



**PLOKTA**



**value**

**fanzine**



## Colophon

This is issue 39½ of *Plokta*, edited by Steve Davies, Alison Scott and Mike Scott. It is available for letter of comment (one copy to Mike's address is fine), trade (copies to each of our addresses if possible, please), contribution, editorial whim, or for \$1 trillion of bank preference shares.

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The cabal also includes Flick, Giulia De Cesare, Sue Mason, and Steven, Marianne & Jonathan Cain.

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Photos by the Cabal (2), Caro Wilson (4)

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By **Flick & the Cabal**

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### 8. Why It Is Impossible to Write Good Things about Diana Wynne Jones

By **Michael Abbott**

In which Michael contradicts himself by writing good things about Diana Wynne Jones.

### 11. Lokta Plokta

No WAHF column this issue, as either our correspondents are getting wittier or our standards are slipping.

## Separated at Birth?



*Dr Plokta*



*Dr Plokta*

## <plokta.con>

We're pleased to announce that we have two guests of honour for <plokta.con> Release 4.0. **Diana Wynne Jones** will be our guest for the Saturday, and **Paul Cornell** on the Sunday. We don't have room here to expound upon the numerous virtues of both of our guests, so you'll find an article about Diana later in this issue, and something about Paul in the next issue.

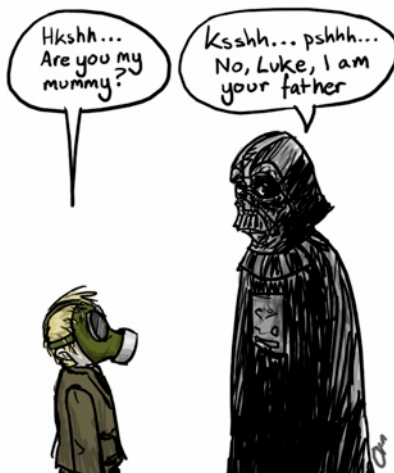
The theme of the convention will be School Stories. As has become traditional at *Plokta* conventions, Sunday night will celebrate our theme, so dig out your old school ties and gym slips and get ready for the new term at Dr Plokta's Academy for Wayward Youngsters.

There will be another mini-*Plokta* around Easter which will have more information on the programme. For now, please let us know if there are any programme items you've always wanted to see or to organise.

You can book your hotel room online at [www.deverevenues.co.uk](http://www.deverevenues.co.uk) quoting code NCPLOB or by calling 01344 634395 and quoting "Plokta". Twin or double rooms are £80 per night, single rooms are £60 per night, and parents can book an adjoining room for one or two children for £40 per night (on the phone only). These rates are valid for the Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights. You'll need a debit (phone only) or credit card to secure your reservation.

To repeat the basic information from last time, the convention will be held at Sunningdale Park in Berkshire from Saturday 23 May 2009 to Monday 25 May 2009, which is a bank holiday Monday. We plan to start programming at around 11am on the Saturday, and finish at around 6pm on the Monday, and we intend to be sitting in the bar on Friday night.

Attending membership is £30 payable either by cheque (payable to Plokta) posted to Mike Scott, 13 Collette Court, Eleanor Close, London, SE16 6PW or by PayPal to [mike@plokta.com](mailto:mike@plokta.com). Free for under 12s, £15 for 12-17.



*From ormsqueak.deviantart.com*

## Editorial

This fanzine supports Steve Green and/or Tom Womack for TAFF. Rather than enclose a paper ballot printed on dead trees (how 20<sup>th</sup> century), we'll just point you at <http://taff.org.uk/> where you can see everything there is to know about TAFF, including this year's ballot and instructions on voting.

Following government exhortations to spend our way out of an immanent depression, most of the Cabal are buying new Mac laptops, thereby reinforcing the struggling US Chinese economy. Marianne is hoping that the trickle-down effect will also create benefits for her.

However, the credit crunch is biting. Steve and Giulia have closed up one wing of Plokta Mansions, we've downgraded the catering for *Plokta* weekends from Fortnum & Mason to Selfridges and Flick has switched from Bombay Sapphire to Gordon's but there are limits.



*Dr Plokta is not the only one*

## Con Members

Here's the convention membership list, effective as of 18 January 2009. Let us know if you think you've joined the con but aren't on the list, or if you'd rather have a different name on your badge.

### **Diana Wynne Jones**

### **Paul Cornell**

Michael Abbott  
 Brian Ameringen  
 Meriol Ameringen  
 Doug Bell  
 Austin Benson  
 Ian Brown  
 Jonathan Cain  
 Marianne Cain  
 Steven Cain  
 Helen Cross  
 Julia Daly  
 Steve Davies  
 Giulia De Cesare  
 Flick  
 Gwen Funnell  
 Julian Headlong  
 Andrew Hobson  
 Sue Hobson  
 Rob Jackson  
 Kari  
 Jane Killick  
 Christina Lake  
 Sue Mason  
 Caroline Mullan  
 Phil Nanson  
 Chris O'Shea  
 Ang Rosin  
 Marcus Rowland  
 Alison Scott  
 Mike Scott  
 Douglas Spencer  
 Peter Wareham  
 Anne Wilson  
 Caro Wilson

# Plokta People

By Mike Scott

*We'll be needing a school song for <plokta.con>, and there will be a small prize for the best set of lyrics to a well-known tune that we receive before the convention. We're sure you can all do better than Dr Plokta.*

She came from Leeds, she had a thirst  
for fandom  
She picked up fanzines more or less at  
random  
That's how I  
Caught her eye  
She told me that she'd won a Nova  
I said "In that case do a *Plokta* cover"  
She said "Fine"  
And then in thirty seconds' time  
  
She said "I want to live like *Plokta* people  
I want to do whatever *Plokta* people do  
I want to smof with *Plokta* people  
I want to smof with *Plokta* people like  
you"  
Well, what else could I do?  
I said "I'll see what I can do"  
  
I took her to a Glasgow Worldcon  
I don't know why, but I had to start it  
somewhere  
So it started there  
I said "Pretend you're con committee"  
But she just cried and said "Oh please  
have pity"  
I said "Yeah  
But I don't see anyone else crying in here  
Are you sure

You want to live like *Plokta* people  
You want to see whatever *Plokta* people  
see  
You want to smof with *Plokta* people  
You want to smof with *Plokta* people like  
me?"  
But she didn't  
Understand  
She just frowned and held my hand  
  
Hand your old Gestetner back  
Shed your angst and get a Mac  
Shrink some ducks and kern some type  
Pretend you like to chat on Skype  
And still you'll never get it right  
'Cos while you're on the web at night  
Writing on my Facebook wall  
If you called D West he would stop it all  
  
You'll never live like *Plokta* people  
You'll never do whatever *Plokta* people  
do  
You'll never geek like *Plokta* people  
You'll never watch blue screens slide into  
view  
And Control, and Alt, and Del  
Because there's nothing else to do  
  
Go online with the *Plokta* people  
Go online and it might just get you  
through  
Blog along with the *Plokta* people  
Blog along even though they're blogging  
'bout you  
And the stupid things you do  
'Cos you think Comic Sans is cool

# Plokta Household Management Tips for the Credit Crunch

*By Flick and the Cabal*

*Alison's Christmas present from Flick and Mike was a reprint of a 1949 book on household management in the new post-servant era. In the same spirit, we present our post-credit-crunch Plokta tips.*

## Daily

Even if you choose not to perform general household tasks before breaking your fast, at the very least LiveJournal and Facebook should be checked before one rises from bed.

Afterwards, one should make at least a desultory effort to clear away the detritus of the previous night's revelries before eating.

One should think back to the immediate post-war period, when the shortage of soap made even basic daily cleaning an inconceivable luxury, and be grateful that one at least has the option, given the reduction in cost of crockery, of being able to neatly lay the breakfast table the night before whilst, at the same time, running the dishwasher overnight.

It is a great timesaver to the modern housewife that door-to-door sales staff, such as those employed by Ocado, Amazon, Play.com and Wong's Chinese Take Away are employed to bring necessary goods directly to one's door.

## Weekly

Before the advent of Time Machine, backing up ones files was an inescapable weekly grind. Now, we are fortunate to know that the only weekly requirement is to reinstall Windows on the obligatory PC, and to update the spam filter.

One should note that, unless you have only a few books, they should be removed from the shelves a few at a time and dusted thoroughly. Ideally, this should not be performed at the same time as polishing one's Macintosh, to avoid transferring dust to its inner workings.

Mirrors should also be polished each week, as they look sad when dull, particularly if one has a semi-pubescent daughter who is worried about her appearance.

Look into the cellar dungeon at least each week, and toss Jonathan a few crusts if he appears to have temporarily stopped growing.

## Monthly

If your household duties permit, try to have at least one weekend per month in Jersey, or a similar duty-free location, in order to stock up on Gin and fags.

## Annual

If time permits, one might choose to dust the house.

## Money Saving Tips

A few hours spent instructing ones children in basic hacking techniques may provide the details of the neighbours WEP key, thus saving at least ten pounds per month on broadband costs. Even if this process is unsuccessful, failure will result in ones children being taken into care as young criminals, thus saving far more than ten pounds per month from the housekeeping bill.

If you spill Gin, do not stoop to lick it from the floor. Instead, wipe it up to use cleaning windows.

It is perfectly possible to incorporate a visit from the *Plokta* Cabal with only slight changes to your usual shopping routine. Instead of buying a side of beef, consider buying a whole cow.

Alternatively, if money is tight, consider buying a young piglet and rearing it to adulthood: not only does it provide a ready source of breakfast food but giving the children charge of the animal's feed and cleaning inculcates a sense of responsibility and duty. If this sounds too much like hard work, you could just keep Sea Monkeys.

When purchased by the gallon, tonic water is far more economical, as is Gin. Ice cubes can be made in one's own freezer, saving the expense of purchasing them from a local independent store.

In order to raise a little extra cash to help with the household bills, a modern *Plokta* housewife will be keen to raise funds by selling unwanted Christmas gifts on eBay. If this presents a potentially tricky etiquette problem, one can simply create a new eBay ID, thus preventing family and friends from noticing that you hated their gifts. Alternatively, ask your children to keep their video games tidy: in this way, any games found on the floor of the house can be sold for scrap with a clean conscience.

Recycle fanzines! Twilltone is particularly soft and absorbent.

Get an allotment! Grow your own asparagus, saffron, wasabi and other expensive foodstuffs. With a bit more global warming, or for those of our readers who live nearer the equator, you can also grow your own olives, limes and quinine.

Train your cats to hunt for their own food, or failing that at least teach them to kidnap the more valuable beanie babies for resale on eBay.

Why not convert that expensive hot tub into a pear press for using up all those inedible pears that grow in your garden and brewing your own perry?



# Why It Is Impossible to Write Good Things about Diana Wynne Jones

*By Michael Abbott*

Well, maybe it's not impossible, but it's certainly very hard. Let me explain.

If you read a science fiction book, you can talk about how plausible the science is. Is that a real piece of physics? If it's made up, are its implications worked through? Does the associated mathematics add up? It's not the most profound kind of criticism, but anyone can play, because it's left-brain rational thinking, and everyone does that the same way, following the rules.

It's a bit harder for fantasy—no, it's a lot harder—and it's not just because “anything is possible in a fantasy book”. Because that isn't really true, anyway: any half-way decent author has an idea about what can and cannot happen in their story or world, and plays by those rules. (Yes, the phrase “half-way decent” does exclude some people.) But one of the key skills of a fantasy writer is the ability to convey conviction: to make the reader think, when something fantastic happens, “Yes, *of course* that would happen”:

“Yes, *of course* saying that name would make an island come out of the sea, and *of course* that man would turn into a patch of corn when it happens.”

“Yes, *of course* that would be the only way *They* would let the chains be broken.”

“Yes, *of course* the giants are normal people like us.”

“Yes, *of course* dragon's teeth would do that nowadays.”

“Yes, *of course* there's a magic spell of confusion on the Adelphi Hotel.”

“Yes, *of course* that's why he appears when you strike a match.”

“Yes, *of course* the spirit of a star would know nothing about the underworld.”

“Yes, *of course* he'd be building a spaceship.”

And then, ideally, the reader says “Why didn't I think of that?” Being both obvious and surprising is the ideal.

But this is harder than it seems, because good fantasy is all about right-brain intuition. It's not about how we know the world works, it's about how we feel it behaves. So you can't verbalise the rules it works by, and you just have to hope that what works for you works for other people as well.

And Diana Wynne Jones does this better, more often, more fluently, than any other writer out there, and has been doing it for years, and for over forty books. Which is just lovely, for her, and for all her readers, including, until now, me. But now I have to talk about how well



she does this, and because the right side of the brain is non-verbal, it is completely beyond me to explain how good she is at it.

So I'm a bit stuck. And you'll just have to take my word for it, or go and read the books yourself. (Which is a much better idea, in fact, but I wasn't going to say that at the beginning of the article.)

I suppose I could have talked about her other right-brain talents: writing characters that are easy to empathise with, her excellent grasp of personal interactions (especially within families), her gripping plotting and her powerful endings (I still haven't got over the last sentence in *The Homeward Bounders* fifteen years after I first read it). Or her other abilities as a writer: her fluent prose, her comic touch, her familiarity with a wide range of myth and folk beliefs, and her ability to avoid cliché, possibly by hoarding the clichés for years and using them all up in the salutary and hilarious *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. But unfortunately, I seem to have run out of space. What a shame.

(You may wish to try to identify the novels I refer to above, though the Cabal are too cheap to offer prizes for competitions. One hint: they are all from books by the same author.)

Warning: brains may not actually work exactly as described above.

## Bibliography

Here's the Diana Wynne Jones bibliography from the Internet Science Fiction Database, [www.isfdb.org](http://www.isfdb.org), to accompany Michael's article. We've omitted the omnibus volumes of the Chrestomanci, Dalemark and Howl works.

## Fiction Series

### Chrestomanci

The Sage of Theare (1982)  
 Warlock at the Wheel (1984)  
 Carol Oneir's Hundredth Dream (1986)  
 Stealer of Souls (2000)  
*Mixed Magic: Four Tales of Chrestomanci* (Collection containing the four stories above) (2000)  
*Charmed Life* (1977)  
*The Magicians of Caprona* (1980)  
*Witch Week* (1982)  
*The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988)  
*Conrad's Fate* (2005)  
*The Pinboe Egg* (2006)

### Dalemark

*Cart and Cwidder* (1975)  
*Drowned Ammet* (1977)  
*The Spellcoats* (1979)  
*Crown of Dalemark* (1993)  
 Variant Title: *The Crown of Dalemark* (1993)

### Derkholm

*The Dark Lord of Derkholm* (1998)  
 Variant Title: *Dark Lord of Derkholm* (1998)  
*Year of the Griffin* (2000)

## Howl's Castle

*Howl's Moving Castle* (1986)

*Castle in the Air* (1990)

*House of Many Ways* (2008)

## Magids

*Deep Secret* (1997)

*The Merlin Conspiracy* (2003)

## Other Novels

*Changeover* (1970)

*Wilkins' Tooth* (1973)

Variant Title: *Witch's Business* (1974)

*The Ogre Downstairs* (1974)

*Dogsbody* (1975)

*Eight Days of Luke* (1975)

*Power of Three* (1976)

*Who Got Rid of Angus Flint?* (1978)

*The Four Grannies* (1980)

*The Time of the Ghost* (1981)

*The Homeward Bounders* (1981)

*Fire and Hemlock* (1984)

*Archer's Goon* (1984)

*A Tale of Time City* (1987)

*Aunt Maria* (1991)

Variant Title: *Black Maria* (1991)

*A Sudden Wild Magic* (1992)

*Yes, Dear* (1992)

*Hexwood* (1993)

*The Game* (2007)

## Collections

*Warlock at the Wheel and Other Stories* (1984)

*Hidden Turnings: A Collection of Stories*

*Through Time and Space* (1990)

*Stopping for a Spell: Three Fantasies* (1993)

*Everard's Ride* (1995)

*Minor Arcana* (1996)

*Believing is Seeing: Seven Stories* (1999)

*Unexpected Magic: Collected Stories* (2004)

## Anthologies

*Spellbound: Fantasy Stories* (1994)

## Non-Fiction

*The Skiver's Guide* (1984)

*The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996)

## Short Fiction

Who Got Rid of Angus Flint? (1975)

The Four Grannies (1980)

Dragon Reserve, Home Eight (1984)

The Fat Wizard (1987)

The Green Stone (1988)

The Master (1989)

Chair Person (1989)

nad and Dan adn Quaffy (1990)

Variant Title: Nad and Dan adn Quaffy (1990)

The Girl Who Loved the Sun (1990)

What the Cat Told Me (1994)

Everard's Ride (1995)

No One (1995)

The Plague of Peacocks (1995)

Enna Hittims (1999)

Little Dot (2003)

I'll Give You My Word (2006)

## Poems

A Slice of Life (1986)

## Essays

Two Kinds of Writing (1991)

The Shape of the Narrative in The Lord of the Rings (1995)

Introduction (Believing is Seeing) (1996)

The Profession of Science Fiction, 51:

Answers to Some Questions (1997)

# Lokta Plokta

## James Bacon

Thanks for *Plokta* My Face Ache. I am impressed that the Hugos were designed by Werner Von Braun. I should have known. Those sleek lines!

Liked Sue's piece. It sounds like a hard job. I always had the impression she was a professional artist or something—Designer of Things, dunno, probably stupid things to buy your cats that they won't use.

I felt relieved that Steve did not take revenge upon me somewhere. He would have been welcome to join us at Eastercon, I must admit I fell asleep while around me the youth had more beer.

## Pamela Boal

**pamelaboal (at) westfieldway.fsnet.co.uk**

Thank you for the POCTSAR CD. Unfortunately although I have mastered putting CDs into the computer cup holder thingy this one would not fit. Great fun and much appreciated, you have a whole new career there in sea side products. The card and the rock are sure fire best sellers.

So far none of our grand children have arrived with green hair, though the youngest grand daughter arrived with her beautiful blond locks raggedly shorn by her friend. Nits were something I associated with the war years but they seem to

have made a big comeback for several years now.

**Marcus Rowland  
marcus.rowland (at) gmail.com**

I'm sure you can think of more themes for *Plokta* Poct Sarcds if you really put your mind to it—your fans demand more!

Lice Olympics made me itch—working with kids, I've suspected an unwelcome passenger on several occasions. Fortunately it seems to be false alarms so far, but not my idea of fun.

Finally, that was a very interesting article on Dumas, and reminded me that I still need to get hold of the Lester films on DVD, I only have them as fairly crap recordings on tape.

**Steve Jeffery  
srjeffery (at) aol.com**

Cheers for *Plokta* Summer Special issue, which arrived just in time for the first (and possibly last) pleasantly warm day

## Overheard in the *Plokta* Mines

"Can you make the cover look badly photocopied?"

"Can't we just photocopy it badly?"

"Don't be silly!"

of the end of September. I may have to break out some ice cream and a hankie knotted at the corners.

(What's 2/6 in new-fangled money? Half a crown? That's ...ummm. twelve and half p. Were comics that expensive, even back then?)

Sue's cover is splendid, very *Beano*. Is that Smiffy of the Bash Street Kids behind the camera? Did anyone own up to being Plug?

The Frahm poetsarcid is spot on, even to the celery, and a nice bit of *Plokta* synchronicity. There ought to be word for that. Plokticity? You should register it for a place in the dictionary now that Collins are apparently throwing out a load of old outmoded words that have lost their meanings, like frubsy, please and mortgage guarantee, for shiny new words, most of which I've never heard of.

I found a reference to Frahm by chance, after running a Google image search for pulp sf

magazine covers after Peter Weston and Julian Headlong's illustrated talk at the last Novacon. This turned up a blog site called Bibi's box ([www.bibi.org/box](http://www.bibi.org/box)).

No idea who Bibi is, but she has a penchant for collecting links to weird and wonderful bits of kitch art. Anything from pulp genre magazine and paperback covers—not just sf and fantasy but detective and some of the more lurid romance covers—to the Vintage Japanese Robot Storm Sci-Fi Museum, chewing gum sculptures or cheescake pin-up illustrators like Frahm, Alberto Vargas or Enoch Bolles.

I shall have a go at your picture Sudoku later. I have enough problem with the chemical element one in Chemistry World. Although it shouldn't make any difference, once you substitute letters or symbols for numbers it seems to get extraordinarily more difficult. Probably a left brain right brain thingie.

(I've been working though the exercises in Betty Edwards Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, and it's more difficult than I thought to turn off the analytical/critical left brain when drawing and just put down what you can actually see, not what you expect to see.)

I failed to solve the puzzle of who had the strawberry margarita or the ice cream because I decided the best way to solve it would be to re-enact it. After the third or fourth I forgot all about what I was trying to solve. Too much fruit, I expect. Not good for you.

**Joseph Nicholas**  
josephn (at) globalnet.co.uk

I had the latest issue of *Plokta* on my desk one day at work last week. "Can I have a look at your comic?" a passing colleague asked. "Sure," I said. "But you probably won't understand a word of it."

He looked scornful as he picked it up. Sure enough, he did not

understand a word of it, although he laughed at the postcard. But he refused to read the photostory on the grounds that photostories were the sort of thing which used to appear in *Jackie* (the favoured reading material of teenage girls during the late 1960s). “You read them in *Jackie*,” I said, recalling the time when all the boys in the class would borrow copies of *Jackie* to allegedly laugh at the tales of tangled teen relationships. “No I did not!” he protested, in the sort of tone which tells you that he too used to borrow copies of *Jackie* to read while waiting for the teachers to appear at the start of lessons.

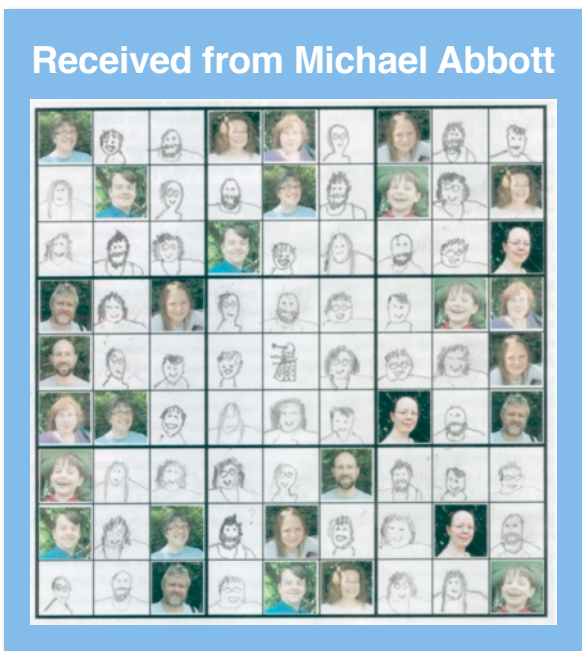
Other than that, *Plokta* was jolly good fun as usual, although I am only moved to respond to Kari Maund’s assertion that *The Four Musketeers* was riveting. I recall it quite differently—*The Three Musketeers* was riveting—thoroughgoing swashbuckling fun, executed with tremendous self-

confidence—but *The Four Musketeers* was a plod: presumably filmed back-to-back with the previous film, since it was released very shortly afterwards, but it had all the air of something being done according to studio contracts rather than because anyone actually wanted to make it. But then people’s mileage may differ, and I haven’t seen either film since they were screened at the cinema long, long ago. (197-something—

perhaps I should look it up on IMDB.)

(And just did. IMDB gives 1973 and 1974 as the dates of production, although release date for the second film in the UK was September 1975.)

I liked Marianne’s piece about Jonathan’s lice. But how is it she knows of Michael Bentine, whose *It’s A Square World* and similar must predate her by three decades or thereabouts?



Joseph T Major  
jtmajor (at) iglou.com

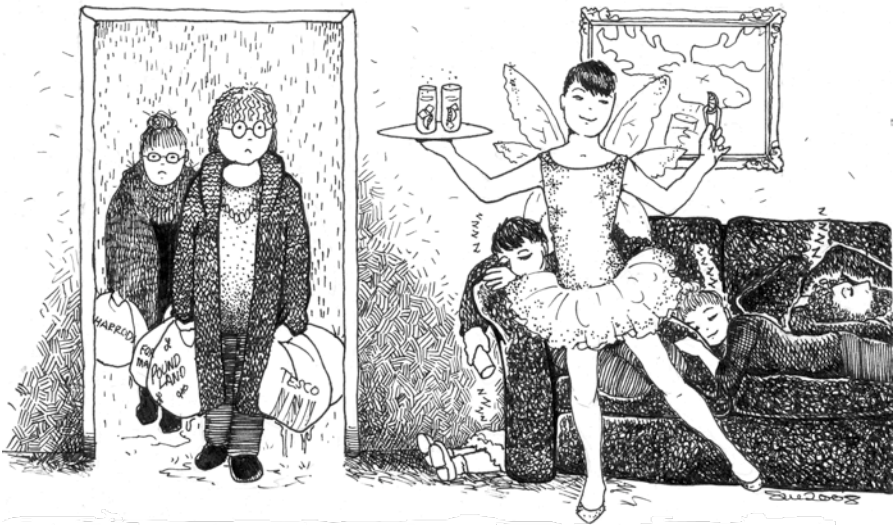
In this style 2/6. I'm surprised the software didn't forcibly change it to 13p.

So Flick is going to be a mistress. Somehow I'm not surprised there's a college major in that, there seems to be a college major in everything else. You can't satirize this, every time you make up something utterly absurd someone points you to a very real

course that is even more preposterous.

Trente Ans Apres: Kari may find *The Four Musketeers: The True Story of d'Artagnan, Porthos, Aramis, & Athos* by Kari Maund and Phil Nanson (2006) to be interesting. [! ... Ed] The source book Dumas cited is real. Not for real, the author seems to have stretched the *Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan* from the reality as much as Dumas did from that book. Nevertheless,

Charles de Batz de Castlemore, Seigneur d'Artagnan, was a real person, and had a very interesting life. Some things of course are outside Dumas's purview, such as the time that d'Artagnan and an English soldier won the favor of King Charles by rescuing his natural son, M. le Duc de Monmouth. King Louis probably regretted that d'Artagnan hadn't fragged the English soldier at the time. He was John



*The Walthamstow Sausage Fairies return, only to find that they have been supplanted by the Gin Fairy in everyone's affections*

Churchill, who in later years turned out to be a bit of a bother to Louis.

Lloyd Penney: Ah, but British comicism did not have Dr. Frederic Wertham, author of *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) to explain how normal juvenile violence was in fact something sinister and corrupting. And yet Wertham found fanzines to be not corrupting. (*The World of Fanzines* (1974)). There's no understanding people sometimes.

**Jerry Kaufman**  
**JKaufman (at) aol.com**

I enjoyed Kari's account of her pilgrimage immensely. It reminded me a bit of Sandra Bond's account of her pilgrimage to Route 66, though all the details are so much different. I read *The Three Musketeers*, too, and have seen several movie versions, but never could keep straight the different Musketeers. Perhaps if I read the book again?

Suzle and I will visit Paris in November, and perhaps we will also visit

the Pantheon. We'll be staying in a hotel north of the Seine (in the 4<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, I think), so I hope to visit the Pere Lachaise cemetery, where many other French and foreign luminaries are buried.

I was surprised that Colin Greenland didn't recognize the phrase "pots for rags" but not because I knew what it meant. I was sure that it was just another one of those daft British expressions that everyone in the UK would know and no one here in the US would get (me included). Now that I know such idioms aren't necessarily universal, I'm strangely reassured.

Now all I have to do is figure out who to mail the pocksard to, and my *Plokta* experience will be complete.

**Lloyd Penney**  
**penneys (at) allstream.net**

*Plokta* 39 has arrived, and I thank you for a smile and a laugh, and that's just taking it out of the envelope. In my last loc, I mentioned the comics I

used to get from my Scottish grandparents... I feel like I just got another one. 2/6, and worth at least twice the price.

Yvonne asks...what is Potatoshop? Is it a programme that allows you to produce beautiful graphics and photographs using carved potatoes?

**John Nielsen Hall**  
**john.sila (at) virgin.net**

Well, forgive me, I know it was a Summer Special and now an Autumn gale is howling through the trees with sideways rain accompanying, but I'm in a Fanac break right now and I wasn't then. Thank you for my pocksard. The issue was like a summer pudding, light fluffy and way too sweet.

**Mike Meara**  
**meara810 (at) binternet.com**

Sandra Bond, reviewing *Plokta* 38 in *Quasiquote* 6 (also received at Cytricon!) described it as "good looking but bitty", and I would say the same about #39. I liked the cover very much, though I'd be hard-pressed to say

exactly why, and also the photo-story, but everything else seemed a bit inconsequential... so that's about it, really. Not much of a loc after all. Oh dear. Must try harder (me, I mean).

**Brad Foster**  
bwfoster (at) junoo.com

Latest *Plokta* plopped into the mailbox this past week. However, since we are now officially into Fall, I guess I'll have to set this aside until next Summer, as I wouldn't want to be accused of reading out of season. Looking forward to enjoying what looks like a wonderful issue of fun and sun frolic.

**Milt Stevens**  
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In *Plokta* #39, I see you have two pages of puzzles which the reader is supposed to figure out. If you get through those two pages you can go on the figure out the rest of the issue. I studied those two photos closely. At first, I thought you might be spelling something out with your hands with each photo spelling something different. Or 16

maybe, there was a guy in a kangaroo suit in the underbrush in one of the photos. Eventually, I did notice that one of the cabal members had been replaced by a moose in the photo on the right. It would be quite easy to miss such a subtle change.

*[You're close, but the correct answer is that in the second photo the iPhone in Alison's pocket is the new 3G model—Ed]*

**Henry Welch**  
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Thanks for the latest *Plokta* with all the puzzles. I'm not certain of the propriety of publishing a word search using a serif font where the aspect ratio was not quite 1:1. Made it tough to work down those diagonals.

**KRin Pender-Gunn**  
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Did we all receive the same slightly creepy postcard in the Summer Special? A machine to destroy knicker elastic is not what I would expect from an evil genius like

Dr Plokta, even if it would be fun.

The Naked Scientists ([www.thenakedscientists.com](http://www.thenakedscientists.com)) did the chocolate teapot experiment in their kitchen science segments—it can be downloaded from their site. No date on it though.

**Jack Russell**  
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I am clearing stuff out of my life and have a 1lb empty tin which used to contain Fowlers Treacle. I just love the pale green and the old fashioned look and many years ago saved the empty tin from the scrapheap and cleaned it out. It sat on a shelf in my office but now seeks a new home. I guess it is about 35 years old but looks older despite being in pristine condition.

If you want it it's yours for the price of the postage. It's you or the tip!

Best treaclely wishes

*[Thank you for thinking of us, but Alison expects to inherit an ancient tin of black treacle from her mother—Ed]*