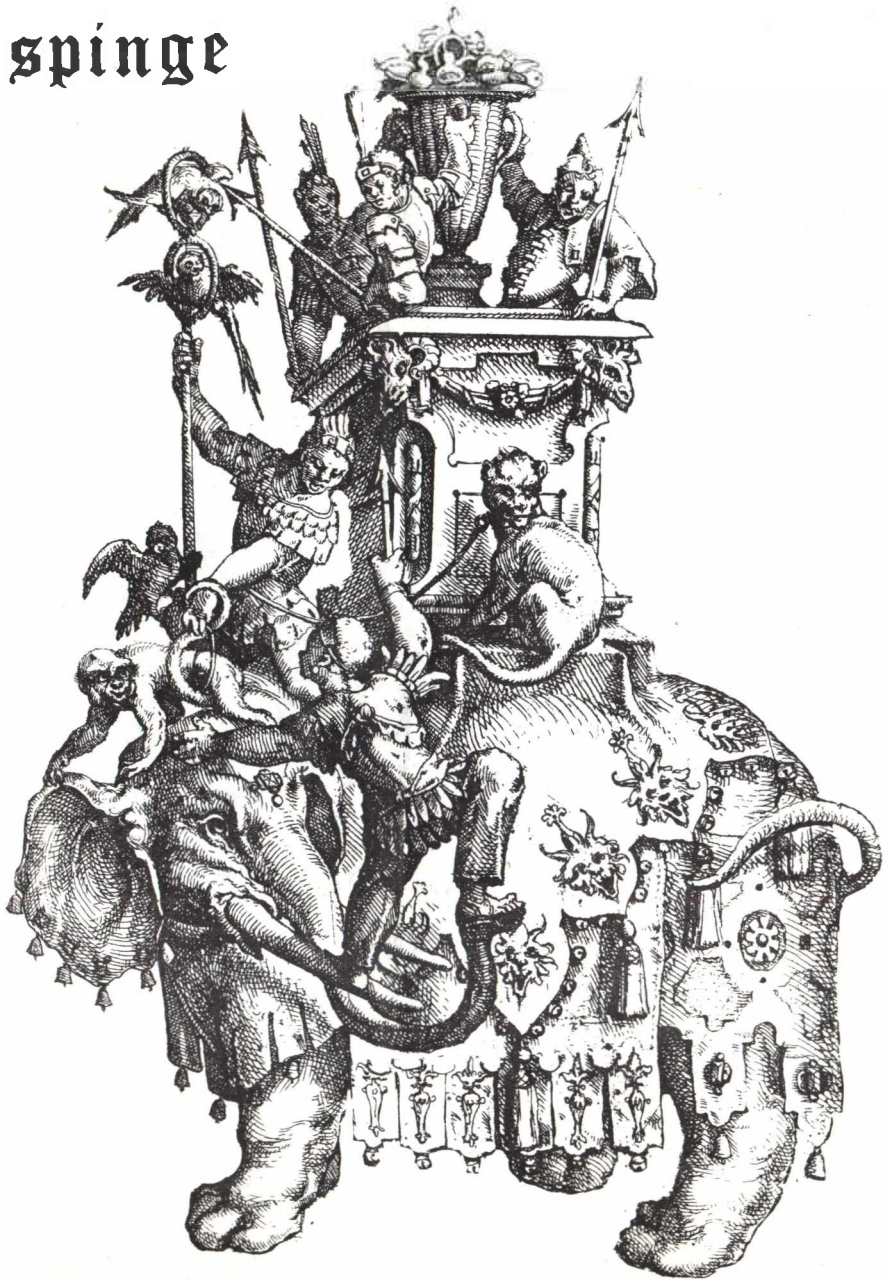


# les spinge



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Dave Rowe.



# LES SPINCE

There are a lot of different kinds of place in the world, and I suppose that most of all I love the hills and orchards of my native Worcestershire. But that doesn't mean that I don't like a lot of other places as well. Among

other things I'm an unashamed Francophile. Not Paris: it's too noisy and car-dominated. Not the Riviera with its aura of frying flesh.

Not the tourist traps like Chartres (though even Chartres is surprisingly charming at quiet times) but all those thousands of square miles of rural France, in all their diversity. And of all la belle France, my favourite place is what might loosely be termed the Auvergne, the Massif Central. I'd like to have explored France in the old days of the Secondaires, of the Tramways a Vapeur; but I was too late for that. I did manage to ride a few of the last ways; to Argentat on the PO. Correze in an old Billard autorail with an incredibly noisy gearbox, for instance. Most of my travelling has had to be by SNCF and (ghu help us) the local buses.

One afternoon, it would be seven years ago now, in the middle of October, I and a few companions arrived at Le Mont-Dore, in Puy-de-Dome. Now, Le Mont-Dore is a spa, a fact whose full implications I didn't then realise. It had the air of all such places, damp cold and rheumatic, pregnant with total boredom.

After we'd installed ourselves in our hotel (with the aid of the free station-to-hotels bus service, whose main drawback was that about six times as many people were waiting to use it as the bus would hold) and had dinner, we went out to see what life there was in the neighbourhood. All we could find was a single caff with a couple of pintables and a juke box. Le Mont-Dore after dark was not exactly lively. Eventually we retreated apathetically to the hotel.

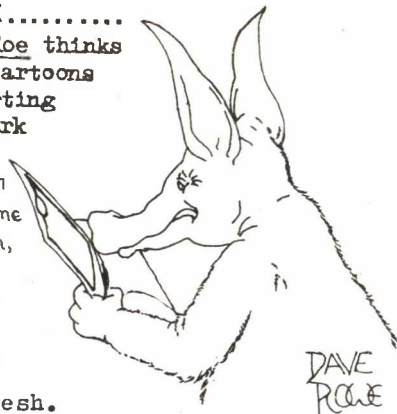
Next morning we were up fairly early, because we wanted to catch an early train to Merlines; I was up first and had a little time in hand before breakfast, so I went for a stroll in the town.

That morning a thick fog had collected, since the area lies at the top end of a valley between high hills and traps the mists quite readily. Visibility was virtually zero. As I got into the central square the fog momentarily lifted, and

from EGG SIX.....

"Rosemary Pardoe thinks Dave Rowe's cartoons may be converting her to aardvark fandom."

Well, I've known Dave to have some affects on women, but .....





there in front of me was a giant building of decidedly cthulhoid appearance; towering slabs of granite rising up and up to eventually disappear from sight in the fog. As I stood there a clock struck eight, and to my amazement shambling figures muffled up in shapeless white robes, their heads covered by tall hoods pierced only by eye-holes, began to appear from all directions and shuffle into the building through the great doors in its base. Horrors! For a moment I was not in Le Mont-Dore but somewhere else. R'lyeh perhaps, and these were the misshapen spawn of Cthulhu, come to worship their master... then reason asserted itself and the moment passed.

Over breakfast, I learnt that the building was the main baths of the spa; the Things in hoods and robes were the patients, muffled up in lots of towelling against the cold October fog; and eight o'clock, of course, was when the baths opened for business. We caught our train to Merlines and I've not been back since. Sometimes I wonder - is Le Mont-Dore just a spa, or are perhaps the Great Old Ones worshipped there, on cold foggy mornings in October?

\* \* \*

In winter we usually put out food in our front garden for the wild birds of the neighbourhood, mostly bread and seed (strangely, they prefer budgie seed like "Trill" to the things like "Swoop" which are supposed to be meant especially for them). On a cold day great flocks of sparrows turn up to partake of the goodies provided, and we have noticed that although a single sparrow is none too hot on the intelligence scene, a flock of them is quite bright. If we miss out a day the birds still turn up at the usual feeding time, expecting to find food, so they can obviously look ahead from one day to another. Some of the local moggies have cottoned on to the bird-feeding proceedings, and turn up expecting to catch a sparrow for themselves. Kitten 2 (the black and white one) is the main offender. We designate it 2 because we don't know its name, nor where it lives, so some such convenient reference term is needed in conversation. In the middle of the garden is a cherry tree, and as soon as a cat appears on the scene the sparrows all fly to the top of the tree and perch there, watching the cat. Cat immediately tries to climb the tree, of course, but the sparrows aren't worried; they don't fly away. They know that the cat won't get above the few biggest branches at the bottom of the tree, and they just perch there and watch it. Kitten 2 is incompetent anyway. Once it's in the

tree it suddenly realises that it doesn't know how to get down again. It usually collapses out of the tree with paws flying in all directions and head down. No doubt the birds enjoy the spectacle.

Kittens 1 and 3 are better at climbing trees, but even they don't catch any sparrows. The other natural hazard the sparrows face at feeding time is the starlings. Nasty, quarrelsome birds they are. When they see the sparrows feeding they come swooping down and strut about pre-empting all the food for themselves and generally trying to exclude the sparrows from their fair share. But the sparrows have a way of dealing with this. If the starlings are interfering, the flock of sparrows will all suddenly take off and fly up into the tree, as though some danger (a cat, perhaps) was approaching. Seeing this, the starlings will also take fright and fly off. It appears that they are more cowardly than sparrows, though; they don't just go up in the tree, they fly off as far away as they can and as fast as they can. The interesting thing is that the sparrows will do this when no danger of any kind is in the vicinity, and the only reason for it must be to get rid of the starlings. Once the starlings have gone, the sparrows all fly back down to the ground and resume their meal.

In London we had many pigeons (ugh). When we moved to Huntingdon we found to our relief that there were none at all about. Instead we have seagulls (especially in winter), and being on the edge of the fens we have a good number of lapwings. In summer there are also skylarks. Altogether a much nicer bird population than we used to have in London, though sparrows are lovable everywhere. We hardly ever see a skylark, but can often hear them as they fly around high up in the air, singing.

Lots of fandoms have grown up around

fictional people. The greatest of all is Sherlock Holmes, of course, with his huge following, but there are others as well. Philip Jose Farmer's recent Tarzan biography, for instance. A fictional person who seems to have been rather neglected is C.S. Forester's creation, Horatio Hornblower. The only book about H.H. (as



opposed to Forester's novels about him) I know of is Northcote Parkinson's biography "The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower". This is a good book, but I wish more people would get interested in Hornblower in print. He is such a believable character, human and imperfect as real people are. For those who haven't read the books, perhaps I'd better say that Hornblower was a (fictional) British naval officer of the Napoleonic war period. In the first book he is a midshipman, and we follow his career as he is promoted (rather rapidly by the standards of the time) until the last glimpse is in a short story where he is Admiral of the Fleet (retired) and meets the future Napoleon III. Forester did his homework thoroughly: he also wrote 'The Hornblower Companion' which documents Hornblower's career and travels in a series of maps and plans.

A feature of the books is Forester's technique that if history is inadequate to the demands of the story, he has no hesitation in revising it. Thus, we have Hornblower invading French territory and becoming Governor of Le Havre (while in reality someone whose name I forget was similarly installed as Governor of Bordeaux, too far round the coast to fit the requirements of Forester's story). Hornblower marries as his second wife Lady Barbara Wellesley, a non-existent sister of the Duke of Wellington invented by Forester for the purposes of his stories.

Still, fiction of this type has to be judged on its internal merits, without worrying over exact correspondence with the true world. After all, that's the game that people play: to take the differences and contradictions and, assuming that the fictional character is real, to explain them away. That's why Sherlock Holmes studies are so entertaining. Doyle loaded the stories up with clashing statements for which explanations have to be found. Where was Watson's wound, for instance?

Hornblower is the same, though his stories are more internally consistent than Holmes's. For example, at one point he and Maria (his first wife) make a canal boat journey on the Thames and Severn Canal and the River Thames. I've not been able to discover any commercial passenger boat operating on the Thames and Severn Canal at the time. Have I not looked hard enough, or (assuming H.H. was real) is there some other explanation? This sort of thing can provide hours of endless fun.

As I said though, it would be nice if a Horatio Hornblower cult got under way; he's always been one of my favourite fictional people.

# CRY OF THE WILD GELS

John Linwood: 125 Twickenham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex

The IS

I remember with affection was a ratbag of reactionary (Ken Cheslin) and radical (Dave Hale) opinions, while my column (The Fanalytic Eye) was geared to outrage fannish opinion to provide plentiful LoCs. I look back with horror and amusement at the way we picked feuds with Alan Dodd, Charles Platt, Gray Hall, and other stuffed shirts; when we couldn't find any pompous opinions to jump on, hoax fans were created to provide them. In retrospect, the only really important contributions were those by Mike Moorcock; we didn't know it at the time, but he was writing the Mein Kampf of the New Wave, and spelling out the future of British SF. We also thought that sercon fanzines like Zenith were a flash in the pan, ribbed them mercilessly, and lived to regret it.

Who started this silly

'Golden Age' crap? It was just a coincidence that at a particular point in time (very early 60s) a small group of London fans were producing some of the best ever British fmz: Inchmery's Age and Ella Parker's Orion. Inchmery's overworked duper also churned out fmz for other fans, such as George Locke's Smoke and the late Ivor Mayne's Foop, both baby Age's because of their blue ink and ATom's Ben period covers. Also at this time Eric Bentcliffe was pubbing Bastion, which doesn't seem to get the praise it deserves. It ran for only a few issues, but its presentation and quality were far superior to most fmz of that period except Age. Hyphen was in its decline during this period; you have to go back a few years to find that fanzine's 'Golden Age' (ecch, there I said it!). My preference for these fmz rather than the current British ones (bar Spec and Maya) is because their editors had control over their fmz, they knew how to edit, also they selected material

rather than the twisting of contributors' arms that some present-day faneds indulge in.

(++ I agree, Jhim, that LS now is quite a different thing from the LS of Dave's era. But Dave's LS was a different creature from the original Cheslin model, too. I suppose I have kept up the name because of the old Stourbridge connection as much as anything. I don't see any reason to change, though. ++)

Ian Butterworth: 29 Larkhill Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire

I have also read 'Red Shift' and I must agree that at first glance the style would seem to put it out of reach to 'children'. But it seems to me that you have underestimated the intelligence of the average 'child': I think a more realistic minimum age would be twelve, or even eleven. I also think that although it is good, it is not quite as good as 'The Owl Service'.

Jim Allan: 299 Mill Road 1708, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada  
M9C 4V9

Your put-down of FIAWOL strikes a resounding cord in my being. However, I must admit that with the extent of the activities counted under 'fandom' these days one could follow FIAWOL and lead a fuller life than most of the non-fans. For example, I recently received a letter from someone who claimed he edited a 'mathematics fanzine'.

I stopped by at Portmeirion and Penrhyndeudraeth myself when in Britain over a year ago. I was backpacking it, and so arrived at the Hotel Portmeirion via a rather circuitous route through some fields. Suddenly, I was confronted by a strange arched gate, covered with plaster, and fronted by a rather forbidding sign warning me that from here on was private property and trespassers were forbidden.

However, I went in past it anyway, and found a girl working at cleaning up something or other in the gatehouse. I asked her where one was supposed to come in.

"Oh," she replied, "down front at the main entrance. But they close at five."

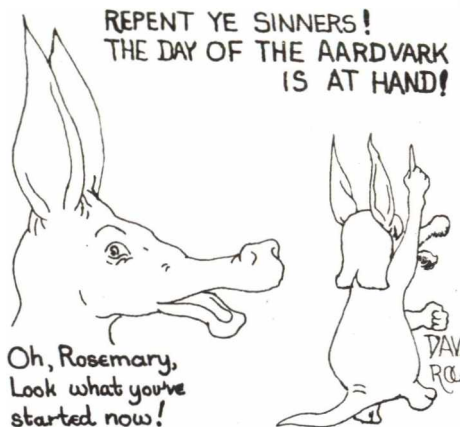
"Oh dear" I said.  
"Well, I suppose I could come back tomorrow."

"No," she said,  
"Just go right in if you want, and don't make yourself conspicuous, and you should be all right."

So I did, at a saving



which would have been a little more than your 60p, since it was then early August. However, I did not, and still do not, know how anyone can quite be inconspicuous in a posh resort such as that when they carry a bright yellow backpack. What surprised me was the colour on so many of the buildings. I'd only seen 'The Prisoner' on black-and-white television and had pictured the village as being all stucco white in colour. And there were so many religious statues about which must have been removed when they were shooting.



JO3 D Gary Grady: Box 25 AFRTS, FPO New York, NY 09571

Terry Jeeves is a tad Tory, isn't he? Can't say I agree with him, but he has a right to his opinion. One annoying characteristic of some of my fellow liberals is their tendency to act as though the opposition is totally wrong. There is, in fact, much evidence to indicate that emphasis on violence and sex in the entertainment of children or Republicans leads to rather unfriendly behaviour on their part. Not too long ago, I leafed through a porno novel belonging to an acquaintance of mine (all right, I read the good parts). It described the rape of a young girl, indicating how the victim is helplessly drawn into enjoying the experience by her body's responses. I doubt Rosemary would enjoy bumping into someone who has read this and takes it seriously.

On the other hand films like 'Clockwork Orange' should not be subject to wholesale ban. CO for example proposed some very interesting questions in an effective manner. I am not familiar with your cinema system, but in my own area no-one under eighteen was allowed to see the film without his parents. The rule is sometimes not too strictly enforced, but there were no instances I know of where anyone acted out the violent parts of the film. At least, that was true of the Wilmington, NC, area where I worked for a TV news department at the time. There was an increase in the sales of Beethoven, however.

The Keflavik American Forces Radio Station (with which I am loosely associated as a journalist) carries radio mysteries every Saturday evening, mainly reruns of 30s and 40s broadcasts. In the States the Meritta Bread Co. is sponsoring rebroadcasts of the 'Lone Ranger'. One of

the U.S. SF magazines is supposed to be working on a series of radio plays based on stories it has recently published. Some Icelanders may have been surprised at Halloween when the AFRS station ran Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds', the same thing that produced the panics in New Jersey.

Terry Jeeves: 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE

Looks like our fmz (Vagary, Erg, Scottishe and Spinge) are the centenarians of British fandom, as you say. Offhand, I don't know if the so-called 'golden age' were better (or worse) than today's fmz. In general they were larger pagewise; they also tended to use more illos. The essence of the problem is probably that on looking back, we think of the top fanzines - but forget the crud which littered the scene then as now.

Agree with Jill Bridges' problems of a 1973 listener. Despite the much vaunted 4 programmes, in actual fact there are three: 1 and 2 alternate in claiming the title for what is a one channel programme. As for the music, it is either full-blooded pop or high-faluting Radio 3 noise; failing that a load of natter on the habits of the lesser spotted crogglebird.

Archie Mercer: 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall  
TR13 8LH

Jilli Bridges has a very valid point re the setup on BBC wireless. One aspect that needs pointing out is that since the abolition of sound wireless licences the listeners no longer have any right to be considered. BBC sound exists strictly on the charity of the vast amorphous TV audience, and of course they couldn't care less.

As for her Masonic family history, words don't quite fail me. I presume that marrying one's deceased wife's pre-existing daughter somehow falls outside the scope of the Tables of Kindred and Affinity - but surely to goodness it covers uncle and niece? Even if they are also, by sleight-of-hand as it were, first cousins. (Thinks: first cousins are exempt. Possible uncles and nieces are zero-rated?). One final matter. Have you ever encountered a pop song called 'Dancing in the Moonlight'? I'm subjected to it every now and again, and every time it impresses me as absolute wombat-music. You can actually hear the wom...

(++ Licences or not, we are all taxpayers: not that that matters either, of course)

Leigh Edmonds: PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183, Australia

Is 'Journey into Space' the serial in which some people go to the moon from somewhere in central Australia and then get whipped back in time to when the earth was much younger and there are spacemen who look like apes. Maybe it wasn't; I seem to remember there being two or three serials all coming out about the same time. Of course, I was very little then, and unfortunately bath time coincided with the time the serial was on. In order to be able to hear it I either had to have a very quick bath (which was, I suspect, frowned upon) or strain my ears to hear the radio and take a long time (which was also frowned upon). Either way I didn't get to hear the serial properly but I enjoyed it immensely.

I wish they'd played the Dan Dare serial out here; Dan was (and will probably remain) my favourite comic hero, and the Mekon my favourite comic villain. I once bought four years' worth of 'The Eagle' at a school fair, for one or two shillings, mainly for the cutaway pictures of tanks and aeroplanes, but I soon found that Dan was just as interesting and far more exciting. I guess that was my first real contact with SF. I still remember the time when Dan flew in the suicide rocket to destroy the satellite which controlled the robots, and if I had a complete run of 'Amazing' I'd gladly trade them for that story in 'Eagle' - that's nostalgia for me. Dan Dare was also the character who introduced me to collecting, because one way or another I managed to trade or buy every other issue after the ones I'd bought at the fair (and even some before then), and I convinced my mother to buy me a subscription to 'Eagle' for my birthday. Soon after that the strip went to black and white and the story content declined. Still I kept getting 'Eagle' until I came down to Melbourne to live.

A few years later I began to think about Dan Dare again, so when I went home next I looked for them, but my mother had cleared out the room a few weeks before and they were all gone.

At the Adelaide convention in August somebody had a display of Dan Dare strips which I stood and looked at for hours, I thought they were so marvellous. I got to talking to the fan who owned them, and we waxed nostalgic over them, recounting the adventures and so on. His memory went back to before the Venusian adventure which I thought was pretty fantastic, because to me Dan began on Venus.

(++ Surely the first Dan Dare story, back in 1950, took place on Venus, because that was where the Mekon hung out. My own memories of the story are rather faded, but I think the setting was Venusian, in which case, what did your acquaintance at Adelaide have in mind?)

Ken Ozanne: 'The Cottonwoods', 42 Meek's Crescent,  
Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia

It seems that you are paying too much postage. In the same mail came LURK 5, which cost Mike and Pat only 5p postage for a heavier magazine. They were posted within two days of one another as well. The only difference I can see is that their envelope bore the legend PRINTED MATTER. I'd suggest a word with the PO or perhaps the Hearas. While I'm on the subject of the PO, I might mention that every one of the nine stamps adorning this issue got cancelled.

(++ I sent out my overseas copies by the full (letter) rate in the fond belief that this ensured faster travel than the Printed Matter rate. Obviously this is not so to Australia, but from the evidence available I think I am right in saying that from here to the US it makes a difference of 2-3 weeks in arrival time. This present issue (31) I am going to try the air mail printed rate, which is only marginally higher than the surface letter rate, and should make a lot of difference in the transit time. We shall see. The trans-Atlantic mail is terrible nowadays: I received a fanzine the other day that had taken more than three months to get here from the US.)

WAHF Hermann Schröder (Mulheim); Dave Rowe (Wickford); Mary Legg (Oxford); Eric Lindsay (Faulconbridge).



In an idle moment in the public library I browsed through about five years of the British National Bibliography looking for fanzines. I only found one, and of all things that one could have been I was amazed to find that it was RUEFCUT. Presumably the staff of the BNB had their minds blown by trying to decide what it was...