

# The Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Honorary presidents: BRIAN ALDISS and HARRY HARRISON.

Number 143

JULY 1983

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of the Ivy Bush pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the Old Royal pub on the corner of Church Street and Cornwall Street, Birmingham 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Membership rates are £3.50 per person, or £5.50 for two people at the same address. The treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2NJ.

## JULY MEETING.

Friday July 15 at 7:45 pm.

This month, PETE LYON will give us a talk, illustrated with slides. Pete is a well-known fanartist who regularly exhibits at conventions. In 1980, and recently, he was top of the Checkpoint/Ansible poll and has won the Nova award and the Ken McIntyre award in 1981. He was guest-of-honour at this year's Racon and is a friendly, fannish sort to boot!

The meeting will be followed with a Chinese meal at the Lychee Carden restaurant. Please give your name to Margaret Thorpe at the start of the meeting if you wish to attend.

Admission: Members 60p, Non-members £1.

## NEXT MONTH:

AUGUST 19: A shuttle-debate, with a group of nerdowells attempting to convince you that they should get the one spacesuit left in a broken-down shuttle. The rest get to take a long walk!

AUGUST 6: Bar-B-Q in the beautiful Malverns. A bus will pick you up at the Grand Hotel, Colmore Row at 7:00 pm. Tickets are £4:00 from Margaret Thorpe, available at the July meeting. Food will be provided, even if it should rain!

## STOP PRESS!!

A grand auction will also take place at the August 19 meeting. Bring along your old fanzines, books, even copies of Frank Sinatra's biography in Japanese that Rog palmed off on you at Novacon!



# Letters:

Firstly, an apology to Barrington Bayley fans — my biography of him in last month's issue was, as some of the following letter writers have told me, lacking in some details. The thing is, I had very little material to work with, the backs of his books in fact. So in future, if you see the name of a guest announced that you know all about, please tell me. Here is a biography by STEVE GREEN.

Barrington J. Bayley began his career under a variety of pseudonyms in the early 1950's, among them Michael Barrington (with Michael Moorcock) and P.F. Woods, but all novels were published under his real name, beginning with Star Virus in 1970. Both this and the second novel, Annihilation Factor (1972) were expanded from the New Worlds series, published in 1964, the former was a strong influence on NW colleague M. John Harrison. His bibliography continues: Empire of Two Worlds (1972), Collision Course, (1973, UK title Collision With Chronos), The Fall of Chronopolis (1974), The Soul of the Robot (1974 and revised in 1976), The Garmants of Caean (1976), and The Grand Wheel (1977).

John Clute said of him, "He is currently underestimated, perhaps because nearly all his work has been published in a pulp SF format, and his reputation is likely to rise in the next few years."

JOSEPH NICHOLAS.

22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER.

"Thanks for number 142 of the newsletter; becoming more triffic with every issue, I'd say. .... Anyway, here's Peter Weston enthusing about the wonders of Larry Niven's home: "...fans, we don't know what we're missing until you (sic) see this sort of life-style. There I was, lying on an inflated raft tethered in the 'spa' or outdoor jacuzzi, under a burning hot sun..." How insular and complacent can you get? Eight million people in the Third World would be glad to have some clean water to drink, never mind bloody float around in; yet in the face of their plight the only emotion Peter Weston seems capable of expressing is envy for someone else's wealth. Grow up, man, for God's sake."

JUDITH HANNER.

22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER.

"Yeah, now that Pete Weston mentions it, I've suddenly realised that there is a strange absence of geraniums growing like weeds around the place..... do you mean to say orange trees won't grow here either? Aaargh — what alien country is this?!"

DAVID HARDY.

99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AB.

"I'd like to add my congratulations on doing an excellent job with the newsletter. So please don't take the following items of criticism personally (most of them are directed to other correspondents anyway). They are intended to be constructive.

First, can't we do without the snide remarks on (a) previous newsletters, and (b) previous Novacons? F'R'instance, there was no need for the amazement expressed at the inclusion of items of news: be fair Mr G — if you care to look through your back-issues, you'll see that there has always been up to a page of news-items. As for Novacons, past committees have



put in a hell of a lot of work (all voluntary) and if this year's can do better, fine — but let's cut out the sniping shall we? As a group, we should be pulling together if we are to go anywhere."

STEVE GREEN.

11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7SD.

"Joy Hibbert is quite correct to point out that Pat Charnock's excellent article in Tiger Tea quite clearly states that she did not suffer from post-natal (in newsletter 142), although she does discuss frankly the need to guard against it; the error was in the ambiguity of my synopsis, rather than my mental digestion of its text. As for my slightly tongue-in-cheek comment about male reluctance to bare souls in print, I'll have to take Joy's word for it that Jimmy Robertson and Roy Dalgeish do so, having only seen one issue of Dragonbreath and not even that of Felicity (even I don't receive everything published in Britain), but this is undeniably an area where female fans, especially in a forum such as the Women's Apa, do outdistance the men. ((ed. and so that was why the apa was set up, perhaps?)) Maybe it's because society tends to teach my sex to guard its emotions and try to avoid looking 'soft' (a view I acknowledge but would not endorse); whatever, I still think Jimmy and Roy are the exceptions, and are likely to remain so for a long time, more's the pity. The exclusion of Dave from the footnote on Biscuit I was not responsible for; full credits were given in my original review. ((ed. yes, I am very sorry Joy, Dave and Steve — the error was mine own. I didn't mean to miss you out Dave, but I must have been disturbed between Joy's name and yours, and so completely forgot to include you.))

Consider my hand slapped over the Ehrlich episode; I remembered Gene L. Coon as the author of Apple (not a particularly good episode of Star Trek anyway) and forgot that he only collaborated on the teleplay." ((ed. ah well, if you too were a member of the Star Trek Action Group, you'd get to know these things!))

JOY HIBBERT.

11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 5JG.

"You and Ansible both mentioned the birth of Thomas, ((son of Chris Atkinson and Malcolm Edwards)) but no-one has yet said what his surname is. ((ed. I would think the little fan's name would be Thomas Atkinson-Edwards, but I don't really know. Better ask Chris and Malcolm.))

I like the idea of SF groups twinning, but would ask that you be careful to twin with a group like the Brum Group and not be carried away with the cleverness of twinning with a group of the same name. I feel that it would be best if the group was about the same size as the Brum Group, the same sort of fans (ie written SF fans predominating) and preferable ran a yearly local con, but not in November. Now that there is cheap airtravel, a trip to the states could be within most employed peoples reach if they had fans to stay with."

DAVID LANGFORD.

94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU.

"Thanks for another Brum newsletter..... Am still trying to find out what it is I'm doing on this famous Novacon 13 Alternative Programme: maybe Steve told me once, but I can't trace the details. Anyway, if it's Jim Barker Fan Turn Challenge games, I hereby resign... ((ed. well I hope the piece on the alternative programme, by Steve, elsewhere in this issue will give you some idea.))

Am also trying hard to love Phill's cartoons, but it's an uphill struggle. One doesn't mind it so much in the newsletter; I really do suggest, though, that rather schoolboyish stuff like the Mars Bar thing in Novacon PR1 is



not the way to give the impression of a dynamic, vigorous new Novacon management. These may sound harsh words: I'm sure, though, Phill would admit he isn't (yet) a top class fanartist. And when you're going all-out to get top class folk for the Novacon programme (present company excepted, coff coff), why not do the same with the progress reports? The PRs are the only tangible evidence of the committee's great talent available to fandom before the con itself, after all; they're the only achievements you can show in the drive for increased membership; they need to be Top Class, surely? Better stop before I get horribly caricatured in the next Probert cartoon epic."

PHILL PROBERT.

32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE.

"Sorry Dave. I have to disagree with you on your thoughts on Novacon 13. This year I am trying very hard to do lots of new and different things with the Novacon format. One of these things is to make the progress reports more than just the usual information How-to-book-and-how-to-get-there etc.

The Novacon Summer Special is a case in point. I would like to see PRs not only contain information about the con, but to be entertaining, short of being a fanzine. So in progress report one I felt that a full page cartoon would be a step in this direction. Since I did not have one from Dave Haden (the Novacon 13 artist) I used one of mine.

I agree I am very short of experience. However I would like to know how one gains experience without being printed anywhere. You seem to know. I am also interested in how you knew it was my artwork. I had only told a very few people and had not signed the item in question. I should have done all the Novacon 13 artwork to gain experience, but no. I felt Dave Haden deserved the experience, not me. Is this what I get for being humble?"

PAUL VINCENT.

25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall, West Midlands, WS3 4HG.

"Full marks for the format of the newsletter, which is almost approaching the standard of fanzine, rather than information sheet. The winds of change are always refreshing in any publication. Mind you, I see the June issue reached one-and-a-half pages of book reviews — please don't let this figure grow, as is always so tempting.

I love Pete's idea of a twinning project, but is Alabama really the best choice? I'm probably just prejudiced by distorted myths, but isn't Alabama deep in redneck territory, full of good ol' boys where macho rules supreme? Aren't we talking about that part of the U.S. where niggers/commies/fags/pinkos/subversives are likely to receive a knee to the groin if they step out of line? If there's any truth in those myths, then could we have a rethink and choose somewhere a little more liberal? Would it perhaps be worth looking at those cities likely to host a Worldcon in the next few years? This would be idea, as it might mean a large(ish) contingent of Brummies crossing the Atlantic to whoop it up at a Worldcon. Wouldn't that be something, eh? How many British SF groups have done that? Not many! (Good grief, this letter seems to making a world record attempt — "greatest number of question marks in a single paragraph".) My only regret is that, as I live with my parents and sibling-peers, I'd be unable to accomodate any U.S. visitors coming across for a Novacon. Other than that, a resounding "Yes!" to the idea.

Now to something that's been niggling me for a loooong time....namely the appallingly apathetic response to the informal meetings. All right, I know, Vincent is moaning again, but surely we can manage better-attended informal meetings. Exaggeration? OK, here are the statistics:— there



are FOUR (count 'em) regular attendees at the Old Royal informals. There are also a very few irregulars, of whom an average of one-per-month turns up. Considering the large numbers who turn up at the Ivy Bush meetings, this tiny attendance is pitiful! Surely Brum Group members aren't all that unsociable, or are they? Granted, many of you have kids who require baby-sitters, or can't afford to go out as often as you'd like, but out of a total membership around the hundred mark that must still leave a substantial number of members to account for. Perhaps some are put off by not knowing what happens at the informals, so let me describe them. Basically they are a chance to socialise with other members of the group for a whole evening. News and gossip are exchanged, fanzines are passed around, projects are discussed, and — most importantly — friendships are made and cemented. We also run sideshow attractions, such as watching Chris Suslowicz loose vast sums of money on the cruelly-rigged fruit machines which wait in corners to pounce on the unwary. Oh yes, beer is copiously swigged, if you're into that sort of thing (hic!). Peter did his level best to encourage good attendance a while ago, and the next meeting saw about a dozen fans who seemed to enjoy the evening. Next meeting, sure enough, not a sign of them. Have I persuaded anyone to come along next time? Will you be there on August 2nd? I hope so.

Finally, let me add my support to the suggestion of a move back to the City Centre. I think it would boost membership substantially, and would encourage visitors from outside Brum. After all, it's a central location which is accessible from anywhere else, unlike Edgbaston, which is almost unreachable to those, like me, who live on the opposite side of the centre."

# News~

## The Locus Awards:

- BEST SF NOVEL: Foundation's Edge by Isaac Asimov. (Doubleday)
- BEST FANTASY NOVEL: The Sword of the Lictor by Gene Wolf. (Timescape)
- BEST FIRST NOVEL: Courtship Rite by Donald Kingsbury. (Timescape)  
((Our very own Dave Langford was sixth in this category.))
- BEST NOVELLA: Souls by Joanna Russ. (F&SF January, 1982.)
- BEST NOVELLETTE: Djinn, No Chaser by Harlan Ellison. (Twilight Zone, April, 1982.)
- BEST SHORT STORY: Sur by Ursula K. le Guin. (The Compass Rose.)
- BEST ANTHOLOGY: The Best SF of the Year, number 11 edited by Terry Carr. (Timescape.)
- BEST SINGLE AUTHOR COLLECTION: The Compass Rose by Ursula K. le Guin. (Harper & Row.)
- BEST NON-FICTION/REFERENCE: The Engines of the Night by Barry Malzberg. (Doubleday.)
- BEST ARTIST: Michael Whelan.
- BEST MAGAZINE: Locus.
- BEST PUBLISHER: Pocket/Timescape.

L. Ron Hubbard has been declared officially alive by Californian superior court judge, David Hennigan, after a seven-page declaration written by Hubbard was tested by handwriting experts. Hubbard has also been giving postal interviews, but will not talk about dianetics or scientology.



Meanwhile, he is just finishing his ten-volume epic!

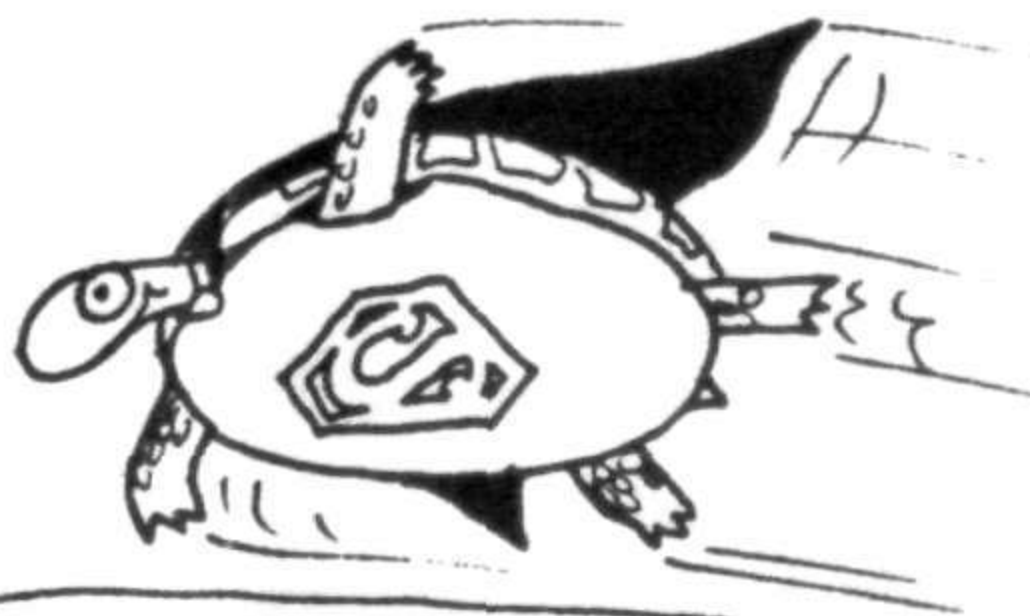
There will be no more new Star Wars films for five years, as George Lucas is taking a two-year rest and any new film in the series will take three years to make.

Zenna Henderson died, aged sixty-five, on May the eleventh, of cancer. Mrs. Henderson was best-known for her gentle aliens, known as "The People". All the 'People' stories were novelized and collected in Pilgrimage: The Book of the People (1961) and The People: No Different Flesh (1966). The People had psychic powers, which as Mrs. Henderson said, "belonged to the miraculous in daily life.....all the wonderful, slow, miracles of life, growth and being." There are also two collections not connected with The People — The Anything Box (1966) and Holding Wonder (1971), in which the protagonists were mainly children, learning of love.

Brian Aldiss was interviewed on radio WM, by Tim Manning, broadcast at 3:00 pm on Monday, 27 June. They discussed Trekkies and the SF 'ghetto'. Mr. Aldiss even mentioned the Brum group. It was very refreshing to hear a writer being interviewed by a person who did not think SF meant Star Wars and little else.

## Andromeda Top ten

1. Dr. Who: Castrovalva by Christopher Bidmead. (Star)
2. Helliconia Spring by Brian Aldiss. (Granada)
3. Return of the Jedi by James Kahn. (Futura)
4. Return of the Jedi storybook by Joan Vinge. (Futura)
4. Hello America by J.G. Ballard. (Granada)
6. Blue Adept by P. Anthony. (Granada)
7. Nor Crystal Tears by A.D. Foster. (NEL)
8. The Hand of Oberon by Roger Zelazny. (Sphere)
9. Planet of no Return by Harry Harrison. (Sphere)
9. The Non Born King by Julian May. (Pan)
11. Courts of Chaos by Roger Zelazny. (Sphere)



IS IT A PIEDISH?  
IS IT A TUPPERWARE BOWL?  
—NO IT'S  
SUPER TORTOISE!!



# COFF AWARD

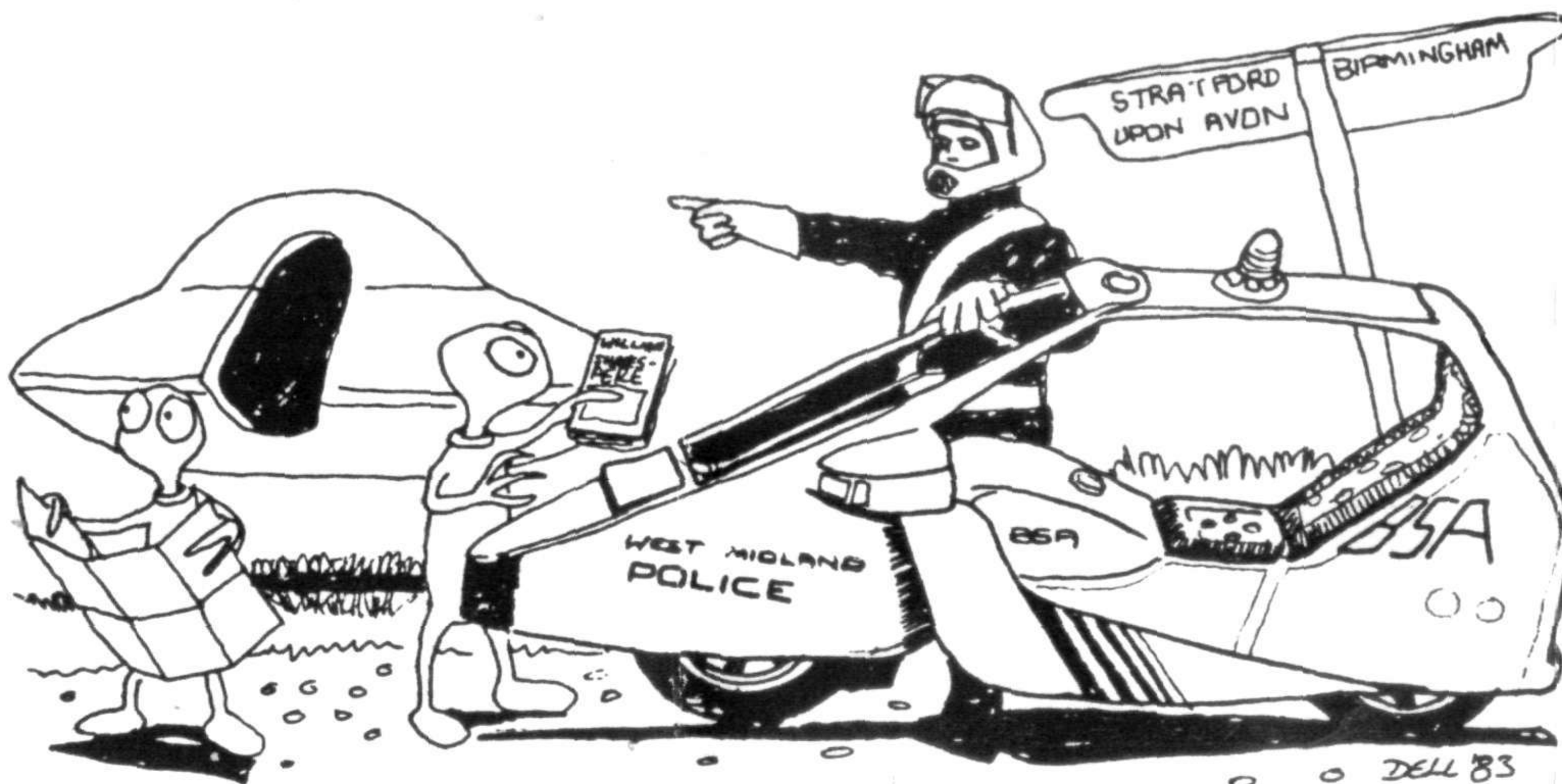
With untypical malice, Eunice has asked me to scribble down a few words about the Coff Award, that Frankenstein Monster offspring of too many over-lubricated nights at the Solihull Group, knowing full well that I only achieved a pitiful second place in last year's race. I should refuse outright. I should throw out a few helpful hints on where to put her typewriter. But no, ever a sucker for cute redheads, I give in.

Coff, or to give this diseased-brainchild of Kev Clarke's its full title, the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund, is now an annual Novacon event, an emotional experience ranking right alongside watching wallpaper yellow. Personally, I suspect the short and hairy one created this event simply so he could automatically eliminate himself from the running, but that's just my paranoia surfacing again.

The twist to this award is, of course, that it's the one gong no one really wants to win, not unless you're the other Bob Shaw, and anyway he won it last year, so yar boo sucks to him. Votes cost a mere 10p (the cost of a six-minute wrong number) and for the 1983 Coff race, Kev and co-administrator Chris Suslowicz are even running a 'Coff Mole' service, which, for a trifling sum, will report the number of votes cast for a particular fan and the number of the current leader. Proceeds are split between two worthy causes: the Taff and Guff funds, which finance fannish exchanges between American, Australian and British fans.

Like I said, last year I came second. Now this year.....

STEVE GREEN.





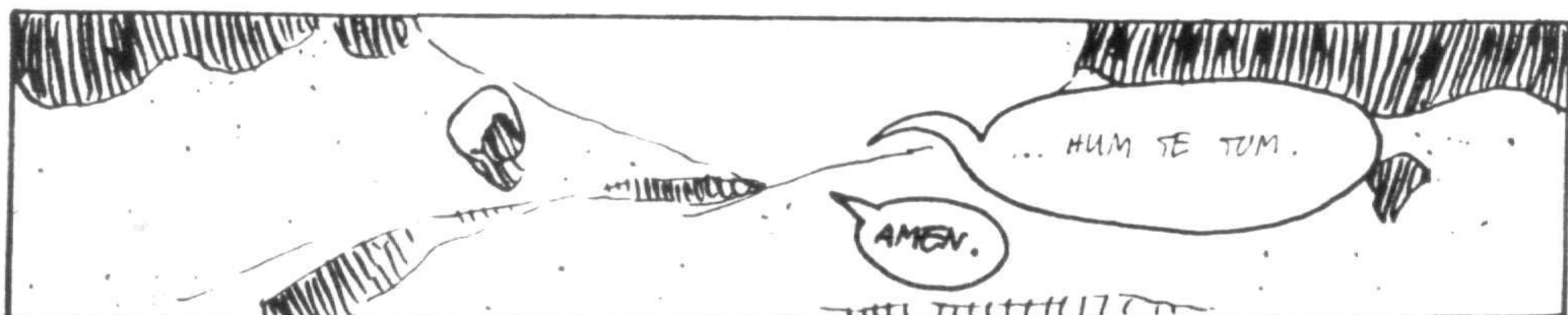
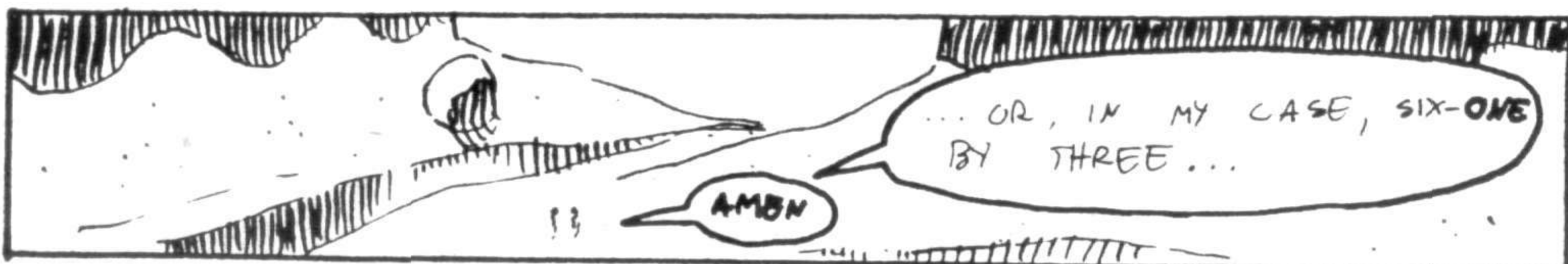






OI WARNED YE, OI  
SARD, DOO NART GO  
NEER THART  
ARTUAL PLOICE, OI  
SARD, ARTS WURTH  
YAR LOIF ARND  
YAR SOUL, OI SARD  
THAR IAS BIN SOUS  
IN THE 'EVARNS,  
OI SARD ...

... ARN' DIRD  
'EE LISSERN TOO  
ME? DIRD YAR...  
**BUGGERY!!!**





# Fanzines

THE STAINLESS STEEL WRIT  
July 1983

One of the rarer pleasures of approaching sf fanzines on a critical slant is that very occasionally you're witness to the gradual inset of editorial evolution as a new-comer to the field slowly coalesces into a worthwhile title. Such is the case with Terry Hill's Microwave, which first appeared as a somewhat undistinguished A5 photocopy fanzine last summer and in the space of just four subsequent issues has been transformed into a 1983 incarnation of Wal Willis' classic 50's tidemark, Hyphen. Whether this kind of stylistic regression can really be counted as evolution I'm not entirely certain, but Terry's obsession with 50's fandom and his enlisting of such near-forgotten figures as Vin Clarke, Art Thomson, Lee Hoffman, Steve Green (?) and Mal Ashworth for the anniversary fifth issue is not without a certain charm, nor several of his contributors without talent.

Pam Wells has come a long way since her first bemused encounters with sf fandom in the winter of '81, and the journey isn't over yet. Nutz, her first excursion into print outside the Women's APA, includes contributions from several of Pam's fellow Londoners, among them Linda Pickersgill, John Harvey and Antipodean immigrant Judith Hanna; best by far is an image of Manhattan by Caroline Mullan. Needs work, but shows promise.

Crossing the Atlantic for a moment, Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Thompkin's Mainstream is typical of the unstructured American zines currently available, though among the best of its breed. Personally, I've nothing against this kind of hit-and-run journalism if the authors have something worthwhile to say, and as long as Jerry and Suzle can come up with literary exercises like Greg Benford's "Stochasticities", and Loren MacGregor's cynical "37¢ of Wonder" in issue eight, Mainstream will remain a zine to watch.

Mike Dickinson and Jackie Gresham should have returned from seeking fame and fortune in sunny Italy by the time you read this, leaving Spaghetti Junction as the sole fannish souvenir of their year abroad. The pair take turns to adopt a sideways view of the Mediterranean lifestyle, slipping in a few cracks about the pillocks of Leeds fandom (er, shouldn't that be pillars?) for good measure, though this will be of limited interest to the average BSFGer.

Death Rays is one of the best group fanzines currently on the market, issue seven cramming in a clutch of film and book reviews, incoming editor Mike Cheater's views on sf comics (fairly comprehensive but curiously omitting Marvel's superb Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction) and a lengthy lettercol; Death Rays isn't perfect by a long chalk, but it shows just how far the fannish output of the BSFG lies behind even a group as small as the South Hants bunch. Anyone want to pick up the gauntlet?

Microwave: Terry Hill, 41 Western Road, Maidstone, Kent.

Nutz: Pam Wells, 24a Beech Road, Bowes Park, London.

Mainstream: Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins, 4326 Winslow Place N, Seattle, WA 98103, USA.

Spaghetti Junction: Mike Dickinson and Jackie Gresham, 146 North Parade, Sleaford, Lincolnshire.

Death Rays: Mike Cheater, 38 Outram Road, Southsea, Portsmouth.

Except for Death Rays, which costs 50p, all zines are available for "the Usual"; ie. trade, contribution or return postage.

STEVE GREEN.



# APA-B NEWS

Editorial Address; Cathryn Easthope.  
113 Abbey Road,  
Erdington.  
Birmingham B23 7QQ.

Hi. You may have noticed if you were there, a slight lack of organisation as far as the collation of the first mailing was concerned. As soon as Barry Bayley had done his bit, I carefully placed nine neat piles of fanzines on the front table — and immediately submerged in a flood of bodies, all demanding 'complete mailings'. Unfortunately, many APA contributors seemed to have taken 25 copies as an arbitrary figure and the reality was that we were only able to make up about twenty containing each of the nine fanzines which were submitted this month. Sorry to everyone who missed out on Simon's excellent TOS (well done Simon! Malcolm's Micro would probably be very interested in meeting your mainframe). Better luck next time.

The standard, as you might expect, was very variable, but so long as you knew the people concerned, general consensus seems to give the prize to Dave Upton's Group Therapy. I don't know where Peter Weston got the energy from to produce Prolapse. Good God, a real fanzine. In an APA!? Wow!!!

Actually, what I'd like to see are comments on each fanzine in your next issue. They needn't be very long, but the real boost to produce further issues can only come from feedback. There's nothing more depressing than sending your pride and joy off into the void and hearing a big nothing (not even the sound of sharpening knives). In a way this is a beginner's class for fanzine production (although we do, of course, have some seasoned (some well-seasoned) vetrans to show some approaches) and so praise and criticism should be welcomed. Having said that though, I wouldn't want to see anyone stifle their originality to someone else's formula. Please feel free to do exactly what you want, but maybe learn from the old \*\*\*ts (fannish technical term) now and then.

A few people (and one in particular) seem to have the idea that an apazine can only be circulated through the apa, and must never, in any circumstances reach the outside world. As far as APA-B is concerned, that's rubbish. Send your fanzine to as many people as you like, but preferably after the mailing has taken place. If you already produce a fanzine, you don't need to turn out another just for the apa either. Just let us get our grubby fingers on it first!

Lasting: Please try to make as many mailings as you can. If you don't think you can produce an issue in a particular month, send your short mailing comments to me and I'll see they're published.

Oh yes. Peter suggested missing the meal at the end of the meeting in order to get the collation done, but that of course is a non-starter. Much as I love and revere the APA I'm afraid that Food Must Come First!

Don't worry. I'll think of something.

CATHRYN EASTHOPE.



# chairman's report

## "WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR...?"

Halfway through the year; time, maybe, to take stock and see how well the BSFG is faring!

I'm generally pretty well pleased with our progress. It's always difficult to head out in new directions, but I feel my policy of involving members, and starting new projects, is now starting to lift off.

Elsewhere in this issue you should read something about APA-B, the Group Publishing Project which commenced in June and suffice to say that the success of the APA gives me immense personal satisfaction. Then there's the newsletter itself; during the last few months Eunice has done a terrific job in bringing it to life, so much so that the size of her issues seems to be increasing in leaps and bounds. Long may she continue — and get writing, if you haven't already done so; when you're producing something like this, it's really a big 'lift' to get a letter in comment.

We had around a dozen members at the Easter convention this year, and threw an uproarious party, which was very well attended; later on, some of us will be going to other conventions, culminating in our very own NOVACON in the Autumn — and this year promises to be exceptionally good, with a very full programme of events already arranged.

What else? Well, Alan Cash is making a film (see him for details); we hold an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of every month, when a few stalwarts generally gather at the Old Royal, Church Street; and of course, there's our main programme meetings.

Now, the remark was recently made that we weren't having any serious meetings this year. But, so far we've had three professionals from the world of SF, alternating with "home grown" events with a strong SF bias. I thought the May "Question Time" item worked very well, and is worth repeating; while Rog Peyton and I managed to talk and show slides to a reasonably appreciative audience in March.

Not a bad performance so far I think!

What's next? — Well, in just a few weeks time we have our Fabulous Summer Event, with a science fictional barbecue in the Malverns. In the Autumn we move back into the centre of the city, in response to popular demand, and we already have a fantastic Christmas Party organised for the end of the year, at which Bob and Sadie Shaw will be our special guests.

A final word, then, in thanks to my committee, and all the other people who've worked so hard — in particular, some of the newcomers to the Group whose enthusiasm has really made the whole thing worthwhile!

PETER WESTON.





# Reviews

DOWNBELOW STATION by C.J. Cherryh, Methuen £1.95, 432pp.

Merchanters v Mazian's Fleet v The Union v Pell Station, the base they all need to survive. Lots of flash and pow with all the logistical back-up so you feel you know each grommet personally. This won the 1982 Hugo Award, and deserved it for sheer detailed plot. The Station which orbits the planet Pall is so real you can smell its overworked air and the fear of refugees and citizens; the planet and its dwellers feel wet and furry; the very Space around it is a threatening void. The story, and its resolution, are so well worked-out that you feel the rights and wrongs and shades of gray between from each viewpoint. Cherryh's characters have at least three dimensions. The reader is drawn to sympathise with each, and worry about their fate. Tension hangs over all. BUT this same detail and kaleidoscope shift of subject that make this massive book so important, so vivid and well-rounded, slow the action and in some ways weaken its hold on the reader. On the other hand, maybe Cherryh wanted to give the impression of calamity rolling unstoppably forward like Juggernaut crushed its victims. It's well worth reading Downbelow Station to find out for yourself.

Reviewed by ANNE GAY.

NINE PRINCES IN AMBER (£1.50, 190pp) THE GUNS OF AVALON (£1.50, 203pp)  
SIGN OF THE UNICORN (£1.50, 186pp) THE HAND OF OBERON (£1.75, 181pp)  
THE COURTS OF CHAOS (£1.50, 142 pp) all by Roger Zelazny, Sphere.

I must admit to a great liking for Zelazny's writing, though that hasn't prevented me noticing the patchiness of this series (now all available in matching format from Sphere). The first volume combines beautiful imagery with a clichéd plot and some dreadful stylistic lapses, while the fifth volume is disappointingly inconclusive; in between is some Good Stuff. A family of superbeings vie with each other for supremacy, while the narrator, Corwin, being on top for most of the time. The uncertain loyalties between the nine brothers (slightly less on average; a few get killed en route) and four sisters are one of the best aspects of the series. These siblings can mould any worlds (except for the central kingdom of Amber) at their will, and they possess packs of cards ("Trumps") by which they can contact each other — a fascinating gimmick. There are puzzles at Amber, not the least being the whereabouts of Oberon (the father of all the princes and princesses), and the kingdom is under attack from the forces of Chaos, aided by a traitor among the princes. The overall theme of the series is the struggle between order and chaos, which Zelazny would have the reader believe means good against evil. This is a complex and hugely entertaining heroic fantasy series, though less deep and satisfying than Zelazny is capable of.

Reviewed by CHRIS MORGAN.





# NOVACON THIRTEEN

This month, the fan room.

## GOING UNDERGROUND

As I see it, there are two justifications for running an alternative programme at Novacon 13. The first is to provide an informal, slightly more intimate venue for the kind of chatshows and panels which deserve a hearing but probably wouldn't fill the main hall (although at least three events I have scheduled wouldn't look out of place on the main bill at, say Unicon or Cymrucon). The second is to offer an alternative to the more straightforward sf discussion by examining the nature of fandom and its myriad manifestations. There is a third, of course, which in reality outweighs the other two: to have a bloody good time.

Although the schedule for the Novacon fan room (housed in the former art room, deep in the catacombs of the Royal Angus) is still in the formative stages, I can announce a few of the highlights:

- : Guest-of-Honour Lisa Tuttle's other speech, out talented author talking not as an acclaimed sf writer but as a diehard sf fan.
- : Hugo award-winning humourist Bob Shaw in person and on video.
- : A tongue-in-cheek assault on the worst in sf, launched by Bob Shaw, Dave Langford, Garry Kilworth and other top sf authors.
- : Panels on American fandom, fan fiction, comics and feminism.

There are still a few gaps in the programme, so if anyone feels like dropping me a line at 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham 27, maybe you too can become part of the other Novacon 13.....

STEVE GREEN.

## Last Month

After trying in vain to make himself heard over the juke box downstairs, Barrington Bayley retired to the bar for a while and then returned to answer some questions. No prizes for guessing who the first one was from. Simon had noticed a contradiction in the speech and was not going to let it pass. After vainly trying to defend himself, Mr. Bayley was forced to admit he was wrong. The group then got on with what they had apparently come for; questioning Simon. Mr Bayley rather rudely put his hand up, and was eventually allowed to butt in. After the questions, Mr Bayley left for the bar, closely stalked by Simon. Some people said that this meeting was a disappointment; I thought it was a disaster.

DEAN BISSEKER.





## End Bits .....

I certainly did not intend such a large newsletter when I first set about compiling this issue — but like Alice in Wonderland, it just grew and grew and grew! Thank you very much to this month's contributors; Steve Green, Pete Weston and Cathryn Easthop and to the two reviewers. Art work this month is all by John Dell, except for page eight, which is by Matthew Brookers (not Mark Brooker, sorry). The editor-person is Eunice Pearson of 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE, aided and abetted by Phill Probert and printed by Tim Stannard, legal eagle extraordinaire! All contributions will be very gratefully accepted and locs are awaited in anticipation..

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE AND APA-B: MONDAY 8 AUGUST.



# NOVACON

# 13



EVERYONE  
GOES TO NOVACON!

Progress Report 2 Out Now!

GUESTS, PANEL DEBATES, ART SHOW, NOT THE FAN ROOM, SUMMER SPECIAL, NOVACON AM  
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NOVACON 13 TAKES PLACE ON THE 4th - 6th OF NOVEMBER 1983 AT THE ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL  
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REMEMBER IT'S YOUR CONVENTION. WILL YOU BE THERE ?