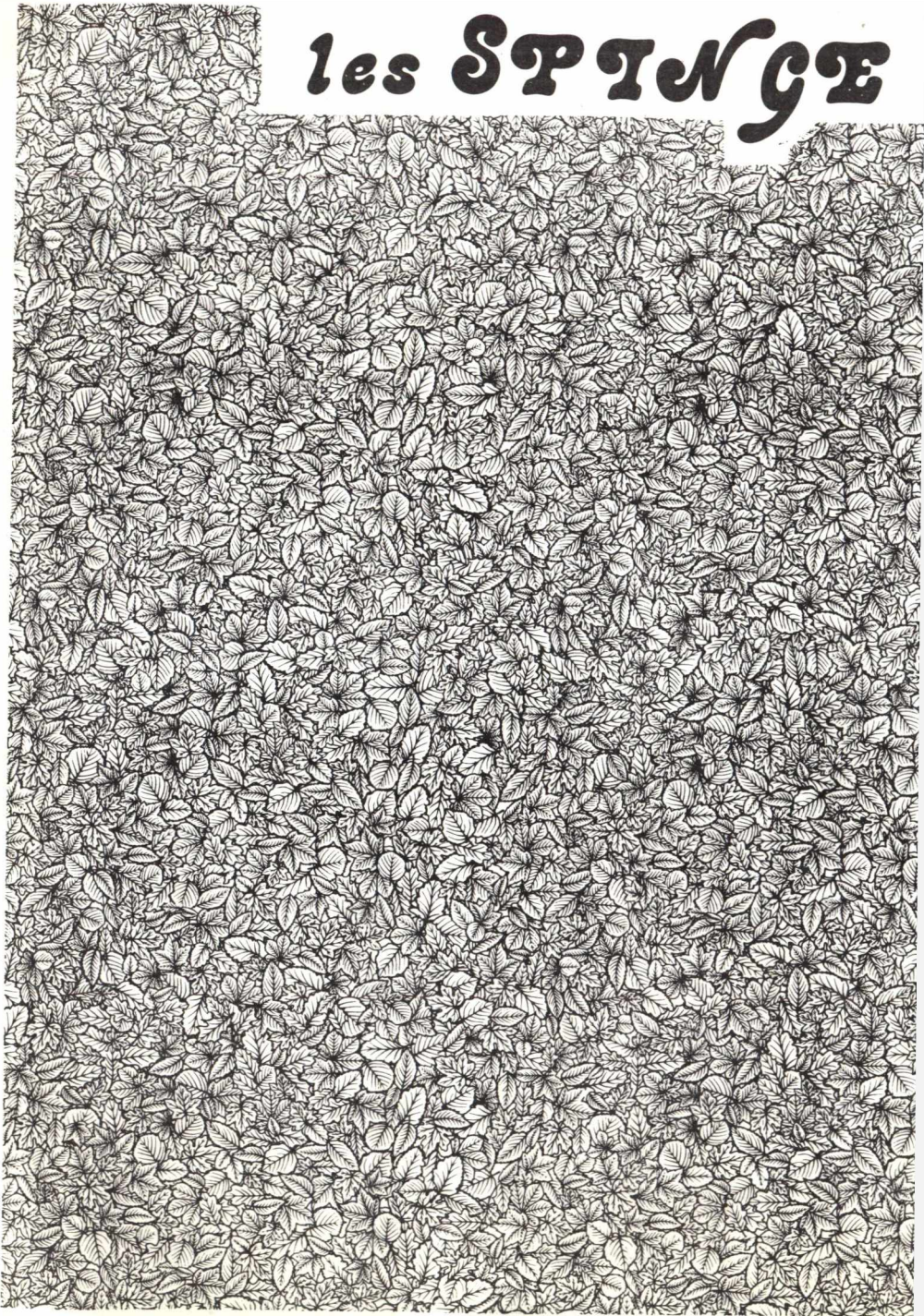


les SPYNGE



Issue Thirty-two, September 1974

Published by Darroll and Rosemary Pardoe,
24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon,
PE18 7SU, England.

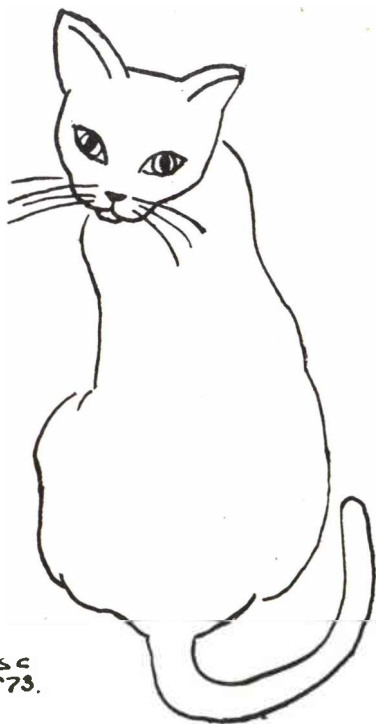
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Availability Not Generally Available.

Artwork Sue Clarke (2, 11); Harry Bell
(5); Harry Douthwaite (9); Ron McGuinness
(12).

Fanzine Control Number 59 96021 32

LES SPIRGE



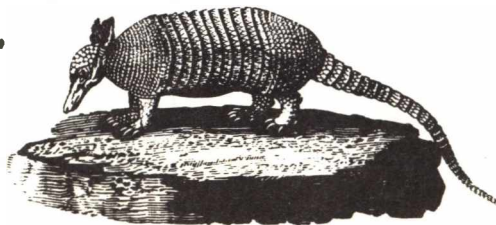
When I was young I was lucky in that my parents were the kind of people who always had a lot of books around the house. The books were of all kinds: they were in the habit of attending auction sales and returning with a couple of boxes of books that they'd bought cheap as a lot without looking at them too closely. So the house was full of books, good and bad and indifferent, and as soon as I could learn to read a little I started to work my way through them.

One of the more interesting items was the complete works of H.G.Wells, and from the age of six or so I was ploughing my way through them. I eventually read the whole lot, from 'The War of the Worlds' to 'Kipps' to 'Tono-Bungay'. At first I was pretty much at sea but as I grew up so I began to understand them more. H.G.Wells was a constant companion all through my childhood.

Two things have followed from this familiarity with the writings of that remarkable man. Thinking back, I'm sure that both my choice of career and my liking for sf are due to my reading. Wells was a man on the side of science: he believed that the sciences were the way to man's mastery of his environment and himself, and his scientific optimism comes through strongly in his stories. Enough of this must have rubbed off on me that when the time came to choose my path in the world I opted to be a scientist myself (specifically, a sugar chemist). The scientific vision of the world may have soured a bit since Wells' day but a lot of what he said is still true. It's a pity he could be so naive as well, sometimes in his science but mostly in his sociology. I always think of 'The World Set Free' as the most glaring example of this. There's a hospital in the story, and this hospital has a great encyclopedia containing all medical knowledge. Every week new sheets are brought to replace outdated ones, keeping the repository of knowledge up to date. Presumably all the hospitals had them. This idea is peculiar, to put it mildly. It shows Wells' view of science as a collection of facts: not a word about anybody actually doing research to find things out, just this collection of indexed facts. I suppose it comes from Wells not being a scientist himself, just a scientifically literate person, and thus not being so well up on the actual process of pushing back the frontiers.

The other thing Wells did for me was to presensitise me to science fiction. I always liked his proto-sf such as 'The Time Machine' and 'The Sleeper Wakes' so when I encountered a copy of 'Planet Stories' in 1951 I lapped it up at once, and became a confirmed sf fan overnight. And I was only eight years old.

I still like to read Wells novels from time to time: not only the sf ones but all the others as well, and his non-fiction too, especially the despairing 'Mind at the end of its tether' written right at the end of his life. It's fashionable in some places



to do down H.G.Wells, but he doesn't deserve it. His actual writing technique may not have been perfect, but he entertained me and made me think. What more could I ask of an author?

.....

The saga of the cats in our garden continues. We don't see a lot of Kitten One and Kitten Three nowadays; since they grew up they seem to have avoided our neighbourhood. But Kitten Two (the black-and-white one) is still a frequent caller, though now a grown cat. Our chief visitor for the last couple of months though has been a new one, who we call Broken-Eared Tabby (which should describe his appearance to you adequately enough). He's a medium aged cat, perhaps four years old, and spends a lot of time just sitting under our fir tree in the back garden and watching the world go by. Most places in the area any cat is liable to be surrounded by children and fussed and stroked, even if he wants nothing but peace and quiet. Broken-eared Tabby seems to have realised that our garden is a haven of peace among all this frenetic cat-affection (we're one of the few households in Othello Close without resident children). In fact we've seen him chase off other cats from the garden when he's been there: perhaps he has assumed proprietary rights. Kitten Two he tolerates, however. Perhaps this is because Kitten Two is a she. Carbonel (the big black one from down the road) has also been seen to enter our garden unmolested, but then Carbonel is distinctly patriarchal in appearance and manner.

The other side of the bit of open ground out front of our house, in Hamlet Close, a ginger cat has come to live. We haven't seen a lot of him so far, but his main occupation in life appears to be sitting on top of the coal bunker outside their back door, where he can catch the sun, and looking in a superior way at the labrador who lives in the next house along. As you might guess, we've assigned him the name Ginger Cat. One day we must really go round and find out the real names of all these moggies: but from what we know of our neighbours they'll turn out to be odious names like Tiddles or Puss. In any case, we don't even know where some of them live.

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(The review that follows is by Rosemary). 'The Baby Trap' by Ellen Peck, published by Heinrich Hanau at 75p.

This book is subtitled 'An Outspoken Attack on the Motherhood Myth' and that is very roughly what it is. Ellen Peck doesn't believe that motherhood is wrong, but simply that it is not the best course for a great many women. She maintains that a lot of women have babies for the wrong reasons; because they have been pressured into it from various sources. The first chapters of the book examine the pressures put on a woman to have children, which are such that it is almost always assumed that a girl, when she marries,

will be pregnant within five or six years at the very most (and nowadays it's more likely to be one or two).

The first 'trap' facing a young couple is 'babysell', the word the writer uses to describe the massive advertising campaign given not only to equipment 'essential' for baby, but also to other items sold on the basis that they're necessary for 'the family' (I notice for instance that a new weekly encyclopedia is being sold on TV with the words that 'you owe it to your family'). The majority of products are sold with the aid of carefully chosen child models and serene, calm looking mothers. One wonders how many women get a nasty shock when they are taken in by this image and then find that in reality you need more than a packet of peas to be a good mother.

Then there is the 'media trap'. In the chapter on this Mrs Peck shows how womens' magazines are preoccupied with the mother image, and similarly how on TV a childfree (from choice) married couple is rarely if ever seen. Now it's true that if TV wants to reflect life it must concentrate on the family, but there are more childfree couples than one might think and it would be nice not to see them totally ignored.

Of course behind these other traps is the 'cultural trap'. The whole of society is concentrated around children. A husband for instance tries to do better in his job in order to get more pay in order that his wife can leave work and have a baby. Then he has to make more money to pay for the extra cost of bringing up a child, and maybe he even saves up to pay for his schooling and to supplement his grant in college. Each generation is brought up, from tiny children, to make infinite sacrifices for the next, and it isn't unselfish but just pathetic. In concentrating on bringing up the adults of the future, how can one hope to improve the present? A childfree man can say 'I will not take on this job, although it's highly paid, because it is wrong' (property developing, petrol-driven car manufacture etc) but how many men with family responsibilities dare say the same?

Finally there's the 'trap of your own feelings'. This is not, as you might have expected, the so-called maternal instinct (which in fact is probably almost absent in modern woman), rather it is those feelings (often suspect) which lead a girl to think that she would like children. They can include a need for attention, a need for something to love (this happens surprisingly often in marriage) or perhaps most frequently the feeling that it would be fulfilling. Actually everyone, male or female, seeks fulfillment out of life (a reason for living, if you like) but whilst women think that they must be getting broody and promptly get pregnant, men go out and seek the real answer. I tend to think that this is the reason why up until now it is man and not woman who has made most of



the great discoveries and inventions of mankind.

So what happens to those women who have babies for the wrong reasons? Well, some get by of course and are (or seem to be) quite happy, but others have tremendous problems of one sort or another. Some take to 'baby bashing' simply because they cannot cope, others lose their husbands altogether or at least develop a less close relationship with them. Most men, let's face it, prefer a sex partner to a mother figure, and there aren't that many women who can combine the two with any success. Many (possibly even most) mothers become more attached to their child than they are to its father, obviously giving the lie to the idea that a woman has a baby to show her love for the father. Can you wonder that so many men look elsewhere?

What then is the alternative? The rest of 'The Baby Trap' examines how to avoid motherhood, and what to do once you have. There is a chapter on birth control, and another on how to deal with the questions and pressures of friends and relatives. These can only be appreciated if you are a childfree couple; they can be quite hard to cope with and many give in under the strain.

Then Ellen Peck describes the lives of child-free couples. Here, as in many other sections of the book, it is impossible to avoid generalisations (and she makes no bones about the fact that she includes a great many, to give the opposite view from those found in women's magazines) but it is fair to say that the childfree couple has freedom which the family doesn't. Many childfree couples are as materialistic as anyone else, but they do have the freedom to choose a more 'significant' lifestyle. For twenty years upwards the couple with children are more or less forced to live one particular sort of life; always the family must come first. The man and woman with no children can, if they choose, improve the quality not only of their own but also other peoples' lives. Many can combine family with other things: most can't effectively.

Thus 'The Baby Trap' explains the viewpoint of the couple without children from choice. I suppose in a way it's an apologist view but it can hardly avoid being that. All the author is saying is that people ought to have the right to choose whether motherhood or fatherhood is for them. At present it takes a strong will and a good deal of determination if you choose not to conform to the norm. Witness for instance the programme some months ago on TV which some of you may have seen, in which Ellen Peck faced a group of people (the programme was 'Midweek'). These people, a number of whom I'd previously thought of as reasonably sensible, became positively fanatical when their assumptions about motherhood were challenged. Mrs Peck helped her case simply by not losing her cool, even when the idea that no normal person would want to remain childless was aired.

To get back to the book, however, it is not without its faults. It is filled with examples of couples living various lifestyles, all of which are fascinating,

but some of which don't sound quite real (or at least the conversations with them don't). I'm not saying I don't think the couples exist, but rather that the conversations have been either under or over edited, probably the former (unedited speech always sounds fake when written down verbatim). Also, the book suffers from having been specially edited, believe it or not, for an English audience. Mostly this seems to consist of changing the names of many American cities mentioned for English ones. This sticks out like a sore thumb on occasion; for instance a couple said to be living in London complain of 'doctors' bills!' Similarly there's a mention of 'cuddling...on the flight to Manchester'. I'd like to know what sort of man would find enough time to cuddle with a strange woman on so short a flight (assuming some time for chatting up beforehand); however, Darroll has made the point that he might get the time whilst the plane was circling innumerable times waiting for permission to land!



As a whole, the book is fascinating. If nothing else, I hope that it will persuade people to allow that just maybe Ellen Peck is right. In one chapter she complains that the culture of the modern world is 'more concerned with reproducing itself than with improving itself'. I hope that perhaps she has persuaded a few people not to do what is culturally normal but instead to seek the ultimately more fulfilling course of attempting to improve the quality of life instead of the quantity. Of those who choose childbirth for the right reasons perhaps now they'll realise that what's right for them isn't right for everyone, and that the Pecks, as well as Darroll and I and an increasing number of other couples who are childfree are not peculiar, immature or selfish.

(Darroll again now) At present in Great Britain we have two APAs: the old-established OMPA and its new rival ROMPA (silly name). OMPA suffered a lot in the mid-sixties with the crises which arose during the AE-ships of Brian Jordan and Heinz Arenz. It never really recovered, and it's been slowly dying ever since. ROMPA was founded to correct this situation by providing Britain with a lively APA and OMPA with some competition. From the few ROMPA fmz I've seen, it does seem to be more lively than OMPA at present, but I'm afraid it's perpetuated some of the mistakes that have prevented OMPA from staging a proper recovery from its moribund condition. For example, the method by which both APAs are run is for the members to send in their individual fmz to the AE, who then makes up bundles and sends them out to the membership, usually every quarter. This is the traditional APA method (used for instance by FAPA, which is why I've never felt much of an urge to become a member of FAPA, and anyway it's the last resting place of old, tired fans) but it has disadvantages. The thought of having to put out a 'proper' fanzine each time can lead to procrastination

(mea culpa). The bundle method is not really suitable for a frequency of mailings any closer than three months, but three months is too long for an informal organisation such as an APA should be. An APA should ideally be a multiple conversation-in-print, but a whole quarter is too long to have to wait for people's reaction to one's thoughts and ideas.

The answer is to adopt the alternative method, where the members send in a few pages each, which are then made up into a single magazine (a combozine, if you like) by the AE. This way the opportunity to produce individual, formal fmz is lost but the gains are enormous. Since the activity required at any one time is smaller, the frequency of mailings can be higher: monthly, perhaps. The turn-round time for response to one's writings is reduced and people feel more in contact with each other.

If one of the British APAs had the courage to go over to this method, I'm sure it would be highly successful. But at present I'm rather disenchanted with our APAs. This is the age of the personalzine anyway, so why go in for producing a formal fanzine for an APA when the same thing could be sent out as a personalzine to a wider audience (and an audience whose members one can choose for oneself, too).

This is the Pardoe method, as you will probably have noticed. LES SPINGE is a medium-circulation personalzine, not now connected with any APA, and the only APA I'm active in at the moment is a combozine-organized one, ELANOR.

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This issue marks the fifteenth annish of LES SPINGE. Old Leslie has come a long way since that first mimeo'd issue in 1959, which the Stourbridge mob of those times typed up on sixmo stencils (not knowing any better) and sent to Ron Bennett, who'd offered to duplicate it. Ron, kind soul, retyped the whole fmz on to standard stencils before running it off. A real helping hand which got LS started off on the right footing.

I suppose the high spot of the life of LS was the later Dave Hale issues, and especially the last one (14), over a hundred pages and with a cover in white ink on black paper. If Dave had kept up LS I think he could have gone right to the top and won a Hugo. It was that good. Instead, LS has gone through several changes of style and ended up as the Pardoe personalzine. Still, though, one thread has run all through: LES SPINGE has always been a fmz of Stourbridge Fandom one way or another. Admittedly, Stourbridge Fandom now consists of Ken Cheslin (who actually lives there) and myself (in exile, as we say) but the connection has been maintained. Happy Birthday, Leslie P. Hinge. Where I wonder will you be in 1989?



CRY OF THE WILD GELS

Frank Denton: 14654 8th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98166

I haven't seen the movie version of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, but we did see the road company perform it here in Seattle. I felt much the same as you profess. Contrary to some reports which I had read which expressed a feeling that the work was blasphemous, I left the theater with a very strong feeling of emotion and food for thinking a little bit differently about some of the people with whom Jesus associated. A good contemporary work.

Sheryl Birkhead: 23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20760

A-
round here we both put out wildbird seed and suet. The suet is a chunk of pork 'fatback' or side meat with a string around it and hangs from one end of the clothesline - the seed is in a small feeder - again, on the line, and so far none of the multitudinous cats have tampered with the setup. Did you ever think about broadcasting some sunflower seeds? We did last year, but in the rush of summer didn't get around to them and never even found the plants in the weeds. In case you do, all you have to do with the heads is bring them in once they are matured and save them until time to feed the birds. Then just tie up the whole head (no feeder needed) and let them pick the seeds off the head for themselves. Living on a farm (but with civilisation FAST encroaching) makes for a lot of interesting birds around; but I'm not really a bird watcher and don't know what they are (except for the obvious ones, like cardinals and bluejays and a handful of others). On one side of us there is already a housing development and the land on the other two sides has been sold and is ready to be parcelled out for houses. Sigh. It makes for a lot of fun when any of the animals get out and take off across someone's yard; then we get all sorts of city housewives (who moved out to the 'country')

running around chasing poor petrified calves, screeching at them and waving brooms: GREAT way to calm the animals! If it's the equine stock that's out and that kind of behavior results: forget it, we won't find them for days!

Dave Sell: 1921 Lakewood Drive, Olympia, WA 98501

Linda and I went and saw JC Superstar a couple of months ago and I'll have to agree with your review, it was really excellent entertainment. The theology was down my alley also. The two scenes that stick out in my mind as being the best were Judas with the collection of angels. 'Don't get me wrong, I only want to know.' It was really a different view of Judas than we of Christian background are used to getting, yet it made more sense. I was given the impression that Judas was a dirty traitor and hung himself out of remorse, yet in the picture it gave the idea that Judas like Jesus was an instrument of God.

The other scene that appealed to me was fat old Herod bouncing around, singing 'prove to me that you're no fool, walk across my swimming pool'. That scene brought home a line from one of Steven Stills' songs 'Jesus was the first non-violent revolutionary' as he stood there without a word to Herod.

The film showed Jesus as a man, ot brought him off his pedestal so to speak. This I think is what bothers most people about the movie; they would rather leave him there.

Concerning FIAWOL, I have sort of mellowed out about that. I think that when a neo comes into fandom he lays aside all other activities and is only interested in fandom. But then he must come back to some sort of homeostasis, in other words mellow out. When I wrote FIAWOL I should have put FIASOM, Fandom is a State of Mind. The only thing about FIJAGH is the GD part. I feel if it's a ghoddam hobby, then anything would do, like collecting bottle caps or baseball trading cards.

I was wondering, what is the League against Cruel Sports?

(++ I've always felt it's a mistake for anyone to concentrate exclusively on one interest, even such a one as fandom. I and Rosemary have our antiquarian researches to enjoy, and play the piano and other assorted musical instruments we have in the house. We wouldn't want to give them up for fandom, or vice versa either. Similarly, I always feel sorry for those fans who say they never read any books other than SF. It must be a very narrow reading diet: we devour books of all kinds and would feel very frustrated if confined to SF alone. But fandom does have a hold: and specifically, the amateur publishing part of fandom. I really do enjoy it; but I don't want to be confined to it. As for the League against Cruel Sports,

of which Rosemary is a life member, its function is to fight against such delights as foxhunting, otterhunting, badger baiting and other atrocities against furry animals. Was it Oscar Wilde who defined foxhunting as 'the unspeakable in pursuit of the inedible'? ++D)

Susan Clarke: 2/159 Herring Road, North Ryde, NSW 2113, Australia

(++The illustration reproduced here++) is of a creature which I feel you have neglected in turning to Aardvark fandom, Rosemary. If he does not appeal to you, would you like to try Bunyip fandom, a fandom long neglected, even by Australians.

Bhob

Smith, legendary father of Australian Fandom (do not let either John Foyster or John Bangsund fool you) who has finally gaffiated for the last time (we think) has reverted to Cat Fandom as against our Budgie fandom. His place is now owned by six of the most proud and beautiful long haired cats I've ever seen, even a long-haired tortoiseshell female and a birmese. One really has to see this household to believe the effect upon the Smiths that they have made.

(++ Don't worry, the Pardoe household is still firmly on the side of Wombat Fandom. I don't think Rosemary was serious about defecting to the Aardvarks. ++ Sue also asked me to pass on the message that she'd like anyone going over to Australia for the Worldcon in 1975 to get in touch, if they'd be interested in seeing Sydney and meeting the Sydney fans. ++D)

Chris Sherman: 700 Parkview Terrace, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416

Here in Minneapolis, the temperature this winter has oft times been below zero (^oF), yet we still have several diehard starlings who refuse to take to the warmer climates of the south like their more 'intelligent' cousins. They've been freezing to death, feeding off of suet we have out by the bird bath (which we keep warm in the winter with a heater) and refusing to let the cold bother them, though you can tell that it is not exactly their bag, because of the terrible condition they are in. Feathers are ruffled and without sheen, beaks are crusty, and other symptoms. They, like yours, take flight at the slightest motion of other birds. We've discovered that the cardinals and blue-jays are the bravest, going so far as to stay at the bird-feeder when a car pulls up in the driveway, but scurrying off as soon as the door is opened. Do you have squirrels? We've almost trained one so that it will eat out of our hand (it is still a bit timid and has only claimed the prize



directly from a hand twice.

Pamela Boal: 43 Hawthorne Crescent, Grove, Wantage, Berks OX12 7JD On

the road between Oxford and here at certain times of the year it snows moths, they fly into the car in their thousands. We grow plants that attract butterflies; this year we have photographed a peacock butterfly, which were in danger of disappearing from this country. We also have some very healthy cowslips, a wild flower heading for extinction. The previous tenant rescued them from the farmer's plough.

Your Hornblower fanclub has four other members; myself, Derek (my husband), Christine and Steven (our 17 and 16 year olds). Our 13 year old isn't into him as yet. Each time we move we have to dispose of most of our books, but our complete Hornblower set has been to Singapore and Cyprus with us. When fictional characters and events have their own intrinsic truth, we also feel, that it is unimportant if those truths do not accord with recorded history.

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WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Jim Carleton, Joanne Burger, Warren Johnson, Roy Tackett, Mike Kring, Rose Hogue, Gary Grady, Mary Smith, Michael T. Shoemaker, Ken Gammage Jr, Rambling Jake Grigg, Mike Glicksohn, Sam Long, Leigh Edmonds, Eric Lindsay, Phil Spencer, Jim Allan, Al Cockrell, Archie Mercer, Terry Jeeves, Alessandro Averoldi, Ian Williams (Banbury), Mary Legg, Leigh Edmonds (again), Bobbie Gray, Philip Payne. Thanks for writing, people; I'd like to have printed a lot more from your letters, but space is very short as you can see.

.. .. .

A word on availability. You are getting this issue (1) because you are a good friend (2) you publish a fanzine we are fond of, or (3) we think you would enjoy reading LS. The 'Not generally available' business means we are not too interested in sending LS to people who have no interest in it; and want to hold the circulation to a manageable level. But your LoCs and trades will be most welcome.



R2N

