce Gillespie** – I'm guessing the main reason why I haven't been attending the Nova Mob Zoom sessions is due to the domestic arrangements and my lack of a quiet, enclosed room. Looks like I may have solved that problem now as the meeting at which I spoke on a couple of books in early September worked out okay. I'll have to stick with that solution. •

Being a Wellsaholic might be the best reason to see *Mank*. I can't think of too many others. •

**Snippets 12 – Michael Green** – ReYCtoMe: The problem with removing the southern fence and replacing it is that it would entail us having fencers working on the neighbouring property. A couple of years back they installed a remote-controlled gate for their driveway and key-pad locking mechanism for their front pedestrian gate. So we couldn't get anyone in there without their permission. Also replacing the fence is going to be expensive so we'd like to split the cost. If they don't agree then we have to cover it all ourselves. •

**The Fretful Porpentine 39 – David Grigg** – Good to hear that your mother is doing well during the ongoing health crisis. I suspect that, although you are unable to visit her in person, you can be comfortable knowing that the staff in her facility have kept all the residents safe. Though, reading on through your problems about privacy and access to the facility and your need to create a new "virtual identity" makes me think of a new world order of burgeoning identities all aimed at individual contact points. Who am I today? •

ReYCtoClaire: Kit Marlowe features in a mystery series by Philip DePoy, though there only appears to be two of them so far (*A Prisoner in Malta* (2016) and *The English Agent* (2017)). And

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also in another by M. J. Trow, and there are 10 novels in that series (2011-2019). •

ReYCToMe: I think most fanzine fans would class themselves as fontaholic in one way or another. Some, such as your good self, may well be in over their heads. Others, such as myself, can only look on and wonder. •

The problem with attempting to write a major literary biography of the Lindsay and Dyson families is that I wouldn't know where to start. And I'd have to dive head-first into the work. No, I'll let someone else do that. Should be someone over in Ballarat. No, not Edmonds, he's busy on his fannish history. •

**Necessity 161 – Jack Herman** – As you well note there are a whole heap of Australian fannish anniversaries coming up over the next few years. 2022 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first DUFF trip. I'm hoping to be in Chicago next year so will attempt to get something on the Worldcon program and maybe arrange a dinner for DUFF delegates one night. We should attempt to do the same with next year's Australian Natcon. Stay tuned. •

ReYCToMarc: You note: "Of all the zines I published I would least object to someone scanning and posting the three-year run of *Forerunner*." We may well be in touch with you about that in future. Newszines are a fundamental foundation of many fannish histories. •

**Gaston J. Feeblehare 20 – Kim Huett** – I hope the post-operative period has been uneventful, in the best possible way. I haven't had much surgery over the years (a couple of bouts of stitches in my childhood is about all) so have no idea of the problems involved. Whatever they were I hope they were minor. •

Your notes about Robyn Annear finding interesting material on the same page as her main items of interest rings true for me as well. I've found a number of Australian poets that way, and also tend to get stuck reading reports of cricket Test matches when I'm trawling through 1930s newspapers looking for C. J. Dennis material. All good stuff. This also works for dictionaries as well. Bill Rotsler once told me that his definition of a fool was someone who only looked up one word in a dictionary at a time. Presumably because the position of the original word accessed was adjacent to other words of interest. Can't do that on dictionary.com. •

Ah, the Private Bin. I seem to recall it being called the "Rubbish Bin" when I lived in Canberra. Never went there however. •

**Sketchy 8 – Christina Lake** – It would be interesting to get your, or someone else's, update on Paul Theroux's *Kingdom By the Sea*, if only for the section of Cornwall that you are aiming to walk. Theroux's walk around the UK took place in the early 1980s, so I'm expecting much to be changed by now. Thanks for the recommendation of the similar book by Wynn. I think I might skip the Armitage one. Theroux is grumpy enough. •

**Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay** – The last time I took a cardiac stress test on a treadmill the monitoring went on for a while until the technicians moved away from the equipment and started chatting. "Do you have everything you need?" I asked. "Yes," they said. "So can I finish up then?" "Oh, okay." Got to the doctor's a few days later: "I see you ended the test because you got tired," he said. Bloody cheek, I thought. No, I had to go to work and they had everything they needed. Simple really. •

**Crash of the Hard Disk 55 – Gary Mason** – Given the nature of PDF files I've just decided to end my fanzines where they end. Internally I try to start new sections on new pages but near the end just tend to let it go. I'd rather not add blank pages either. •

ReYCToLeigh about FANAC: I don't believe that the early mailings of ANZAPA (or APA-A) are

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available there. The general rule is that we have to get written permission from all concerned and, while we usually assume assent from those not longer with us, not everyone has been contacted. We're cherry-picking fanzines by certain fans – Bangsund, Foyster, Edmonds and Gillespie being the first batch. Others will follow in good time. •

ReYCtoMe about the cat: The major problem I have with adopting Jessie as “our” cat is that one certain person – namely ME – will have to do all of the work, feeding, cleaning etc. This previously happened with the rabbit and the fish. No more I say. •

ReYourCToMe about LibreOffice: I hope your experience with the application is a good one. There are always quirks to be discovered and some mysterious omissions that I need to find work-arounds for. I'm sure Jean would just say, “Oh, that's all covered here...”. But the fun is sometimes in the self-discovery. •

**Hold that Tiger! – Terry Morris** – Is that cement in the background of the photo on the front of **Perryscope 10**? More than likely. Can't think what else it might be. It should be noted however, that as my father was renting a house in Tailem Bend at the time I doubt it belonged to him. •

**Sparowgrass & battle-twigs 75 – Roman Orszanki** – ReYourCToMe about reviewing: I try not to be harsh in my reviews, but sometimes a story just doesn't grab me. For whatever reason I kept on being jarred out of the story in **Flyaway** and couldn't get into it at all. I wanted to, but it just didn't work. •

ReYourCToMe about the scanner: Fanzines that are single-stapled in the top left corner are generally short so extracting the staple and then re-stapling is the preferred option for scanning. Saddle-stapled (eg A3 folded and stapled in the gutter) need to laid out flat and the application software will compensate for the curve of the pages, mostly. It doesn't always work but does more often than not. •

**Knot Appropriate – Marc Ortlieb** – Good cover on the F&SF from August 1970, and thanks for showing all of it. I'm now looking at short sf in 1967 for the podcast, so probably won't get to 1970 until some time next year. One day we may even meet on our respective timelines. •

**From the Threshold 5– Ann Poore** – ReYourCToMe about the cat: I think it was more the house and garden that got chosen by the cat, rather than myself. In any event, it seems here to stay. •

**The Erotic Wombat 20– Gerald Smith** – I haven't been to Wallaroo in nearly 50 years, though my late father has a cousin living in Moonta. One day. •

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Thanks to all the other contributions in yet another massive mailing. I keep reading them but am not finding anything to comment about.

Stay well.