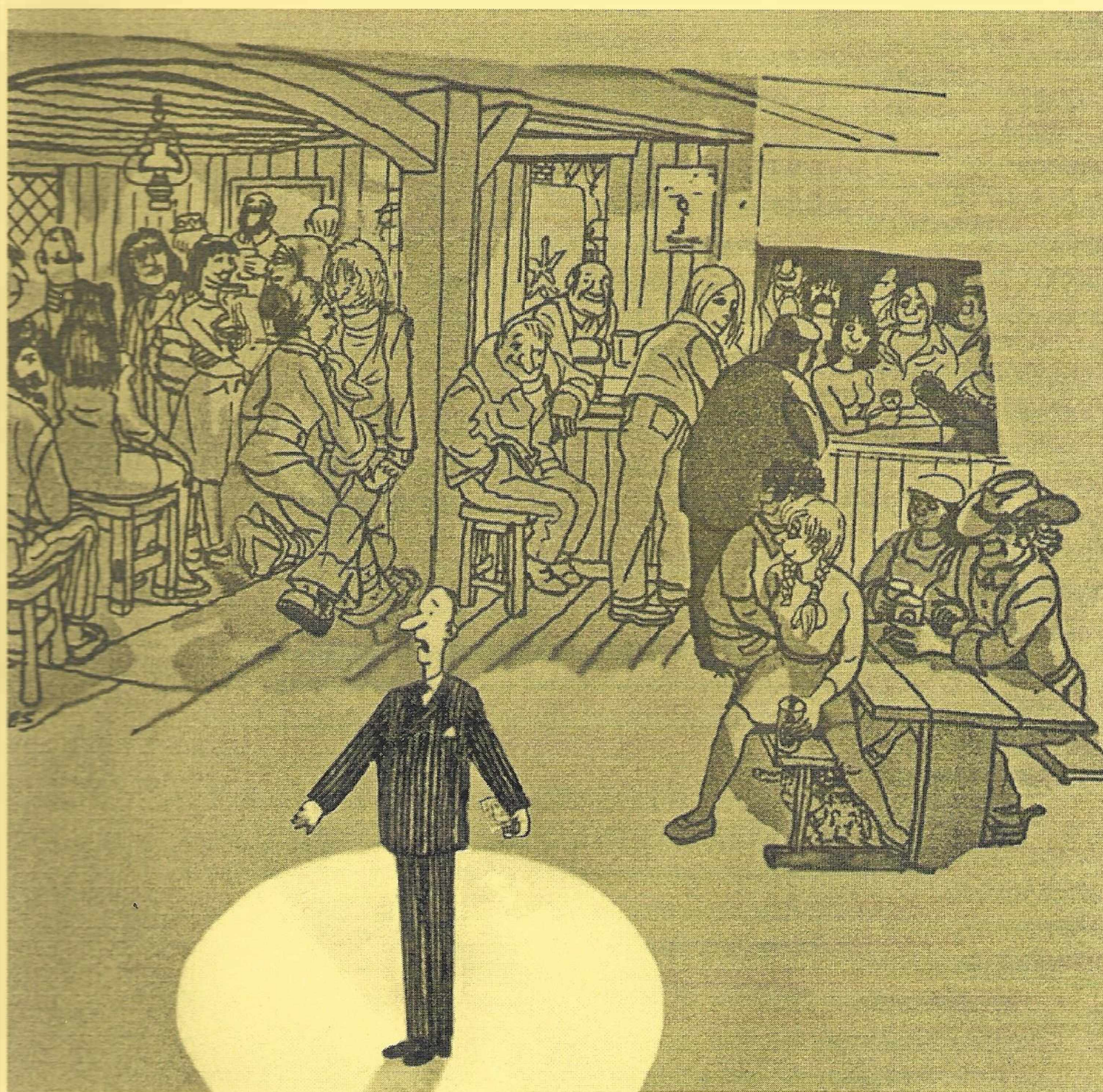


A 'Paper-First'
Fanzine!

PROLAPSE

Number 5:
February 2007

"..upholding the traditions of the founders..." Joseph Nicholas, LoC



"Does anyone want to talk science fiction?"

(Swedish fan Sture Sedolin at 1960 London Eastercon,
as quoted by Dick Ellingsworth)

- See Editorial - *with apologies to 'Giles'*

INSIDE: 'The Wizard of Ozimov' in which Dorothy discovers the wonderful land of Fandom, with Judy Blish, Arthur Cruttenden, Rob Holdstock, & Andrew Stephenson. **PLUS:** John-Henri Holmberg, John Hall, George Locke, and more!



PROLAPSE

This is *Prolapse 5*, completed in the far-future world of February 2007 by Peter Weston at 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS, UK. That address still works for heavy objects and my subscription copies of *North & South* and *Analog*, and it's nice to get fan-post again, but really it's a lot quicker to use the hot-line: pr.weston@btinternet.com. Our philosophy is 'Paper First'; which means this issue will go onto *eFanzines* a month or so after the printed copies have been safely delivered (and, I hope, commented upon), when you will be able to see the photographs in full colour. *Prolapse* is a Time-Travelling Fanzine, flitting up and down the time-stream to cover various aspects of British SF fan-history.

"Once again the BSFA had risen to haunt me!"— Ted Tubb, LoC

After writing so much about the 1959 *Brumcon* in the previous issue I was rather hoping to be challenged – after all, I wasn't there and a lot of what I said was pure conjecture. Alas, nobody did, but as soon as Steve Green's LoC arrived I realised that I'd inadvertently been guilty of some slightly sloppy thinking, so I shall now proceed to challenge myself. If you remember, I described the somewhat sparse programme then said, 'And yet... if I'd been there I don't think it would have mattered, I would have loved every minute of it anyway.' To which Steve commented, very perceptively, 'In contrast to the sixteen year-old Peter Weston, I suspect I'd have felt much more of an outsider – an intruder, even – at an event as under-programmed as *Brumcon*.'

Steve, you're right! I realise now this is exactly how I *would* have felt, and thinking about it, I remember a very similar situation about a year earlier. In those days I was still in the process of discovering SF but my main interest was Astronomy, and thanks to the school Physics teacher I was introduced to the Birmingham Astronomy Group who met in a basement in the city-centre premises of the Josiah Mason College (next-door to a pub called, coincidentally, 'The White Horse'). I went along dutifully to their meetings but as a 14-year-old I was a bit out of place, which was brought painfully home to me when in the Spring of 1958 I attended their one-day Saturday afternoon conference on the Solar System.

The subject matter was fine, being a little swot I knew most of that stuff already, but at half-time the audience went out for refreshments and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know anyone to talk to, didn't have any money anyway, so I ended up sitting by myself in an empty hall for a half-hour or more, lonely and feeling a complete idiot. It was all so unwelcoming that even though I was still desperately interested in Astronomy I never went back to the BAG.

The point of this sad little story is that I'm wondering whether the same thing might have happened if I'd turned up by myself at *Brumcon*. It would have been an even more difficult experience; not only a young stranger again, but this time I would have also found the programme incomprehensible. Instead of hearing about science fiction I would have seen people I didn't know (but who clearly all knew each other) clowning around and taking part in tea-drinking contests, and might indeed have felt an 'outsider, an intruder'. Maybe I would have grabbed a catalogue from Ken Slater's stall and bolted, never to return. Which leads me onto the next question – how many others did exactly that?

When you study those 1959 pictures you notice tantalising glimpses of people you can't identify and who were never seen again. Look at the membership list for that convention, short as it is, and you'll notice a few unfamiliar names. What happened to D.K. Fawcett of Showell Green Lane, Birmingham? He was BSFA member number 64; did he see the publicity, come along for a day and leave, disappointed? How many unrecorded walk-in members gave it a try and decided this fandom thing wasn't for them?

Last time I said the problem was that the newly-born BSFA had decided it must re-connect with the SF-reading public, but it was still being run by long-time fans who just didn't know how to do it. They were unable to make the leap of imagination necessary for their convention to be 'accessible' to outsiders. And I suspect exactly the same performance went on the following year in London – a convention run by Ethel Lindsay and Ella Parker – where, as Dick Ellingsworth commented last time, "I recall a very serious young man, Sture Sedolin – I think he was Swedish – whose plaintive cry was 'Does anybody want to talk science fiction?'" Here's the programme for the 1960 *Loncon*:-

SATURDAY 16th April

2.00 pm Opening speech by A. Weir (Dr.Sc)
 2.15 pm Introducing Don Ford (TAFF winner)
 2.25 pm TAFF Candidates speeches
 3.00 pm TAFF Candidates Quiz
 3.45 pm Ted Carnell – speech
 -- TEA --
 6.30 pm Don Ford slide-show
 7.30 pm Auction
 9.30 pm Fancy Dress Party

SUNDAY 17th April

11.30 am BSFA Annual General Meeting
 2.30 pm 'This is Your Fan Life' (Norman Shorrocks)
 3.00 pm 'Karel Capek – Master of the Robots'
 (talk by Dr A. Weir)
 3.45 pm Amateur films
 -- TEA --
 6.15 pm Auction
 8.00 pm Film – 'The Day the Earth Stood Still'
 10.00 pm Farewell

Not a lot to interest a newcomer, eh? When I looked at that poor little programme I honestly wondered if the organisers had *any* idea of what they were doing. What had happened to those good intentions at the launch of the BSFA? Why didn't they get some professionals involved? Brian Aldiss was there, Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, and they could have invited some of the other *New Worlds* writers. No wonder poor old Sture Sedolin gave up on British fandom, went back to Sweden and became a BNF over there.

So maybe I was being charitable last time when I said that *Bruncon* was “a total success in the only area that really mattered; being able to welcome new fans into the community”. Let me ask the important question; did it actually bring in *anybody at all* (meaning, genuine newcomers) to British convention fandom? I think the answer has to be “Probably not”. Those names I quoted approvingly last time turn out not to have been so very new after all. For instance, it might have been Jim Linwood’s first con, but he wasn’t exactly a stranger, as he explained to me recently:

“I came into contact with fandom in 1954 through *Nebula* and the *Vargo Statten Mag* and corresponded with Derek Pickles, Archie Mercer, the Benfords and Mike Moorcock (like me, a schoolboy at the time). Ken’s ‘Operation Fantast’ supplied me with books and bundles of fanzines. The first fan I met was Archie (and fellow members of the Lincoln Astronomical Society) who lived nearby in North Hykeham. I wrote a few fanzine pieces and became a member of OMPA in 1957. In 1958 I went to the Globe for the first time while holidaying in London. Mike dragged me off to show me the *Tarzan Adventures* office just round the corner where he worked. I met up with the Inchmery crowd, Ivor Mayne, George Locke, Ken Bulmer, the Buckmasters, Alan Bale, Ted Tubb and Ella. While still living in Nottingham I visited London frequently staying at Ella’s or Ivor’s.”

Clearly, Jim hadn’t exactly been waiting to be recruited by the BSFA since he already had the best part of five years under his belt, while George Locke had been at Kettering and the 1957 Worldcon, and he had recruited Ivor Mayne well before *Bruncon* (see George’s letter this time). From con reports it’s clear that Alan Rispin and Brian Jordan already knew each other and had been in correspondence with other fans, so they weren’t exactly ‘new’, either. Who does that leave? Ken Cheslin, perhaps? But even here, Ken wasn’t the lone newcomer of my scenario since he came along with two pals, Peter Davies and Mike Kilvert, so he must have had at least some prior contact with other enthusiasts. And there’s a big difference between turning-up by yourself in a strange place and going in company.

There’s another point too; those ‘first-timers’ at *Bruncon* were not the sercon types one might have expected to see if the BSFA’s rationale was correct. Instead they were already ‘fannish’, indoctrinated by the company they had been keeping (at the ‘Globe’ and elsewhere), so that 18-year-old Ivor Mayne could report, “like most fans at conventions I had promised myself that I wouldn’t attend anything on the official programme but somebody had obviously tipped them off and they forestalled me by arranging a practically all-fannish programme.” And Jim Linwood could say in all innocence, “It was my first convention and I already assumed that programme items were a front for wild parties and orgies.”

Back to the 1960 *Loncon*, where the attendance figure is unknown (not in *THEN* or *Skyrack*), and with no list of members in the programme book, such as it was – a few poorly-duplicated quarto sheets – but it was so poorly promoted that I bet attendance wasn’t much higher than at *Bruncon*. The following year’s *LEXICON* had just 77 attendees, Harrogate had 94, and not until the 1963 *Bullcon* did numbers approach 150 (for the first time since 1954) and then largely as a result of Ken Slater’s energetic pushing for members. During the same period the BSFA’s membership climbed steadily but I wonder how many of those newcomers actually trickled through to the Easter conventions? These remained almost as fannish as they had ever been, and contrary to accepted wisdom I suspect they were getting their members – new people like Tony Walsh, Dave Barber, Don Geldart, Dick Ellingsworth, Gerry Webb – almost irrespective of the BSFA.

Probably most *Prolapsers* won’t have seen my article on BSFA ‘Origins’ in the special anniversary issue of *Vector* (#250) at the end of January, but because it’s relevant I’m going to summarise it here. I described how, in a six-hour marathon at Kettering in 1958, it was decided that the only answer to the problem of falling attendances at conventions was a new national organisation, one ostensibly devoted to the serious study of science fiction but which would carry material about fandom in its publications so that those hooked and nurtured in this way might eventually go on to a more personal involvement. Then I quoted from the original motion, which was passed by those present:-

‘This meeting proposes that a national science fiction society should be formed, whose aims and objects will be the encouragement of readership of science fiction and liaison and general social and literary contact between SF readers, and that the persons present in this room shall, when called upon to do so, fork out a sum of money to set up a capital fund for the formation of this society.’

It’s worth noting that the vote may not have been unanimous; in the first issue of *Skyrack* Ron Bennett stated a contrary view: ‘as one of the BSFA’s staunchest critics since its inception at Kettering a year ago..... I contested the Association’s implication that British fandom needed such an organisation in order to survive.’ But launched it was, and during the following six months the first Constitution was framed by the joint secretaries, Terry Jeeves & Eric Bentcliffe. Unfortunately they deviated quite far from the Kettering motion, producing an altogether more pretentious document that mentioned neither ‘fandom’ nor the running of the national convention, which had been the whole point of forming the society in the first place. Just look at the preamble:-

‘The association shall exist for the benefit of those interested in science fiction and allied branches of imaginative literature. It shall encourage the reading, writing and publishing of good literature of this class, shall assist and encourage contact between enthusiasts, shall provide liaison between its members and the SF profession, shall endeavour to present science fiction and associated art-forms to the Press and general public in an advantageous manner, and shall provide such amenities as may prove desirable for the use of members.’

Vince Clarke was responsible for sparking-off the whole thing, but when he saw the Constitution he commented that ‘to be serious in the sense of setting up an organisation to improve the standard of science fiction strikes me as sheer egotism; SF criticism, yes, but it’s up to the pros to improve the output of the stuff itself. I’m for fandom first and SF second. I sincerely hope the BSFA won’t forget that it originated at a ‘social’ convention.’

I'm all in favour of being ambitious and 'thinking big', but there's something rather vainglorious about a ragged bunch of SF fans presuming they could expropriate a whole branch of literature and have any serious 'influence' on writers and publishers of science fiction itself. It's on a par with members of a train-spotters' club deluding themselves that their 'purpose' was to supervise manufacture of better trains!

And as we've already seen from con-programmes, fans at this time were so inarticulate about their hobby that they couldn't even organise a decent panel discussion. Yet here they were, presuming to set themselves up as experts, expecting to publish a serious critical journal about science fiction! To put this in perspective, at the time there probably wasn't a single person in British fandom who could write a critical essay, or even a decent review, to the sort of standards we now take for granted. I found this out rather painfully with *Speculation* in the years 1965-67, and wasn't finally able to crack the problem until a new generation started to come through, with (dare I say it?) better-educated people like Brian Stableford, Michael Kenward, Tony Sudbery, and later, Mark Adlard and Tom Shippey. In 1958-59 *Vector* looked and read like a fairly Low-grade fanzine and its various editors had little idea how to improve matters.

There's an interesting exchange in THEN which I'll quote:-

"It was inevitable that the contradiction between the BSFA's apparent purpose and the reason it was actually created would lead to conflict, and so it did. The first sign of trouble had come when in *Vector* 8 (June '60) editor Jim Groves ran through the aims of the BSFA, the first of which, of course, was to recruit new members to fandom. This was its *actual* purpose it's true – and a number of new fans had indeed been brought into fandom by the BSFA – but there were those who felt that it should stick to its *stated* purpose, which was the furtherance of Science Fiction. In *Vector* 9 (Sept '60), Groves repeated his points and there was a piece by Joe Patrizio, one of those new fans brought in by the BSFA, largely supporting his view. However, the letter column in the following issue carried a number of dissenting voices, including that of Daphne Buckmaster who argued that those writing for *Vector* had too casual an attitude, with the reports it carried on fannish socialising and such. She concluded:

"The main problem seems to be the fact that you (the officials) are trying to cater for two separate and differing bodies of people, fans and non-fans. I would suggest, with all modesty, that you cannot do both in one magazine ...the editors and publishers in the professional SF field have never made any secret of the fact that they do not want or need any contact with fans, as such. It is my belief, therefore, that you will either have to decide that you are going to be a reputable organisation to encourage a serious and impersonal interest in the SF field *or* that you are an organisation for recruiting SF readers into the ranks of fandom. And if you want to do the first, you will need a more formal attitude if you want to be taken seriously...."

"In *Vector* 11, John Phillifent (a.k.a SF writer John Rackham) agreed with Buckmaster wholeheartedly and further complained about the BSFA 'being run by, and heavily slanted toward 'fandom'...' a group he had strongly negative feelings about. Yet, as Archie Mercer replied to him, it was only the fannish fans who were interested in putting in the work necessary to keep the BSFA going."

So there's the basic fallacy of the whole thing laid bare; fans (who didn't know how), trying to produce a critical journal for fan-readers (who didn't care anyway) and for non-fans (who didn't think it was good enough and were never going to join fandom anyway). With the best intentions old-time fans had built themselves a 'Sercon City', a false-front to fandom. And yet, I think all of these contradictions could have been avoided simply by adding just one extra word to the title; how about the 'BSFEA' – the British Science Fiction Enthusiasts' Association.

Straightaway, that tells you what the thing is *for*, and its 'purpose' follows straight from that original, simple Kettering motion – "the encouragement of readership of science fiction" (by keeping enthusiasts informed about new books and magazines, listing dealers, and providing library services) and "liaison and general social and literary contact between SF readers" (by providing details of fanzines, fan-clubs, meetings and running conventions). In 1958 a 'journal' was always going to be hopelessly impractical, both in terms of finding suitable content and the resources to issue it on a regular basis. But all that was really required was a monthly newsletter, much easier to produce, and if I'd been BSFA chairman I'd have found someone like Ron Bennett, who did indeed start just such a newsletter (*Skyrack*) only a short time later. Eventually it might have evolved towards something like the modern *Ansible*, which manages to transcend the differences between 'fannish' and 'sercon' camps. What actually happened was rather different, as described in a letter from Jim Linwood again, this time from seventeen years later in Tom Perry's *Quark-14*, April 1977:-

'Most of the zines you review are unavailable to me, as an excommunicated/resigned BSFA member; I didn't realise that they are now going in for knocking traditional fannish activities. The BSFA was formed primarily as a fannish 'front' – a respectable cover to lure new blood into fandom – it now seems to have become a rather large fringe organisation. I had noticed certain totalitarian trends under the new regime (newspeak articles in *Vector*, hysterical diatribes against its critics, etc.) and by disaffecting themselves with the mainstream of fandom they are cheating their members... A bloody, crying shame.'

I think Ron Bennett was right and fans just panicked at Kettering; they never *did* need the BSFA to survive. But it's funny how things work out; here we are, nearly fifty years on, and the BSFA has developed a genuine life of its own. It's impossible not to be impressed with the current *Vector* and the standard it has reached, immeasurably far beyond those early days. In the same way conventions continued to evolve after the 1966 breach, and in the end have become events where Sture Sedolin, if he were still around, would finally be able to hear people 'talk science fiction'. //

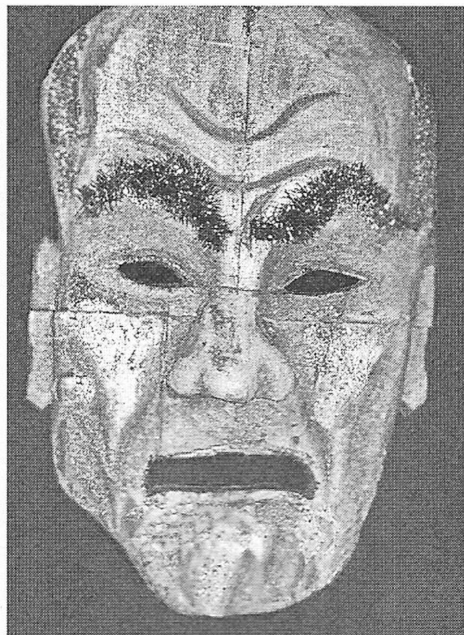


Unlikely to attract the serious-minded;
Vector #3, Winter 1959.
Cover Artist: Jim Cawthorne.

Fabulous, mythical *Tynecon* was the best of all the seventies conventions, and it enveloped me in a glow of euphoria from the instant I walked into the Royal Station Hotel in Newcastle where the 'Gannets' – North-East fandom – were running the 1974 Eastercon. Everything about the *Tynecon* weekend was special but the highlight was Judy Blish's extraordinary Saturday-night production of:-

'The Wizard of Ozimov'

In which Dorothy discovers the magical Land of Fandom



Judy Blish's head
of 'Ozimov':
Photo:
Mike Meara

PW: Let's get my (minor) involvement out of the way first; at the end of 1973 Judy wrote and asked Eileen if she would play Glinda in a fannish production of 'The Wizard of Oz', with a small role for me. I was all for it but Eileen wasn't so keen; by Easter our daughter Alison would be just two years old and we'd already discovered that small children and conventions sometimes don't mix (she was ill at OMPAcon and we'd had to leave early). Then the decision was made for us when Eileen discovered she was going to have another baby, but I agreed to take the role of the Emerald Soldier, whatever that was. It seems strange now but though I'd seen the film as a boy, I'd never read the book – it had just never come my way. So the first thing was to make good the omission, after which I waited anxiously for the script. I often wondered how Judy had thought of the idea, and recently had chance to ask her:-

Judy: I don't remember which Con it was, but while wandering around the hotel we spied the Cowardly Lion himself prowling the halls – complete with orange mane, tawny fur coat, gentle face – but no tail. I assumed it was tucked up under the fur. We had a Lion on hand, so of course we had to do something about the 'Wizard'. I accosted the Lion. He duly jumped backwards. But he liked the idea — turned out to be Arthur Cruttenden – and he happened to have a girlfriend who was just right for Dorothy; and gradually we accumulated other people who were amused by the idea.

Arthur: I should explain that, a number of years ago, Chris Bell, in an article about how she became involved in fandom, was able to prove to her satisfaction that this came about solely as a result of an action of mine at her first con. In much the same way "The Wizard of Ozimov" is also attributable to me, at least to a considerable extent. Allow me to set the scene...

'You know, 1/2r, you remind me of the Cowardly Lion,' Judy Blish said to me at a room-party at *Novacon* 3. So I promptly replied 'Don't go away, back shortly,' and went off to get my overcoat – which was of the hairy persuasion. Donning it on return to the party I proceeded to roll my rrrrrrr's at her and gained some egoboo from the scattered applause and laughter from fans. That should have been the end of it. But Jim Blish had an evil mind – and he loved puns as well. So, on the drive back to their home in Marlow, the two of them, plus Andrew Stephenson, who was travelling with them, started plotting the outline of an item to be presented the following Easter at *Tynecon*.

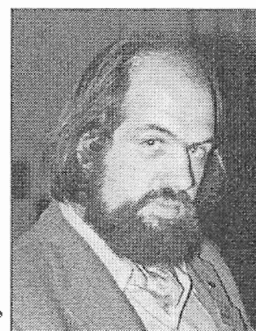
Andrew: Judy and Jim Blish had given me a lift to/from *Novacon*, as we were near (15 miles) neighbours. On the way home, we chatted about this and that, exploring territory such as the ideal fanzine. We ended up enthusing about an Oz skit, to be shaped around fannish references. In the following months, various stages were passed.



Cowardly Lion - 1/2R in his hairy
coat! Photo: Sam Long

A somewhat important one was recruiting the cast; the crew would be minimal, basically just Judy and myself. We had: yourself (Doorman); Jim Blish (Wizard); Rob Holdstock (Tin Man); 1/2R (Lion); Brian Hampton (Scarecrow); Wendy Ellis (Dorothy); Ina Shorrock (Glinda); and Anne McCaffrey as the Wicked Witch.

Arthur: The letter arrived 2 – 3 weeks later, telling me what had happened on the journey and subsequently, roughing out the plot, including the opportunities for truly awful puns, with a provisional cast list, asking if I was interested and wondering if I could suggest anyone for Dorothy and the Scarecrow? Interested? Oh yes, most definitely. Someone to play Dorothy? How about Wendy? (A perfect excuse to introduce her to fandom – and spend the whole of Easter in her company. Cor!) And the Scarecrow? Brian Hampton. For some reason everyone agreed this was perfect typecasting. That sentence will not need explaining to anyone who knew Brian, and couldn't be explained to anyone who didn't. And he said he'd do it. As did Wendy.

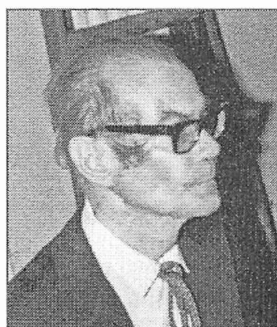


Brian Hampton.
Photo: Sam Long

The next Ozmissive outlined the costumes and set a date for the script- writing meeting, to be held at Jim & Judy's home. Ooh yes! That was fun!! Wendy and I went by train and 'phoned from Paddington to let them know what train we would be on, so someone could meet us when we got to Marlow, causing instant confusion. Sunday at the end of March – what happens in the UK? Clocks go forward an hour, that's what. Americans aren't used to this and are still lazing about in a state of dishabille, totally out of touch with time and unready for the imminent descent of fans. Fortunately our journey involved changing at Maidenhead with a wait for our connection, so they were able to get it all together before we arrived to join our hosts, Andrew, and Rob Holdstock. Rob was to play the Tin Fan-Editor, complete with Gestetner handle in lieu of axe.

Wendy: Arthur returned from *Novacon* in 1973 to meet up with me, his mundane acquaintance of some six months and made a startling announcement: not only did he want me to accompany him to a science fiction convention the following Easter, but he also wanted me to participate in an actor's capacity. Perhaps the fact that I would be on stage in front of total strangers was less daunting than for the other dramatis personae, all of whom had fannish reputations at stake.

I recall a Sunday trip to Jim & Judy Blish's home; we went by train and stayed to lunch. I remained quiet whilst the script of *Wizard of Oz* was re-assembled with a fannish (punnish) twist – the puns I could sometimes appreciate. Judy Blish asked me what I could do about a costume, and promptly swathed me in some blue and white gingham material. I supplied blouse, socks, shoes, hair ribbons and a sense of wonder!



Jim & Judy Blish;
Photos: Sam Long



Rob: I forget when exactly I was invited to be a part of Judy's adaptation of Baum's masterwork. I'd got to know Jim, Judy and Anne McAff at the second Milford Writer's meeting. I was a nervous beginner among illustrious company but the Blishes had been exceptionally welcoming. Jim began his criticism of my offered story with the words:-

"Qui Custodiat Custodiensis?"

I scribbled a note to Chris Priest, sitting next to me: "Qui Custard WHAT?"

"Who Watches the Watchers?" he scribbled back. I was none the wiser; though understanding came later. Jim filleted my story with the expertise of a Smithfield's butcher. It was an excellent experience.

They were a very vibrant couple, Judy and Jim. And Anne, too, was full of creative energy. This synergy, I can only imagine, generated the notion of the homage to Oz. Rehearsals at the Blish's Thames Valley home were fun and friendly. I saw – on a tour of the house – the incredible organisation of a tidy-minded writer. Alas, I learned nothing from it. Judy's workshop was satisfyingly untidy. It was here that my outfit was designed and fitted.

Judy: We had a couple of meetings at our house during which we thrashed out the script, with contributions from all. We followed the well-known plot, which lent itself most satisfactorily to fannish variations. I remember Jim protesting that we (I) had it wrong to insist on the "*WIZARD: Oh, yes, you will. ALL: Oh, no we won't.*" exchange. I had been to the pantomime with a friend's kids, and Jim was finally (but doubtfully) convinced by the others to include it. He was really startled when it worked.

Arthur: We stuck – mostly – to the plot of the original, and as the script progressed the puns got worse and worse, AND we kept having ideas and going back to incorporate them. All this in the days before PC's, laptops, etc., so somebody had to write all this down with appended notes

saying add **** to Dorothy's meeting with the Wicked Witch Reporter, amongst other notes foot, marginal, on the backs of envelopes and hands, etc. Finally it was finished and read back. At this point we realised just what we (mostly Jim) had done and some of the more horrendous puns were hastily deleted. I recall one where it was decided that "If we do *that* one we probably won't be allowed to finish!" Ghod, I wish I had that original script!! I'd be very happy if I could just remember that particular pun!

Judy: I had a great time collecting stuff for the costumes and figuring out how they would work. Poor Rob was tightly wrapped in aluminium and very stiff paint-dipped jeans, and forgot to take off his glasses altogether. The missing Cowardly Tail was supplied. Arthur needed the least costuming and makeup of anyone, of course. I remember trying for days to find a long roll of yellow paper on which to sketch bricks, and then trying to do that without tearing it . . . and making hand puppets of owls with gelatin eyes, in which we could flash torches. Anne's costume was only the pointed hat made of newspapers, and I don't recall that there was any great trouble over the rest of it, as she had a cape of her own. We painted her face green, though, which she wasn't crazy about, but coped.



Brian Hampton as Scarecrow
Photo: Sam Long

As to Scarecrow's costume, it was a faded blue shirt, the pointed flopped-over hat, gardening gloves, dry grass stuck in pockets and between buttons, and a painted gunnysack with holes cut in it for eyes and mouth. It must have been really hot to wear, especially since it was held on with a rope around his neck, poor chap! And blue floral pants, which were entirely Brian's own idea.

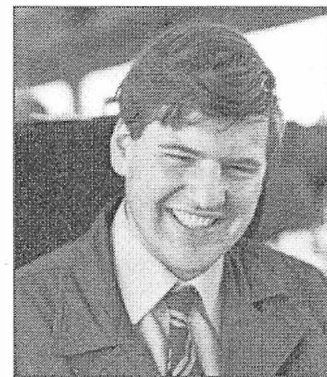
Arthur: The final script arrived and Wendy and I started learning it, finishing my costume and having second thoughts (mostly about the puns – were they bad enough without being too bad?) but also “Will I remember my lines?” Then it was time to go to Newcastle, which we did by train. Arriving at the Station Hotel on Good Friday afternoon, we just had time to register at reception before being grabbed for rehearsals – we were allowed to dump our bags in our room – in the main hall. These continued at any time it wasn't in use until the following evening and the Masquerade, which was to precede our performance. We must have eaten at some time on Friday evening, got some sleep that night, had breakfast and lunch/dinner on Saturday, but neither Wendy nor I can recall this, just rehearsals and more rehearsals.

Wendy: Our arrival in Newcastle proved a whirlwind in itself. We were immediately called for rehearsal and by the time of the performance I felt I could quote the entire script.

Anne McCaffrey made a dramatic appearance with a green-painted face and I had to carry a dog (fortunately I like dogs). The applause at the end of our performance encouraged someone to say “I think they liked it!” and we retired to a room-party. I didn't realise just how significant the event we had just staged would become in the annals of fan masquerading.

Andrew: One personal memory was of the rehearsals at the Con. News came that you (PW) would arrive late and I was grabbed to “be” you at the point where the intrepid foursome reach the Emerald City and are challenged by the haughty/stuffy doorman. So as not to fix any expectations of acting manner in their minds, and possibly cause memories to go astray when you actually appeared, I tried to do each run-through of that scene in a different style. By the end, I was becoming seriously short of new silly voices.

PW: This bit has me baffled; certainly I wasn't ‘late’, but apparently I didn't attend any rehearsals. Did Judy excuse me since I had only three brief lines? Was I involved in programme items at conflicting times? All I remember is an increasing sense of panic on the night as I started to discover, as Andrew had, how very many ways it's possible to say “What do you want?” all of them sounding feeble and unconvincing!



Andrew Stephenson
Photo: Sam Long

Judy: I had never directed anything before, though I'd worked around other people doing it, and I loved it! It's very different from acting, which I was never any good at – you get to see the thing as a whole, and balance the timing and placing and so forth. There was one moment, quite unexpected, at which it was clear to me that everybody had rehearsed just enough, and that one more run-through would be overkill. People had their lines and knew their blocking and while there might be glitches, it would be okay. The cast weren't so sure, but I could see it. And that was a strange and interesting experience. I've always wanted to ask a Real Director if it's a common one, but never had the chance.

Andrew: I also recall poor Rob Holdstock becoming overheated in his metal costume and silver skin make-up. His ‘Tin Man’ nearly succumbed to a bad case of terminal rust and/or metal fatigue.

Rob: Two hours or so before the performance was set to start, the Tin Man had to be clad in his metal togs. Other actors had a slightly easier task of it, though the Scarecrow no doubt had to get into some serious make-up. Behind the scenes Judy Blish was in Full-Dresser-Action, Arthur Cruttenden was practicing his lion's growl, Wendy (as Dorothy) was moving through the air in All Innocence. Jim Blish and Annie McCaffrey were laughing and checking the script, and Andrew was making hooting noises (for his role as Owl in Tree.)

The Tin Man gear began with a silver-paint-stiffened pair of old blue jeans being hauled over legs that were more muscular than the lessened flexibility of the new garment would allow for. Then silver-painted gym shoes. A soft shirt with silver arms, no problem. Then: the metal body that Judy had created, fitted over the head, tied at the back, very confining. The inverted funnel on the head was easy. I cannot remember whether I was face-painted or face-masked. I remember only – at this stage – being blind (no specs) and suddenly acutely claustrophobic!

The panic attack was dreadful. A loss of control, in the behavioural rather than the bowel sense, was imminent. It hadn't happened in dress rehearsal. Then someone – it might have been Pete Colborn – led me quickly to the men's room and ran cold water over my hands. It had a remarkable effect. I calmed. But still blind, the panic surfaced again. I remember asking Judy in despair if I could wear my glasses. Whatever she was thinking (she had designed the set meticulously) she agreed. Problem solved. The four-eyed Tin Man began to relax.



Rob becomes canned man!
Photo: Sam Long



'A Green Recruit'
Photo: Sam Long

Arthur: I remember the make-up session and seeing everyone together in costume at last, and the discussion about who was going to enter the Masquerade – and as what – as we didn't want to give the game away before the show, since 'An Entertainment' had been announced to follow the fancy dress but no other information had been released. I went in as a Tribble, but memory escapes me about the others.

Rob: It was Newcastle, Saturday night; the main hall was full of spectators sitting on the floor in two crowded rows with a wide gangway between them. Each of the cast would enter the fancy dress individually, and then the performance would unfurl. The horn-rimmed Tin Man instantly suggested (one glance in the mirror of the men's room) 'The Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge on Harry Harrison.' It got a laugh and, if I remember, a bottle of something red.

PW: I went as a 'Green Recruit'; my costume was pretty simple and I provided most of it myself. An old green jacket with yellow ribbon epaulettes, very light trousers tucked into high boots (from Eileen, and only a little too small), leather belt and antique ornamental 'pistol', with white webbing across chest and shoulders. Judy had made me a splendid tall hat in bright green, a long green beard that trailed almost to the floor, and a huge blunderbuss – green, naturally.

Andrew: My job during the show was, like one of a pair of side-of-stage bookends lurking mostly out of view, with Judy being the other, to wear dark clothes and try not to clutter the scenery, whilst moving curtains, Wizard mask (two big chunks of expanded polystyrene Judy had carved into a "face" that pretty much hid the seated Jim entirely) and whatever else needed

pulling or shoving. On my left hand was a black-fabric owl glove-puppet which Judy made. The eyes were clear plastic discs with green dots for pupils, backed by aluminium foil reflectors. My hand held an electric torch, over which the puppet was slipped, so that the torch made the eyes glow. The extra trick was to rotate the owl slowly, displaying the spooky eyes to the audience. To complete our *son-et-lumiere* I made (probably bad) owl-hoot impressions. A few laughs were elicited thereby. Judy and I were supposed to be like those Japanese stage hands: in plain sight yet 'invisible'.

One last minute panic came when Judy produced this huge roll of wide, pale yellow paper she had scrounged from a local paper merchant to serve as a Yellow Brick Road, to be unrolled down the centre of the Con Hall. Unrolled, we realised it wasn't "bricky" enough. I had to grab a felt-tipped marker and hastily make random brick-suggestive patterns along 100 feet or so of the paper. I remember scrambling along it on hands and knees as people came in for the show.

Arthur: Then came the performance. The hall's entrance was at the top of a short flight of stairs and once everyone had been settled down on either side, Andrew rolled out The Yellow Brick (lining paper) Road from the base of the stairs to the other end of the hall, and Scarecrow, Tin Editor and Cowardly Lion took our places along it. Then the door opened, Dorothy entered and – we were off. Dorothy's 'I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto' as she sees the massed ranks of fandom, got the reaction it deserved!

Judy: Andy Stephenson and I in black outfits stood on either side of the 'road' making owlsh noises, being the Witch's Forest. And the Wiz had to be a giant green head, solved with big pieces of carved Styrofoam dyed green, behind which Jim perched on a chair holding it in front of him, bellowing his lines through the mouth opening. I was pretty pleased with that because the face looked just like Jim. I think we co-opted the audience to be Munchkins. But we gave up on the flying monkeys; too complicated in the time we had!

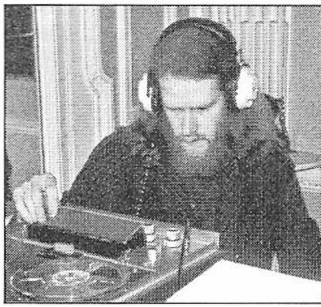
Andrew: Happily the show seemed to work. Back in one of the scripting sessions (with the crew there), the question came up of whether the Con audience would chime in with the "oh-yes-he-is" routine – the skit being basically a pantomime – and Judy insisted we put it in. The audience were well into the spirit by then and got it straight off. They got the other jokes too. And even a few non-jokes. Although it's been 32 years (crikey – so long?), I still have a good set of souvenirs. Most are memories. But one is tangible and even manages to be useful from time to time: I still have the stub of that huge roll of Yellow Brick Road.

Arthur: Wendy and I have discussed the show since and we both remember her entry, and then Judy saying 'I think they liked us' after we trooped off at the end. Plot synopsis; Dorothy is directed onto the Road to Ozimov by Ina Shorrocks's Glinda. Meeting the Tin Fan-Editor, she oils him by pouring a bottle of Newcastle Brown down his throat and agrees to take him, the Scarecrow and the Lion with her, so that Ozimov can resolve their problems. Editor wants to put content and interest into his shallow zine, Scarecrow cannot decide if he's sercon or fannish and Lion wants to get up the nerve to meet and mingle with fandom's luminaries. They meet Wicked Witch Reporter Anne McCaffrey, who vanishes in a puff of smoke, driven off by Dorothy's honest and direct answers to her questions.

The Emerald Soldier, played by Peter Weston, eventually rather grudgingly allows us to address a 6' high mask which is very dismissive of our requests, so much so that we attack and pull it apart, to reveal Jim cringing behind it. He is then accused of being a very bad fan. "Oh no, I'm a very good fan, just a very bad author!" That one, I understand, elicited one of the best reactions of the night from the audience. Editor got his heart to put into his zine, Scarecrow, a rainbow, so his fanzine could cover the full spectrum of fannish interests, and Dorothy and the Lion also had their requests answered. The end, roars of applause, curtain (and cat) calls.



Enter Dorothy with 'Ben Jackson' (Photo: Sam Long)



Gerald Bishop – 'Ye Gerbish'
Photo: Lars-Olov Strandberg

Judy: Toto: We'd all been a bit anxious about how he'd cope with being held by a near stranger – we had tried to introduce them earlier – and all the crowds and noise. He appeared in Dorothy's arms at the opening, a bit uneasy, but polite; then, as we had agreed, she set him down and he trotted off to be claimed by his loving family, with relief evident on all sides. He didn't have to do anymore, after all! He behaved very well indeed. We spared him a curtain call, feeling that he was unlikely to understand all that applause meant 'Good Dog!'

To my everlasting shame I don't remember who handled the sound. We had a record of the film score, and whoever he was, he coped with all the cues. (*Note from PW: almost certainly Gerald Bishop*) I have a tape to prove it. And it was on this occasion that I discovered that directing a show with contact lenses on required reading glasses to see the script. I abandoned the contact lenses for good. It was great fun, and I recall that a splendid time was had by all. The audience certainly gave us to understand that they liked it. I always wanted to do it again.

Rob: The performance itself has blurred with time. I recall Anne McCaffrey acting it up wonderfully as a Wicked Witch. Andrew Stephenson's attention to detail led to hilarious hooting and much waving of his mighty branches. Arthur prowled and growled and clawed, then cowered; a total star. Jim Blish also cowered effectively, and shuddered with exposure when Judy's giant prop-mask was hauled away.

By 1974, fancy dress and partying were a major part of the Eastercon experience. The Blish's 'Oz' – if I recall correctly – inspired mini-theatricals at Eastercon in later years. I was very glad to have been involved. The Tin Man didn't need to find his heart, he'd found it already with a sense of wonder that persists like the best of memories and is ever fresh. I can hardly believe that the Lion needed to find courage, not the way Arthur acted it up. The Straw Man was a clever man. The Wicked Witch knew how to play wicked. It's a talent we can all indulge in. And the Munchkins applauded. And then, no doubt, we could all be found 'in the bar'.

ABOUT THIS FEATURE:

I've wanted to do this feature – or something like it – for a long time. I first began collecting old con-photos while writing 'Stars...' back in 2003, and the first set of *Tynecon* pictures came my way through the good offices of Mike Meara, who let me scan literally hundreds of his negatives from conventions of the seventies. Then more arrived, thanks to the kindness of Lars-Olov Strandberg and Peter Mabey, both of whom carried heavy boxes of slides over hundreds of miles to satisfy my mad obsession! But sadly, there were few pictures of the 'Oz' performance; I'd guess that lighting levels in that hall were pretty low, and photographers weren't able to get very near the action.



Sam at the Oz Show
Photo: Lars-Olov Strandberg.

The breakthrough came last September when Rob Jackson sent me Sam Long's con-report from his fanzine *Qwertyuiop-7*. Sam said: 'I was the official photographer and got a goodly number of pix, though Judy complained I was getting in the way backstage.' Bingo! But how to get in touch with Sam, who I haven't heard from in more than twenty years? I asked Bill Burns, and Bill asked Mary Reed, who had an address for him – and Bill contacted Sam, who now lives in Springfield, Illinois, and yes, he still had his photo-albums, hidden away in the back room. He hauled them out, sent them to Bill in New York, who scanned the 'Oz' pictures for me, and here they are, 32 years after the event and as clear as if it taken yesterday! Great shots, Sam!

There's never been anything quite like 'Ozimov' at a British convention before or since, so I'm grateful to everyone who made this commemorative feature possible, to all the cast-members whose memories I've been able to tap into (though Brian Hampton has gone AWOL, and Anne McCaffrey has been unable to participate), with special thanks to Judy Blish, whose genius made it all happen in the first place. And Dorothy and the Lion lived together happily ever after.

Very little comment was ever made about 'Oz', but here's Darroll Pardoe in *Checkpoint 47*:

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL BRITISH EASTER SF CONVENTION, *Tynecon74* took place on 12-15th April at the Royal Station Hotel in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Attendance was a record; about 350 people actually turned up at the convention out of a total registration of 504. This is the first time the total has topped 500 at an Eastercon. This year's convention was remarkable not only for its excellence but by the large number of attendees for whom this was their first convention. This influx of new faces was in large part due to publicity in *SF Monthly* and surely bodes well for the future of British fandom. THE ORGANIZERS this year were the local Gannet group: Chairman was Ian Maule, Secretary Ian Williams, Treasurer Rob Jackson, and the committee was completed by Harry and Irene Bell. Harry handled the Press, Guest-of-Honour was Bob Shaw, and fan GoH was Peter Weston. The most memorable event was a fannish Wizard of Oz pastiche put on by a group of people headed by James Blish (as the Wizard of First Fandom). The audience had been nicely warmed up beforehand by Vera Johnson's filk song, but the real hero of the hour was Ben Jackson the dog.

And Rob Hansen said in THEN:-

Tynecon '74 is commonly held to have been a classic Eastercon, where almost everything went right, and with a tremendous end-of-con party which sent the attendees away on a real high. Bob Shaw rated the event a 'five-bed convention'; (Brian Aldiss was seen at one room party bouncing up and down on a bed with such enthusiasm that he broke it, and four others went the same way). *Tynecon* was to be the yardstick by which all other British conventions were measured for years after.

'Ozimov' was staged more than 32 years ago and Judy Blish has long since moved to Greece, so it's remarkable that she kept the script and was able to e-mail a copy to me when I first started thinking about this feature. We're even more fortunate that pictures have also survived, in forgotten attics and albums until unearthed over the last three years; those below are courtesy of Sam Long unless indicated. Regard the hard-copy *Prolapse* as a sampler; the web version will be in full colour. And now, before your very eyes.... Judy Blish's production of:

'The Wizard of Ozimov'

The Script



Anne McCaffrey as Wicked Witch Reporter with newspaper hat. Photo: Peter Mabey

DOROTHY: That's what brought me here. It was like a whirlwind but it's all too much. I think I'd better go home.

GLINDA; Where is your home?

DOROTHY; Welwyn Garden City.

GLINDA: Is that the name of a star? Well, you can't get back the way you came.... Maybe the Wizard of Ozimov can help you.

MUNCHKINS (if any): The Wizard! Goshwow! Wizard...

DOROTHY: The Wizard? How do I find him?

GLINDA: Just follow the Yellow Brick Road (she points with fannish totem object)

DOROTHY: But...

GLINDA has disappeared back into crowd. DOROTHY starts on the end of the paper 'road'.

DOROTHY: (Repeating words as if incantation) Follow the Yellow Brick Road. (Song on tape, which fades as she advances about 10 feet slowly, leaving MUNCHKINS waving at starting point. She stops and sees SCARECROW, who is standing by the roadside with one arm at shoulder level, in which he is holding a fanzine labelled 'SERCONZINE' on one side and 'FAANZINE' on bcover; one of these covers is visible to each half of audience.

DOROTHY: Now which way do I go?

Overture plays: 'Over the Rainbow.' During overture, the Yellow Brick Road is unrolled and marked by crew.

The WICKED WITCH REPORTER runs past, cackling evilly, turns, flashes camera flashgun at audience, and vanishes.

Enter DOROTHY, looking bewildered, carrying dog and basket. She takes a few hesitant steps into the hall.

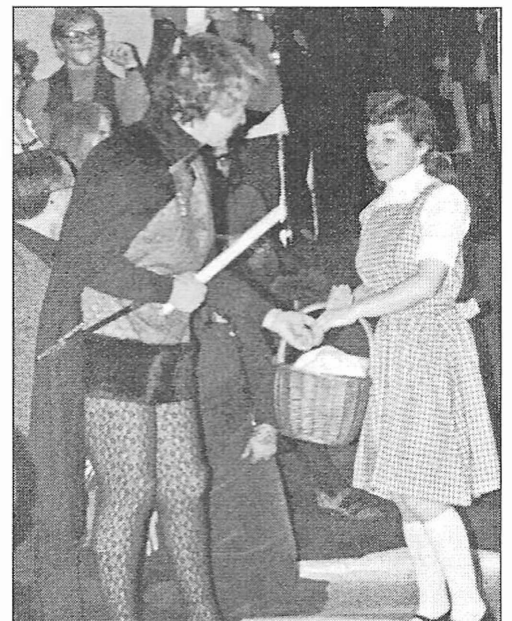
DOROTHY: Where am I? What a strange place!

Enter GLINDA from back of audience, suddenly. She is carrying a St Fantony totem object in lieu of wand.

GLINDA; Welcome, my dear, to the wonderful land of Ozimov, Oz for short. Are you enjoying the convention?

DOROTHY: I don't quite know, this is my first. It's all so Astounding, a whole New World.

GLINDA: (sweetly) All you need is a Sense of Wonder.



Ina Shorrock as Glinda in St Fantony costume with sacred Sword & scroll.



Dorothy meets Brian Hampton as Scarecrow, holding his fanzine.

SCARECROW: Sometimes I think this is the right way. (He drops arm, transfers fanzine to other hand, and raises it so that the labels are now reversed in audience view). Sometimes I think that is the right way. (Drops both arms to sides). I wish I could make up my mind! (plaintively)

DOROTHY: I'm on my way to see the Wizard of Ozimov. Maybe he could sort you out.

SCARECROW: Do you think he might? Oh please, could I go with you?

DOROTHY: Oh, yes, I would like some company.

SCARECROW: (As they start off, and throughout, he should stumble frequently, sag at the knees, whereupon DOROTHY should haul him up again by the collar). The thing is, a fanzine should be Significant.

DOROTHY: (baffled): Oh.

SCARECROW: Or not. (They try to match steps, and sing line of song, 'We're off to See the Wizard').

(About 12 feet further on the TIN FAN-EDITOR is standing by the road, rusting; he holds a duplicator crank).

DOROTHY: (stopping) Oh, look, another strange person!

SCARECROW: It's a fan editor - a fan made out of tin -

TIN FAN: (squeaking) Gestetner!

(DOROTHY inspects him, takes bottle of Newcastle brown from basket and "oils" him).

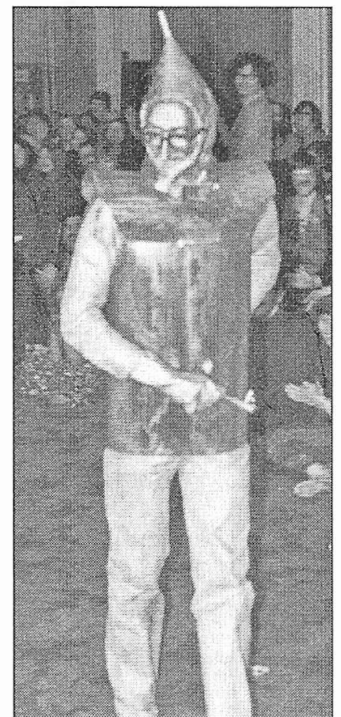
TIN FAN: (moving stiffly) Thank you. I've been standing here rusting since my last issue.

SCARECROW: (to DOROTHY) Typical, typical. They all do that. (To TIN FAN) Why?

TIN FAN: Somehow the heart seems to have gone out of publishing for me. There's something.... lacking.

DOROTHY: A spare part?

SCARECROW: No. He needs egoboo. Maybe the Wizard can help him...



Rob Holdstock as the Tin Fan-Editor with Gestetner crank.



DOROTHY: Come along. (All join arms) We're off to see the wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz...

(Linking arms they move off slowly under the FOREST, represented by overhead branches held by Crew.)

DOROTHY: I don't like this forest, it's dark and creepy.

SCARECROW: I wonder if there are any wild animals. Like Vugs.

TIN FAN: And Dragons.

DOROTHY: And, and BEMS??

ALL; Goshwow! (chanting) VUGS and Dragons and BEMS, Goshwow! VUGS and -



1/2R Cruttenden as Lion lurks behind trees (Judy Blish & Andrew Stephenson)

ENTER LION, (roaring) (He leaps out from behind Tree) GRRRR-APHS! Autographs! BNFS! Autographs!

ALL recoil and push him away. He bursts into tears.

LION; What did you have to go and push me for? I only wanted your autographs!

DOROTHY: But you called us something terrible.

LION: (still snivelling) All I said was BNFS. Aren't you BNFS?

DOROTHY: I don't know what those are, and you scared us.

SCARECROW: We're new here ourselves.

TIN FAN: You're nothing but a bully. And stop sniffing or we'll think you're a coward as well.

LION: (sobs) I am a coward. I can't help it. I'm not brave enough to speak to real BNFS—I'm afraid of 'em.

SCARECROW: You'd better come with us.

TIN FAN: Maybe the Wizard can give you courage. (They start on and reach area in front of stage).

DOROTHY: Oh, there's the Wizard's Palace! Come on!

They run in place a few steps; ENTER WITCH, smoking heavily, cackling with laughter, brandishing the microphone of her cassette recorder as if it were a deadly weapon)

WITCH: Not so fast, not so fast. You will spare me a moment of your time.

DOROTHY: But we want to see the Wizard.

WITCH: Not until you answer a few questions for the Mundane Press. Heh-heh. Well, well, what have we here? What are you got up as, The Death of Grass?

SCARECROW: Uhh.uh.

WITCH: Tell me first; Where do you get those crazy ideas?

SCARECROW: (Humbly, hesitant) Uhh, same place I get the clever ones.

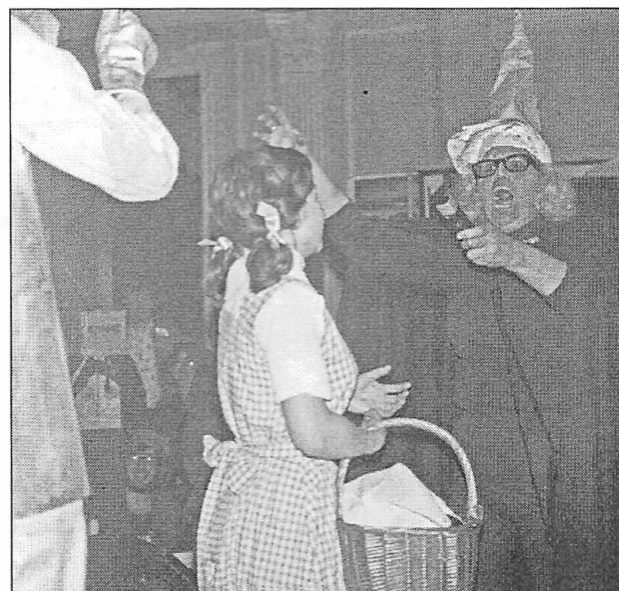
WITCH; (Smiling in evil satisfaction; it is just as she thought). And you.. (She walks all around the LION who turns nervously to face her, so that the effect is that she is chasing his tail. Or he is.) Don't tell me. Let me guess. A giant Tribble? (Suddenly) So, you don't believe in flying saucers?

LION: Yipe! Where, where? (He cowers behind Dorothy's skirt as WITCH hurls a plastic saucer at him. WITCH then turns on TIN FAN, who is rattled).

WITCH: And you, there, Stainless Steel Rat's Revenge, now that they've landed on the Moon, what are you going to write about, hey?

TIN FAN: Oh, about a stencil a day, I reckon.

WITCH: Aaaargh, They're obsessional! And now for you, my pretty. Heh-heh. (She rubs hands, makes much play with recorder). Why do you come to these things?



Wicked Witch Reporter with her recorder asks Dorothy silly questions for the Mundane Press.

DOROTHY: (Very sincerely) I was carried away by a sense of wonder.

WITCH: (shrieking) Aaah! Who would have thought an honest answer would destroy my beautiful sarkiness? Oh! Oh! (She flees) Cassette case and newspaper hat are left behind. Dorothy picks up hat, wondering.

DOROTHY: (looking around at her companions and audience) All of a sudden you don't seem so strange.

They now approach the screens on stage; suspense music.

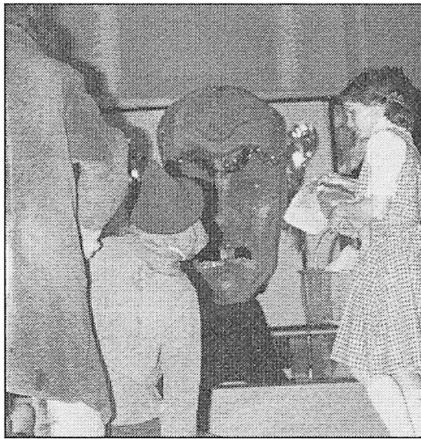
ALL: Hallo! Hallo!

SOLDIER puts head out between the screens. He has a long green beard.

SOLDIER: What do you want?

ALL: We've come to see the Wizard.

SOLDIER: The Wizard? See the Wizard? The Wizard never sees anybody! (after thought) Until he's had a drink, and then he sees them twice.



The travellers kneel in awe at sight of the mighty Wizard of First Fandom

DOROTHY: Oh, please, we've come such a long way....

SOLDIER: Humph! I'll see if he's in. (He retreats behind screens, and re-emerges). All right, he'll see you. But – be careful. Screens are opened, revealing a large head, apparently floating on a throne; smoke rises in front of it, and green lamps flank the throne. With a little luck, lamps may be dimmed and brightened.

WIZARD: (amplified) I am the Great and Terrible Wizard of First Fandom. Who Are you? And What is That Hat?

DOROTHY; (curtseys and places hat on stage). Please sir, it's the hat of the wicked Witch Reporter.

WIZARD; Humph. Yesterday's edition. Pretty Old Hat!

SCARECROW; (reminiscently) We annihilated her.

WIZARD: (Loud and a little nervous) You liquidated her, did you? Nothing left but the hat? What do you want from me?

SCARECROW: I want a mind to make up, please.

TIN FAN: I want some egoboo for my fanzine.

LION: I want the nerve to ask BNFs for their autogrrrraphs. Maybe even Prrros.

WIZARD: (Shocked) The Great and Terrible Wizard of First Fandom has spoken. Go away and come back tomorrow.

TIN FAN: What, and get all this gear on again?

LION: But I want to get autographs tonight.

DOROTHY: (About to cry) And I want to go home.

TIN FAN rushes to stage with crank upraised, threatening. Others follow, and cast aside the mask. Astonished and furious noises from all. WIZARD makes ineffectual defensive gestures.

SCARECROW: (Angrily) Why, he's only a mock-up!

TIN FAN: Just as I thought! A fakefan all the way through.

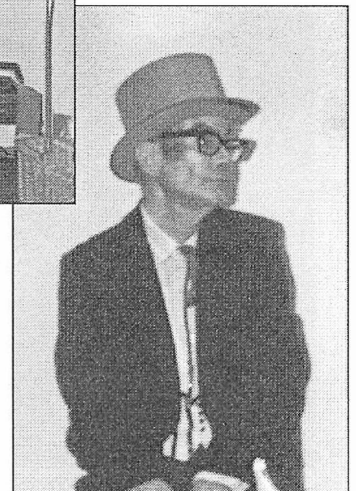
DOROTHY: (Disappointed and indignant) You're a very bad fan!



PW as Emerald Soldier/Doorman to Fandom, hamming it up and trying to look stern



Abashed, a morning-suited Ozimov addresses the Issue At Hand



A very bad Wizard!
(But a bloody good writer!)

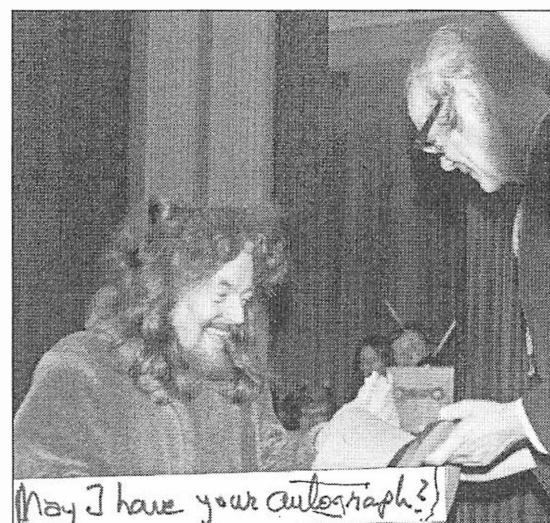
WIZARD: Oh, no my dear, I'm a very good fan. I'm just a very Bad wizard.

ALL: Now I'll never get my – Mind made- up; Egoboo; Autographs; Out of here!

WIZARD: Oh yes you will.

ALL: OH NO WE WON'T!

WIZARD: Now you Scarecrow; YOU can't decide whether you want to be Sercon or Faanish. Why be all one or the other? There's plenty of room here for a whole spectrum. (He unfolds the fanzine, which is indeed a spectrum. SCARECROW jumps for joy, wobbly, showing unfolded Spectrumzine to all. And you, Tin Editor you want egoboo. What you need is a LOC. (Hands TIN FAN a card with a picture of a padlock on it. TIN FAN looks at it doubtfully.



Wizard makes an old Lion very happy!

TIN FAN: What's this for?

WIZARD: Open it. Go on, open it. (TIN FAN unfolds card, revealing a gigantic, decorated letter of comment.) (TIN FAN bangs self on chest and emits Tarzan victory cry.)

WIZARD: And for you, Lion. The Great and Pow-- Oh well. OZ himself has been waiting for this moment. (Hands LION a card and a pen.) Please, Oh Mighty Lion, may I have your autograph? (LION, rather pleased, inscribes the card 1/2r, which WIZARD places in his hatband, a la Mad Hatter. Overcome, LION dances. Then, all stop and turn toward DOROTHY.

TIN FAN: What about DOROTHY?

DOROTHY: I guess you don't have anything for me.

WIZARD: My dear, you don't need anything from me any more. Do you still want to go home, really?

DOROTHY; (a little hesitant) I think I do.

WIZARD: Places arm around her shoulder. He points at people hereinafter named). Home is here, where the fans are gathered – Cuddly fans, like Rob Holdstock; Biblio-biblioph-bib'book-loving fans like Arthur Cruttenden; One-shot fans like Peter Weston (with his blunderbuss); Intellectual fans like Ben Jackson; Scale-covered fans like Anne McCaffrey; Sainly fans like Ina Shorrocks; Star Trek fans like James Blish; and Neo-fans like Wendy Ellis. (He crowns her ceremoniously with propeller beanie)

DOROTHY: I think maybe I do feel at home now. (She's a little surprised at this)

WIZARD: And there's one more thing I can give you all. (ALL attend eagerly) These will admit you - (he hands out bottles of appropriate drink: Courage, Oil cans, Black Label, etc., to all) And the ROOM PARTY is in.... (whispers)

ALL exit, waving booze. Musical closing, while production crew tacks up its credit sign.



Who was Ben Jackson?

Rob Jackson explains; 'My mother brought him from home specially so he could appear. I think he was about two years old at the time. I was too busy to watch and see how he behaved but I think he must have been OK, as no fannish legends have grown up about a naughty West Highlands Terrier at Tynecon.'

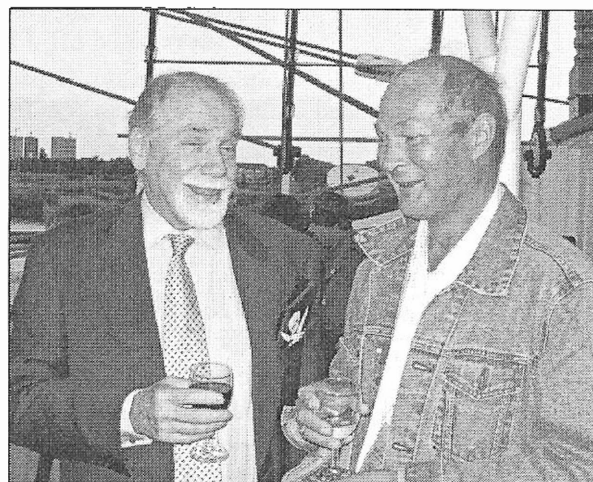
Back around in 1964 when I was just getting my first fanzine off the ground, someone in Sweden with the name of 'Carl Brandon Jr.' started sending me a fortnightly newsletter called *Swefanac*. As the name implied it was about Swedish fandom, with news of all the exciting things being done by people called 'Lars' and 'Per' and 'Bo', and lots of others I'd never heard of, and I'm ashamed to say I didn't take very much notice. It was a single foolscap sheet, printed in blue ink and folded twice to go through the post, and in my ignorance – an ignorance shared by the whole of the 'new look' British fandom of the time – I didn't realise the entire thing was something of a tribute to Terry Carr, as evidenced both by the title and the pseudonym. So it came as a bit of a shock some years later when I finally discovered that 'Carl Brandon Jr.' was actually John-Henri Holmberg. Since then we've met at conventions in Britain and the U.S. and apart from occasional flashes of Scandinavian gloom, John-Henri has always been great fun and has proved to be one of the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic commentators about the SF field, making his living variously as critic, translator, editor and publisher. But sometimes enthusiasm can get out of hand...

CollectorsAnonymous

John-Henri Holmberg

Number 3 in a continuing series of True Confessions

With Bob Silverberg
on the 'tall ship'
at *Interaction* 2005.
Photo: PW



As far as I can recall I started reading science fiction at six when I chanced on a children's novel called *SPACE PIRATES* (in Swedish of course), written by Georg Eliasson. He was a radio producer and his book had initially been a radio serial, which I never heard. But the book transfixed me, and I spent years trying to find equally enchanting things to read. It was worse than that, since I couldn't even re-read *SPACE PIRATES*, which had been a borrowed book – so I had to look for that as well, apart from similar things I knew must be out there.

I lived with my parents in a residential part of Stockholm, with few stores in the area. But there was a small lending library, and a couple of second-hand shops which I visited every week, hoping in vain to find things about space and rockets and future worlds. I borrowed every book in the library with any of those key words in its title. It came to a pitifully small number of books which I read very quickly.

When I started school, my search expanded. I went to a small private school half the city away, and around it were a book store and two or three antiquarian booksellers. Now I actually began making fabulous finds: tattered copies of the Swedish paperback originals of great literary masterpieces like L. Ron Hubbard's *TO THE STARS*, Charles L. Fontenay's *TWICE UPON A TIME*, even hardbound books that had appeared in translation years before, like Ray Bradbury's *MARTIAN CHRONICLES*, Robert A. Heinlein's *THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON* and his *FARMER IN THE SKY*, A. E. Van Vogt's *THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER* and C. L. Moore's *JUDGMENT NIGHT*. These were dizzy, fabulous days of drunken joy. I read until dawn, neglected school and resolved to spread my search ever wider, particularly since I had started finding both new and older copies of the Swedish SF digest *Häpna!*, where I learned not only of vast numbers of still-unfound books, but also of the legendary existence of an earlier SF magazine, the weekly *Jules Verne-magasinet*, which was published from late 1940 through early 1947 and consequently of which there must somewhere be hundreds of issues to find.

But not a single copy of *Jules Verne-magasinet* ever turned up at any of the places where I was looking. I found other books, completed my run of *Häpna!* (which had begun when I was four), began cutting-out and pasting-up scrapbooks of the daily Dan Barry 'Flash Gordon strips' from a newspaper my parents didn't take – I sneaked copies from the piles left outside the garden gates of other houses for the weekly paper collection.

And then, one day, on my way to school, I stopped dead on the pavement. I suppose I must have been eleven or possibly twelve. On the way to the bus-stop I passed a house which had stood empty for years; whoever lived there must have gone into a home or died, and children were scared of it since local legend claimed it to be haunted or at least a hangout for dangerous teenagers. But now someone had started to clean it out, and overnight the pavement in front of the house had been covered with pile after pile of uncounted thousands of old newspapers and magazines.

I stared at this largesse, went up to it, let my hand brush over the yellowing, brittle, decade-old newspaper stock, my head filled by visions of untold riches – a complete run of ‘Flash Gordon’ strips might be hidden here, perhaps, or hundreds of old copies of the weekly family oriented ‘*Vecko-Revy*’ which in every issue published a short story under its ‘The Weekly Shock’ heading, some of which I had discovered were science fiction. I began leafing through the nearest pile... and there, beneath a few newspapers, were two or three copies of *Jules Verne-magasinet*, the first ones I’d ever seen: garish covers with monsters and spacemen, an unbelievable treasure!

I was filled with panic. It would take hours to search through the dozens of piles of paper, each of them three or four feet high. The bus I had to catch for school would arrive in minutes. The paper collectors wouldn’t be along for two or three days... but what if it began to rain? There was only one thing to do. I took the bus. School went past in a mist of anticipation. I went home and early to bed, waiting tensely for all sounds to cease in the house. Finally lights were turned off, I heard my parents close their bedroom door upstairs, and the coast was clear. After a few minutes I got up, dressed, armed myself with a flashlight, opened the door to the balcony outside my room and climbed down the few feet to the lawn below, then ran off to the vacant house and its treasure trove.

I was a systematic and neat child. I began by sorting through everything in the first pile at the innermost right corner of the area covered by the papers, restacked it all a few feet further to the right, took on the next pile, and continued in this fashion. The hours passed, midnight came and went, and still I untied bundles, leafed through newspapers and magazines, restacked and retied them in new piles. I was wet with dew, frozen to the bone by the cold winds of the small hours, I cut my fingers on paper, and was disgusted by the smell of mould. Still I kept at it. Some time around four in the morning, dead tired, dirty and dishevelled, with hands crusted black from old newsprint and shivering from exhaustion, I was finished. I was sick of the very sight of those crumbling, brittle piles of paper. And I had found nothing. *Absolutely nothing*. Not a single ‘Flash Gordon’ strip – the people who had lived in the house had, like my parents, read other newspapers. Not a single ‘Weekly Shock’. And not a single issue of *Jules Verne-magasinet* apart from the ones I’d found the morning before.

I slunk home like a whipped dog, climbed my balcony, hid my dirty clothes at the bottom of my closet until I could sneak down and put them in the cellar washroom, tried to wash without making any noise and went to bed. It was five o’clock and in two hours I would have to get up and stumble off to school. I lay in bed, with the sickly smell of mouldy paper still in my nostrils, and felt like the biggest fool on earth. And that was the moment when I resolved to put some limits on my collecting urge. I have had relapses, I can’t deny. But never again have I waded through a hundred cubic feet of waste paper, hoping to find a scrap of science fiction.

‘Collectors Anonymous’ is a concept originated by Malcolm Edwards, who asked, “What is your single most embarrassing collecting moment – the one where you knew that any reasonable outside observer would conclude that you had lost your marbles completely?” So do please send me your guilty secrets to be revealed in future issues of *Prolapse* – we can change the name if it’s really too embarrassing!

LOOKING BACKWARD

Nextish will see Michael Moorcock’s wonderful epic, ‘I Remember Fandom’, Andrew Stephenson’s forgotten illos for THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR (if Rog Peyton can ever find them) and Rob Hansen’s never-properly-published report on *Seacon* ’75; I need photographs from the 1975 convention, please fans! Coming soon is John Hall with ‘Life with the Brunners’ (an everyday story of Hampstead folk), Dan Morgan’s ‘The Invisible Fan’, Ann Green’s report on the 1994 ‘*Misdeemeanour*’ (which dwells lovingly on ‘The Trial of Steve Green’ with Catherine Pickersgill as Prosecuting Attorney), and Ken Slater’s ‘House of Horrors’ (about his experiences at *BeNeLuxcon* in 1975). For the future, Dick Ellingsworth promises ‘London’s Slan Shack’ (my title) – his recollections of the ‘Kingdon Road set’, which may or may not be backed-up by more stories from Jim Linwood. Meanwhile, George Locke is writing a piece about four of our all-time British BNFs and their collections, while Ina Shorrocks is scribbling down her memories of ‘Early Days in Liverpool Fandom’. Somehow I’m going to have to itemise that ‘Doc Weir’ file mentioned in this issue, while Tony Keen suggests that sometime soon we should commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ‘lost’ 1957 Kettering convention. Thanks to Ina, I now have the source-documents for the Order of St Fantony (which will also be 50 this year) and the scripts for ‘March of Slime’ and the LiG film, ‘May We Have the Pleasure?’ Sounds as if I’m going to be busy.... and I still haven’t really dug into that pile of material from Derek Pickles. Gosh, isn’t this fun!

“Fandom seems to have long tentacles...” – Keith Freeman, LoC

The Melting Pot

or, "What's Cooking, Doc?"

Your turn to 'set me straight,' as Ian Sorensen so elegantly phrased it last time, and I do most definitely want your LoCs on the issue. Editorial asides in italics, *like this*, British spelling, and rather fewer thumbnails of contributors this time – after all, you've seen most of them already!



Illustration: adapted from 'Giles' of the Daily Express

"Secret histories abound" – Dave Langford, (review of 'Stars...')

Paul Vincent

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Dear Peter,

"If I wore a hat, I'd be raising it to you right now. In the space of just two issues of the revived *Prolapse* you've established a clear direction for the zine: a companion to Rob Hansen's *THEN*, focussing on personal recollections and contemporary accounts of moments in fan-history, in contrast to *THEN*'s historical overview. This is great stuff; I personally find old conreps, TAFF trip reports, and the like far more evocative of times past than the 'almanac' approach, invaluable though the latter doubtless is for providing a framework and context for the individual accounts.

"My reactions to Issue 3 were coloured by my having been a part of the events described. I found #4 far more absorbing, particularly the account of *Brumcon*. Like Greg Pickersgill, I was astonished to learn that the program had more resembled that of the *Silicons* than the sercon, heavily SF-oriented affairs I'd always imagined these old conventions to be.

"I well remember the pale blue duper paper referred to by Steve Green in his piece. I didn't say anything at the time, not wishing to appear ungrateful to Steve for his generous donation of time and effort in duping *Abdump* #4, but I remember feeling a bit disappointed at the number of sheets where the print was either faint or slightly smudged. I didn't fully realise at the time just how much difference the quality of the paper could make. At least it didn't have any upside-down pages, like the issue of Martin's *Empties* referred to by Steve.

"Joe Nicholas has lost none of his old ability to cut to the heart of the matter, I see, illuminating with incisive clarity: "A verbal insult is entirely verbal"... a master at work. I can only shake my head in admiration for such insight."

Ro & Darroll Pardoe

pardos@globalnet.co.uk

"My, Peter, you're becoming quite the fanzine fan!

"I feel much the same way you do about the 1959 Birmingham Eastercon. I could have been there, since I lived only ten miles down the road, but I didn't. I hadn't really discovered fandom at that point. That came with my first meeting with Ken Cheslin early in 1960. I'd have gone to the 1960 London convention if I could, but I couldn't afford to. So my first con was the 1961 Eastercon (LXICon). Still, from my experience of the old Imperial many times since (I don't think it had changed much), and from going to a con only two years later, I can imagine well enough what it must have been like.

"It's hard to look back and remember that fandom was very, very small in those days. How many names were there in Ron Bennett's 'Directory' – 400 or so? And that encompassed pretty well the whole of fandom, world-wide. You could know everyone, and get every fanzine, without too much trouble. Which is why Doc Weir had an award named after him. My impression is that there was real affection for him at the time, and British fandom being so small (less than a hundred people) everyone knew him, and his death left a noticeable hole. I suppose it's inevitable with 'name' awards that 40 or 50 years down the line nobody remembers the person. However, I don't think that's a good reason to change the name.

"As for the BSFA, I think it was schizophrenic right from the start, with some people who wanted to maintain its ostensible purpose as a recruiting vehicle, and those who wanted it to be serious about SF. I've a feeling the reason the BSFA was marginalised in the mid-sixties, and why concons were keen to dissociate themselves from it, is that the BSFA was on a roller-coaster. Sometimes there'd be a good committee who would run things well, then they'd be followed by people (like poor old Charlie W.) who cocked it all up and almost, but never completely, ruined its reputation as a stable organisation. These to be followed by a rescue mission which lifted it from the mire again, and so it went on. This has continued, of course. It's not that long since the BSFA was struck-off the companies' register for not sending in the accounts, etc, and it took a lot of hard work by one or two people to get it back on.

"Why does this happen to the BSFA? I belong to several other hobby societies which chug along happily from year to year and never have crises such as are endemic to the BSFA.

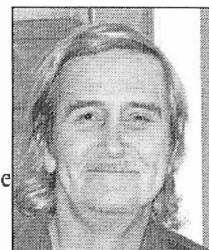
"[Note from Ro] Darroll doesn't look like Father Christmas, but like the current Archbishop of Canterbury. So much is this the case that members of my family think he'd be onto a nice little earner if he hired himself out to open fetes, etc."

Hmm, Darroll, I think you're trying to turn my editorial on its head without much evidence to support your theory; you'll remember last time I said it was the BSFA which cut itself loose from con-running (a decision causing real alarm for a short time until everyone realised it had made absolutely no difference). However your point about the roller-coaster ride is a good one, and I think for this reason by the early seventies no con-committee would have tolerated a return to any form of being overseen by the BSFA. Though in 1971 I did produce a completely bogus letterhead for the Worcester con which claimed it was 'sponsored by the BSFA & Speculation magazine' in a desperate attempt to demonstrate credibility to uncooperative hotel managers. As for Ron Bennett's old 'Directories' I bet 400 names was a high estimate!

Dick Ellingsworth

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Photo: by
Dick, 2007



Dear Peter,

"I remember that bit at *Yarcon* about the BSFA withdrawing from running conventions. I'd always assumed it was simply the latest chapter in the long-running 'sercon' versus 'fannish' thing that had dogged fandom for so long. Certainly, Dave Barber was (justifiably) miffed at the irresponsible behaviour of a few fans, which probably clouded his thinking. One wonders if, in the long term, the absence of BSFA backing really made that much of a difference. To me, coming back after a long break, the convention scene seems healthy enough.

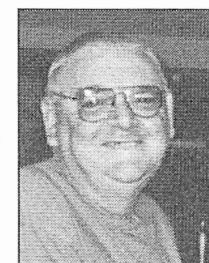
"On Doc Weir, if you'd asked me if I'd ever met him, and what did he look like, my answers would have been "erm..." and "erm...", in that order. He belonged to certain class of Englishman who were all virtually indistinguishable from each other (in looks, anyway). From the picture of him at the rostrum, he could have been Oswald Mosley, Clement Atlee, or my Uncle Claude. I'm sure I must have encountered him at some point, but I'm blown if I can remember anything about it. One has to remember that in those days, the death of a fan was a relatively uncommon occurrence, and there was an almost automatic reaction to mark anyone's passing in some way. I doubt that the Award would have happened in modern fandom – too many worthy people have been corflud'd out of our lives and we can't remember them all in that way.

"Chris Garcia raises an interesting point about computers in zine production. I don't know why they filtered in so slowly in the States, but over here a major factor must have been the cost. I bought my first computer in '82 I think, a Victor (marketed in the UK as the Sirius and infinitely superior to the IBM format, even running an enhanced version of MS-DOS). Even with a substantial journalist's discount, it still cost more than thirteen hundred quid, and by the time I'd added extra memory (128k doubled to 256k!) and bought the cheapest dot-matrix printer I could lay my hands on, the total cost was well in excess of fifteen hundred – not a small amount in those days! In draft mode, the dot-matrix was fairly fast, and I used it for newsletters for my fantasy RPG group, but for anything more serious, I had to take a floppy into work, print it out on the daisy-wheel machine, and take the copy to be printed professionally. Later in the '80s, I bought a laser printer and produced a gaming fanzine on it, but it was still prohibitively expensive; about twelve hundred quid for the printer, if memory serves me right (even without the extra hardware fonts) and another couple of hundred for a monochrome scanner. It simply wasn't the sort of outlay a normal person would want to make."

John Hall

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Photo: from
John,
Vancouver
2003



Dear Peter,

"Good ish. I found much food for thought in your opening remarks about the Internet and this new age of fanzine production. As you know (a great *parp* on my own trumpet here), I have now produced three issues of my own (my very own) *Motorway Dreamer*. I was initially disappointed with the response to *MD1*, which was only produced as a pdf on *efanzines*, and sent as an e-mail attachment to a select few. (Roy Kettle got a paper copy, it's true, but that was because the idle bastard's ISP was bouncing his e-mails, he had so many piled-up on the server). Okay, it was all me, trying and failing to be witty, but I took the lack of real LoCs a bit personal, and it was only the encouragement of the Barista's that led to *MD2*. Recently, Eric Mayer was writing about this in an issue of *In a Prior Lifetime* (John Purcell's web zine), admitting that he doesn't feel under an obligation to LoC any fanzine he views on the web the way he used to in days when they came in the mail, because it seems all of a piece to him – after all, he is used to using free software off the web, without writing and thanking the developer. If he LoCs, then it's only because he has been inspired to do so.

"I might be accused of wanting it both ways (Oo I do, you know) but I actually think Eric is right to adopt this attitude, and it was naive of me to assume that because good old Johnny had resurrected himself in fannish terms and was actually putting out a fanzine, that people would fall over themselves to say 'Jolly Good Show, Old Thing!' Chris Garcia in the same ish of *LAPL* says that he gets very little response to much of his immense output. There's no doubt that it must be hard for Chris to provide quality content if he insists on putting out an ish every ten minutes, but I can't keep up with it. I just can't read it all – which is sad because when I have read it, I have been very entertained. John Purcell keeps to a monthly schedule! Why, I can't read pro mags I subscribe to that often! I have to pile 'em up and read them in binges. Now, the editors of *The Word* or *Literary Review* don't sit in their offices in Soho, reflecting on how sad a thing it is they don't hear from John Nielsen Hall, and nor should they. If Chris and John insist on these schedules they must adopt a like mind. Faneds like you, Peter (and you see I do get to the point eventually) who as you put it, look for 'an intensely personal experience between editor and recipient' must adjust and adapt, and your stated policy of printing paper copies, then putting

it on the web, is the same conclusion I have come to – albeit I'll be putting *MD* on the web and e-mails at the same time as putting the printed copies in the post. The other conclusion I have come to is that I'm going to wait around six months and maybe longer between issues. That way I'll get better contribs, and if I get better contribs, I'll get a better response.

"Your tales of the 1959 Con were interesting in a sort of academic, not quite dry-as-dust sort of way. Because those guys were fans, there is an assumption that we would have known each other instinctively across the years, but that might be a tad romantic. I was a child in the fifties and I don't remember anything about those times that fills me with nostalgia. People not only looked and dressed differently, I believe they *were* different. People of Doc Weir's age had grown up in a different time and with great many things taken for granted that we no longer recognise – were they to fall through that rift in Space-Time that runs through Cardiff they would be at sea not only in our society and with the technology, but also with the fandom we have now. Heavens, it's hard enough relating to younger fans and the obsession of the media types with utterly crap TV serials, and I speak as one of a generation who enjoyed putting the wind up Ye Olde BNF's.

"That's a charming custom you have instituted there with little piccy's of your Loc writers. Not always flattering though. I mean if Joseph Nicholas actually looks like that, how can he ever have got laid? Even in a dress? Darroll Pardoe looks distinctly C of E for a Zen master, and I don't fancy Steve Jeffery much. Does he do eighties electro nights at his local youth club? Andy Sawyer looks like he should be selling Turkey Twizzlers on TV and Chris Garcia, looks like Captain Kirk after he was marooned on a Desert Planet without access to 23rd Century depilatory treatments."

Then I'm a Romantic, John, because I believe we do still have a great deal in common with older fans, otherwise there wouldn't be much point in doing Prolapse, would there! You haven't spent time with Phil Klass ('William Tenn') who at 86 is full of stories about writers and editors and New York fandom of the 1950s. Then there's Ken Slater, and Ina Shorrock, and.... But for another take on this 'different generation' business let's hear from a man you have just so rudely insulted:

Joseph Nicholas

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Last issue James Bacon said in passing that Joseph Nicholas and I were 'shadow-boxing' but this, now, is the real thing, some fundamental differences of opinion on 'fan-history' and on what it means to be a science fiction fan.

Dear Peter,

"I turn to that section of your editorial concerning *Vector's* 250th anniversary issue, in which you say – anent the BSFA severing its connection with the organisation of the Eastercon in 1966 – that this "[opened] the door to the rapid fragmentation of fandom and for the BSFA to be gradually shoved out to the margins". The problem with arguing counterfactuals – that had the BSFA taken full responsibility for convention organisation it might not have been marginalised – is that they are not amenable to either proof or falsification: dependent on the initial conditions selected, one can generate any (equally valid) alternative. But I would argue that the fragmentation of fandom which you appear to lament would have happened anyway, irrespective of the role or position of the BSFA, as science fiction itself ramified into new areas over the next two decades and, *inter alia*, built itself a degree of legitimacy in the public consciousness. (Indeed, one might even advance a counterfactual case that if the BSFA had remained dominant the fragmentation might have been quicker and deeper, as the organisation's inability to cater for the interests of those who wanted their own events became apparent. You will recall that the founders of the British Fantasy Society split from the BSFA precisely because, in their view, it was failing to address their particular concerns.) The growth and ramification of fandom merely paralleled that.

"I can appreciate that, in some quarters and from some perspectives – in particular, from the perspective of one who sees the fall from dominance of their fannish cohort or model of fannish endeavour – this might look like fragmentation. But I, on the other hand, take the view that it is quite unrealistic to expect someone who entered fandom in the 1980s or 1990s from (say) a comics or a gaming background to share the same attitudes and ideals as someone who was publishing duplicated fanzines in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet this is exactly what you are suggesting in your reference to "people who come to modern conventions and who neither know nor care about past history" – the particular history in this case clearly being that of your fannish cohort: a cohort which clearly sees itself as upholding the traditions of the founders. In taking this view, however, you implicitly advance a claim for your history as superior to those of others, and thus the only legitimate history. This is, to put it bluntly, quasi-Stalinist, and it is exactly why your *Trufen* report of the 2005 Eastercon, in which you made very clear that those who didn't adhere to your model of what fans should do and say weren't really fans at all, provoked such a negative reaction. There is no one history of fandom, just as there is no one model of being a fan; you might perhaps reflect on whether those convention attendees you accuse of 'neither know[ing] nor car[ing] about past history' have a similar view of your ignorance of their history."

*Hmm, good letter, Joe. Last time, I looked at the BSFA in its guise as a 'fan organisation' and was lamenting the way in which it had distanced itself from conventions. But maybe it was inevitable that it would have to stop 'living a lie' as a false front for fandom and turn itself into a proper 'SF appreciation' society with a life of its own – something impossible in 1958, but more capable of becoming a reality as time went on. As I've pointed out in my editorial, fandom never needed the BSFA anyway and it managed perfectly well without it! And maybe we're overdoing this 'fragmentation' thing – most of the newer fans with whom I come into contact still seem to be pretty sound on the basics, even if they do fiddle with computers all the time. But what's all this talk of 'cohorts' and 'dominance'? There's no 'superiority' involved, just a general appreciation that British fandom has run in a continuous stream since 1930 or so and its story, as told by Rob Hansen's *THEN*, is the *only* 'legitimate history' of SF fandom in this country. There are no others. Yes, I've been around a long time and I suppose I do consider myself to be 'upholding the traditions of the founders' as compared with comic-collectors or war-gamers who, as you say, have rather different origins, but is that such a bad thing? Aren't we allowed to maintain some continuity with the past? As for con-attendees, a fair proportion have *always* come along only for short-term fun, and perhaps I was being rather too idealistic in hoping otherwise.*



And now a letter from our resident Local Hero; when I read your first paragraph, Steve, I thought, 'Yes, he's right, I would have felt that way too,' and immediately went and wrote the first bit of this issue's editorial. I'd accidentally fallen into the trap of superficial – and mistaken – assumptions.

Hi Peter,

"Like yourself, I wasn't at the 1959 Eastercon (my excuse being that I wasn't born until thirteen months later), but I remember the Imperial Centre Hotel with great affection. It was there that I attended both my first convention (*Fantasycon II*) and my first Brum Group meeting (guest: Brian Aldiss), all in the same month: February '77. The former was organised by the British Fantasy Society and offered precisely the 'sercon' programme which *Brumcon* apparently failed to deliver, and as such was a fairly unthreatening entry-point for a sixteen year-old neo with no real experience of fannish socialising beyond the occasional comics mart. In contrast to the sixteen year-old Peter Weston, I suspect I'd have felt much more of an outsider – an intruder, even – at an event as under-programmed as *Brumcon*.

"Around twenty years back, I was co-opted onto a BSFA sub-committee charged with deciding whether the Doc Weir Award should be quietly pensioned off; we eventually suggested giving it one last chance, providing more publicity was given to its origins and aims. I see little point in re-branding it after four decades, especially as I strongly disagree with your contention that 'everyone remembers J. Michael Rosenblum' (within the ranks of the *Wegenheim* e-list, possibly, but certainly not out there in wider fandom). Incidentally, the trophy itself was insured by the BSFA as solid silver, although I saw correspondence from Archie Mercer (now in the possession of Chuck Connor, I believe) which indicated it was merely silver-plated and expressed concerns over the legality of the insurance policy.

"The photograph of Martin Tudor and myself which accompanied my own article was, as you're aware, not just any old collating session, but that for the very first issue of *Critical Wave*. It had a fairly hefty print-run (400+), as copies were distributed simultaneously at *Novacon 17* in Birmingham and *NIcon II* in Belfast.

"Couldn't agree more with Steve Jeffrey regarding the crying need for the resurrection of fanzine review columns, and would also argue the occasional convention report wouldn't go amiss, either. Sadly, Dave Langford didn't feel he caught enough of *Novacon 36* to provide *Ansible* with its usual con-rep, and no one else stepped into the breach. It's not just that such articles help generate a sense of community, but it's hard to imagine a fan-historian in 2053 piecing together an article such as 'Disappointment at *Brumcon*!' from the scant mentions most current conventions receive. Perhaps *Prolapse* could spearhead the Campaign for Real Fanzines?

"I was intrigued by Ian Sorensen's reference to a putative Glaswegian hijack of *Novacon 15*, although I'm thoroughly relieved it didn't get off the ground. His vision of "[a] multi-stream programme, big name guests, massive local publicity and less of that 'fannish stuff' strikes me as completely at odds with the *Novacon* ethos (I might concede the need for local publicity, but past experience tells me it's usually an awful lot of work for bugger-all results).

"It's a pity Jim Linwood came away from *Prolapse* #3 with the impression that 1980s Britfandom "wasn't a very pleasant place to be" and is glad he wasn't active at the time. On the contrary, I found it an incredibly exciting period, particularly for those of us producing fanzines. And it's good to see Paul Vincent's by-line again, albeit only on a loc.

"I don't recall the *Novacon 14* committee as being especially stressful (plus Paul had already worked on *Novacon 13*, which initially had a highly strained relationship with the Brum Group), although it can't have helped that he caught some of the fallout from the closing ceremony. And for the record, it's not that I won't talk about that event, it's just that there's so little to say, other than to refute the rumour that somebody slipped the stripper an extra fifty quid to do the Full Monty; everything on stage happened exactly as voted for by a majority of the committee members. My comments afterward were a bit of an over-reaction on my part, but I was completely drained by the following morning, and didn't turn up at *Novacon 15* (we joined a small group of friends who were running a mini-minicon in Oxford instead). Time heals all, etc, and I was at both *Novacon 16* and the 1987 worldcon. Dave Langford was wrong about the G-string, of course (see below); there was no 'Hidden Hand', just the hand she used to hide a certain part of her anatomy when the fans got their cameras out. Not that I recall ever seeing any of those photographs in the intervening 22 years."

On first sight of Ian Sorensen's letter last time I assumed he was pulling our legs (so hard to tell whether Ian is ever being serious or not), but on reflection I think he actually meant it; remember, these were the people who brought over Harlan Ellison for what was essentially a British 'regional' convention! As for the special 'presentation' at your *Novacon*, like Bob Shaw I missed the whole thing by about ten minutes. And so far I've not been able to track-down any photographs; the best I can do is this little illo from one of Bamforth's saucy seaside postcards!



'But he said he'd give me his autograph afterwards'

"Rob Holdstock having often told the committee that as GoH he wished to be fawned on by bevvies of naked dancing girls, they took him approximately at his word and hired a 'kissogram' greeting -- only for a rumoured Hidden Hand to pay the extra £50 for a 'strippogram'. The Holdstock grin froze as things jiggled in front of it. Bob Shaw wailed his regret at having missed it all; others were less keen, and protests both verbal and written were duly delivered to the committee (doubtless very properly, though Hazel and I had the rebellious thought that when public breastfeeding and the odd bare bosom in the Fancy Dress are seemingly OK, it seemed a trifle much to express huge horror that 'children should be subjected to the display'. Hell, she kept her G-string on...). Subsequently one committee member dropped out of fandom, while Steve Green says he'll attend no more big cons except --"

- *Ansible* #41



Dear Peter,

"The article about the 1959 *Brumcon* was fascinating, especially, it seems, because I had attended that convention! I've no idea, today, whether I actually wrote a con report, and have very little recollection of the event itself. I was described there as being a member of a 'Gang of Five' (along with Jim Linwood, Alan Rispin, Ivor Mayne and Brian Jordan.) I don't remember the label, although I do remember that there was a group of us (actually more than five) who met regularly at Kingdon Road and who were reacting to some extent against an establishment in London fandom rotating round the hospitable and redoubtable Ella Parker. Is that when the term 'Gang of Five' arose, and did it inspire the 'Gang of Four' Social Democrats who broke away from the Labour Party?!?"

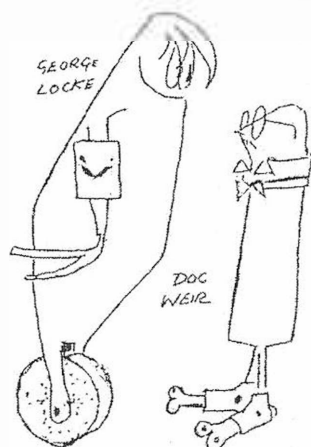
"I have no memory now of Brian Jordan, but I knew Ivor Mayne a lot better. I remember one of my Saturday morning visits to Dalston market, where there were two bookstalls. One sold olde books (I remember finding a first edition of M. P. Shiel's 'Shapes in the Fire' there) and the other focussed on magazines and comics (I bought several copies of *Mad* and *Panic*). This young, bespectacled lad was delving through the SF, we got to talking, found we were kindred spirits, and I introduced Ivor to the Thursday evening meetings at the Globe.

"As regards your comments about the 'sercon' versus 'fannish' debates in the 1950s, these were mostly a bit before my era, but I do recollect it became very heated at times. In one camp were such people as Walt Willis, John Berry and Lee Hoffman, editor of *Quandry*; in the other – damned if I can remember; I was mostly in the 'fannish' camp, but saw no reason why a zine should not combine the two. Does Rob Hansen deal with the subject in his history?"

"The notes on the auctions at *Brumcon* struck a couple of chords. The editors' set of *Authentic*, selling eventually for ten bob, was surely one of the bargains of the century. At the time, I wasn't a filthy huckster, and was only interested in really old stuff, so I wouldn't have been tempted to bid. But I am reminded that the last issue of the magazine included a story of mine, and you've given me the chance to do here what I should have had the courage to do many years ago. Ted Tubb gave me a great deal of encouragement (which I soaked up avidly) and advice (which I'm afraid I didn't take on board as freely as I should have; youthful arrogance!). But he had already rejected my story 'The Human Seed' before he finally printed it in that issue, and I reacted unforgivably badly to his act of kindness. I was downright churlish; the sort of remark I came out with was to the effect that "if it wasn't good enough to publish before, why waste paper on it now!" Even my friend and mentor Arthur Sellings told me I was an ingrate. So I welcome the chance to make a long-overdue apology to Ted for my behaviour.

"(Incidentally, it seems that the buyer of the set bought the collection for the sake of the single number containing Charles L. Harness's 'The Rose'; one of the first things I ever bought at a convention auction was the original, copy-edited typescript of the story at the 1957 London Worldcon a couple of years earlier – it cost me the princely sum of 8/6, the cost of a single new hardback novel! No wonder, a few years later, when I was gathering material for the 1965 London Worldcon auction, that Brian Aldiss turned down my request with the observation that he didn't feel comfortable with his manuscripts fetching insultingly low sums.)

"I did buy, almost certainly at *Brumcon*, one item which keenly interested me and which I described in the book I did about my personal collection ('A Spectrum of Fantasy', vol. I, p. 241). This was 'The Comet's Tale' (a spoof newspaper issued by the Boston Daily Globe in 1881, purported to have been published on a comet heading towards Earth and threatened with 'dampflagation'). Elsewhere in this book I have railed about auctions at science fiction conventions and a tendency to regard them as forums for amateur comedians rather than places where interesting and unusual items can be expected to realise sensible prices.



"I have to confess that I, too, have at times gone to auctions for the laughs, and the occasion of my purchase of 'The Comet's Tale' was one of those.... The jokes at the auction had descended to the level where bids of one penny were considered the acme of hilarity. And that is how the bidding on 'The Comet's Tale' went, penny by penny. I secured that item for the sum of two shillings and eight pence, and still have a strong feeling of disgust at my own conduct with respect to an almost uniquely rare item for which I would today be prepared to pay a very high price indeed. I think Ken Slater consigned it to the auction, since I remember chatting to him about it at the time, but (mercifully perhaps) I don't recall his reaction. But enough catharsis for now, Peter, I didn't intend this LoC to indulge in self-flagellation; it just happened that way.

"The *Brumcon* article ties in with my dim recollections of that convention and the early days of the BSFA. I also seem to remember being present when the decision was taken to create the Doc Weir Award. I confess I was unable to identify Doc from the pictures you emailed a few weeks ago, but I do remember having a number of chats with him. ATom must have picked up on that, as he drew a sketch of me talking to a shorter Doc Weir, printed in his portfolio of fan personalities in *The ATom Anthology* a few years later. I remember that there was a great deal of support for the proposal to name the award after him, and I don't think it was pressure from an enthusiastic minority. (I've often wondered why Arthur drew that wheel – well, a couple of times in 45 years is often, I guess! – Me, a steam-roller when I was flying gliders???)

"Your printing of the electronic debate on Doc, and the detective work which came up with so much information, was a stroke of genius, if only to acquaint this old dinosaur with the benefits of the internet. But no, Peter, I don't think you can pull me into that e-list; I'm too busy, and life's too short, now that I've taken on a half-share in a shop in central London. It's at number 27 Cecil Court, is currently called by its old name, 'Omega Bookshop' (the fascia will change to 'Greening Burland' as soon as we can liaise with a sign writer), and it's open 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm Saturday. No, it's not an SF shop, but I deal in old first editions which feature some SF. Also, just before opening the shop, I bought a collection of nearly three thousand books, mostly rubbish, but including enough gems to take the whole lot on board.

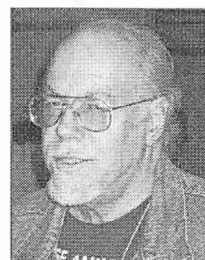
"Among them were about 800 SF and fantasy paperbacks of, mainly, the 1960s and 70s, which are being put outside once a month in batches of about a hundred at a time. Among the other books, which will be catalogued, is a 1930s British hardback which I am 90 percent sure is a pseudonymous work by L. Ron Hubbard. Of more fannish resonance, though, was a hardcover James ~~Bliss~~ title which had a huge bookplate. It was printed by spirit duplicator, and depicted a drawing of a man with three legs seated at a table or desk. It declared that the book belonged to Charles Platt; obviously done while he was still at school, and quite possibly printed by the school duplicator. How many of those are there out there?"

George, don't beat-up on yourself too much just because you picked up a few bargains that others were too slow to spot. It cuts both ways; I remember when you had a table at Yarmouth, or maybe Bristol, and sales were so poor that on the last day of the con you were pretty fed-up and let me have the Shasta edition of IF THIS GOES ON for only £3.00, which I thought was such a terrific bargain that I felt quite guilty about it for some time afterwards. And thanks for the tip about the Atom Anthology – Mark & Claire kindly loaned me their copy, and a number of Arthur's BEMs will be gracing this issue!

Ted White

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Photo: by
Murray Moore,
at Corflu, 2004



Dear Peter,

"You understand that I read both issues with pleasure and interest, but delvings into British fan-history are rarely going to prompt many comments from me. I'm an onlooker, a bystander. I was around at the time, but I wasn't there. I have little to add.

"I suppose I could join the discussion of insults prompted by Joseph's 1983 letter in #3. I rediscovered UK fandom in 1980 and '81 when *Pong* put me in contact with many British fans for the first time. It took me a while to sort everything out, but I was impressed by the *vigour* of much British fan-writing. I credit this mostly to Ratfandom, and I suspect the KTF fanzine reviews had their inspiration in some of Greg's more storied reviews (in *Stop Breaking Down*, for example) – but KTF fmz reviews have over the years developed a bad rep, and Greg's were brilliant, insightful, and a lot of fun to read.

"I think KTF reviews started getting a bad name around the time D. West was writing his column in *Wrinkled Shrew* #7, in which he raked Willis over the coals, but the two people I associated with them were Joseph and Phil Palmer. Maybe I read them wrong. Maybe they were supposed to be friendly insults, rather than hurtful insults, but they struck me at the time simply as wrongheaded insults – insults based on misinterpretations and misunderstandings, insults that reflected more on those who issued them. (Despite my opinion of them at the time and a few harsh comments I made then – I found myself liking and enjoying both Joseph and Phil when I met them face to face).

"Changing the subject totally, Darroll Pardoe says, in your lettercol, 'The comparison I made at the time (about APA-B) was not with APA-L but with APA-F (the Fanoclast apa which was collated on meeting nights – Ro and I were present at a collating session in 1976).' Now here, tangentially, is fan-history I do know something about. I was the host of the Fanoclasts from 1963 until late 1970, and I was present for both the founding of APA-F and its conclusion. APA-F was fandom's first weekly apa (mailings were assembled and distributed at both Fanoclast meetings and FISTFA meetings, each of which were biweekly and alternated, so there was a meeting and an APA-F "mailing" every Friday night), and it was the inspiration for LASFS's APA-L which is still going today. APA-F lasted only a bit over a year and was deliberately brought to an end with its 69th mailing. I think Darroll must be thinking of the later, APA-Q, after the Fanoclasts moved to Queens.

"Then there's Joy Hibbert. The stuff of legend, really. Had anyone tried to make her up, no one would have believed it. Although I was in the same room with her once (*Mexicon 2*), I never actually met her or talked face to face with her. I had no desire to. I thought her a genuine boor, given to gross misinterpretations (poor reading comprehension) coupled with an unthinking arrogance. By way of example, she wrote me and *demanded* I send her my fanzine (because she'd written me a letter demanding it, hadn't she, so she *deserved* it), and then by dint of sending me short, insultingly wrong-headed LoCs, she felt entitled to keep on getting my zines. It was not until several years later that I discovered she'd been putting out her own fanzine the whole while, but never sent me any, *because she didn't need to*. I have no idea what I'd have made of her zine (to this day I've never seen a copy), but I felt insulted by her refusal to trade and I chalked it up as one more reason to cut her off my mailing list."

Ted, in view of my obsessive focus on British fan-history I'm conscious that Prolapse will have very little appeal to trans-Atlantic fans. But since some of us grew up on a diet of Void, Warhoon, Quark, Lighthouse and so on, this is a case of the boot being on the other foot, at last! It's bizarre when you think about it, but back in the sixties we little Brits cut our teeth on things like A SENSE OF FAPA, 'Ah, Sweet Idiocy' and FANCY II, to the point where we knew far more about American fandom than we did about our own. When Charles Platt and I started, British fandom didn't have any history – not in a coherent form. All we had were the timeless musings of some of the older fans (even TED had slipped out of general awareness). I think U.S. fans were generally more conscious of their place in the scheme of things (remember numbered fandoms?) and more likely to write about themselves, whereas British fans seem to have been almost totally inarticulate when it came to analysing their own fandom. Which is why I was so interested in Ken Slater's long essay for Brumcon – that was a one-off, and it's interesting that no-one on the fannish side wrote a counter-argument, so far as I can tell.

Doreen Rogers

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Photo: PW
at BSFG
2004



Dear Peter,

"About Doc Weir; he had gone before I joined the BSFA but I was once asking about him with Michael, Ted, Archie and Ken. Michael Rosenblum said he was a very erudite, kindly person who did a lot for the BSFA behind the scenes and all agreed with him. About 64/65 I became Secretary and took over the correspondence file. Phil was Chairman at the time and as he had had a lot of correspondence

with the Treasurer, Gill Adams, I was intrigued to read through it. Gill had written to Phil and said she had been searching all the shops for an appropriate award for Doc Weir and had seen this beautiful silver communion cup but thought the price was too high. The next letter from Gill thanked Phil for the cheque and said they would sort it out at the next Convention. I was married to Phil before I discovered he always arranged to pay for putting the inscription on the Cup, and I think this went on for a few years before it was taken over by the Treasury. I will also always remember when Archie Mercer received it, as he said "about time too" as it was handed over to him!"

Doreen, by a miracle of synchronicity that very same file arrived the day after I'd set-up your letter, forwarded to me by Rob Hansen into whose possession it had – by some miracle – somehow fallen. All the answers are here; whose idea it was, how much they paid, where the money came from. See the next issue for the full story!

Jerry Kaufman
JAKaufman@aol.com

Photo: Kev Clarke,
 in a Birmingham
 Balti, 2006



Peter,

"Thanks for mailing us *Prolapse* #4. It looked pretty interesting, but referred to #3 so much that I downloaded and read that issue first. (No, I don't do much downloading from *eFanzines*. I recognise and applaud – but I also quail at – the sheer quantity of stuff people like Arnie Katz and John Purcell and Dave Burton post there).

"I enjoyed both issues. I've been in apas enough, even founding one (APA-Q in 1975, the Fanoclast's apa), that I enjoyed comparing my experiences to those recounted by William McCabe and others. However, after declaring the apa open for business, I acted as simply another contributor. For some reason I thought it would be more fun to have an apa with no rules, no structure except to be distributed at Fanoclast meetings (I think they were every two weeks, but neither Suzle nor I are certain of this), and no officers. Other people found this too loose, and soon one Fanoclast member unofficially took responsibility for getting covers, collating distributions, helping out-of-towners participate. I think this noble fan was Moshe Feder. After some years, the membership drifted away from its Fanoclastic roots; last I heard, nearly all members lived outside New York City, even outside New York State. For all I know, it continues to this day.

"I was often amused by 1970s British fandom (though I didn't read most Ratfanzines until years later, and by borrowing zines from Rich Coad), but very glad I didn't live there or come under their burning lenses. 'As flies to little boys/Are we to the Brits...' if I recall the line correctly.

"Steve Green on pubbing issues for Brum fandom reminds me of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when we had the main working e-stenciller and mimeo in these parts. Not only did we publish *Mainstream* and various apazines and one-shots like *The Best of Susan Wood*, but Alan Bostick, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Gary Farber and others were frequently down in our basement, humming along to the beat of the mimeo. (Gary told me of an Ed Sanders book about his Bohemian life, including a section on publishing poetry chapbooks on similar equipment: he owned the mimco of the Beat)."

Keith Freeman
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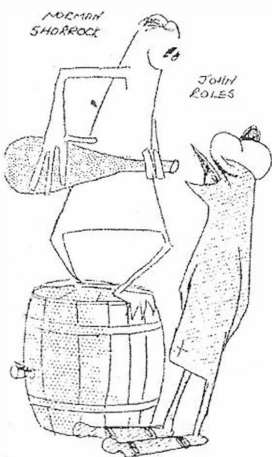
Dear Peter,

"I'd second Ina's comment that John Roles was, indeed, a lovely man. If you got the right people reminiscing about him I dare say you could fill an entire *Prolapse* about him. If I've got the facts right he spent some time in India (during the war?) but was, in many ways unworldly. He came to Minorca with the Liverpool gang plus Audrey Eversfield and myself. First time in Spain, but loved it. Coming back all of us sat in the coach waiting to drive out to the plane... and watched,

fascinated, as John strode past the coach (carrying a large bone) and walked up the steps of another aircraft. Soon he was ushered out by the cleaning staff and pointed in the direction of the coach. "I thought it looked a bit empty" was his only comment. The bone? Well, we'd found it on one of the beaches. Someone suggested it should be taken home for Ramsey Campbell... John took it upon himself to do just that. Later he went to Spain on his own. In his own words he found a lovely guest house where the maids looked after him really well. Only as he left did he find out it was a bordello. Go and talk to Ina and some of the other Liverpooldians and you'll hear even more.

"When did the BSFA change from a means of attracting fans to conventions to becoming what is today? Again dragging out portions of my memory that have been pickled for years I'd say it was when the second constitution was written – when Doreen and Ken were trying to turn it into a limited company – and that was written in order to get charitable status (which endeavour abysmally). And, as far as I know, the BSFA finally lost all connection with Eastercons when the people running the 1968 Manchester con refused to sign an agreement that laid down several strict limits on what they could do and not do. Whether this was the cause of what you call 'the rapid fragmentation of fandom' is a moot point. I think the seeds of this fragmentation were sown in the build-up of fandom (what you perceive as the BSFA's function at the time). The larger a body is, the more likely it is to split (er, I think I've just tried to say the law of gravity is wrong – but I was talking about a body of people). I've seen exactly the same thing happen in other societies and even in the workplace.

"What went wrong with *BrumCon*... my memory says nothing! But then it was my first con and I had no inkling of the various things that were going on. All I knew was that for three days, more or less, I was surrounded by like-minded people. If I'd had time to read *Astounding* I wouldn't have had to hide it behind the cover of a pornographic novel. It could, of course, have been horribly different. As I've said many times I was fairly shy and going to the con knowing several people already (basically the Cheltenham Circle) probably made everything much easier for me. Here, I see, you've quoted Ken Slater and, looking back, I'm forced to agree with him over the 'esoteric mysteries.' The more often people attend cons the more 'old friends' take up your time there – and the newcomer can easily be 'pushed out' (entirely unintentionally); this,



again, could well be part of the reason for fandom fragmenting. Actually, as you show, fandom had already fragmented (slightly) in that London fans were perceived not to like coming out of the capital for conventions!

"Nearly half of *Prolapse#4* is taken up with LoCs... and here you see the agreement and disagreement that shows - must have rung a few bells at least! The trouble is you've got so many good lockers (though the photos show some are certainly not good lookers) I almost hesitate to thrust this missive into the airwaves. But I will; after all, if I've timed it right I'll once again force you to rethink the whole layout of *Prolapse#5*.... The power, Oh the power!"

No, Keith, this time you peaked too soon so I didn't need to re-work the entire lettercolumn! Great stories about John Roles - once again, someone I vaguely 'knew' for years but never really got to open up. As you said separately, he seemed almost 'aloof'; but I think he may have been far more shy, in some ways, than we both realised. And neither of us understand the symbolism of that 'John Roles BEM'. A turban, yes, but is that a cuckoo in the nest? Ina, explain, please!!

Tony Keen

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Photo: PW,
at Interaction,
2005



Peter,

"It's very interesting that you have, by dint of what seem to be a number of accidents, found a niche for *Prolapse* where it is not only doing something that no other fanzine is doing, but (a lot harder) doing something that needs to be done. I am all for a historical fanzine that collects archive material and memoirs in the way you are doing. Indeed, I'm wondering if all my 'Kettering in '57' material would be better placed in *Prolapse* than in a separate fanzine, which had been my original plan. Well, we can both muse on that.

"I had actually read the correspondence with Joseph Nicholas in #3, which was a fascinating insight into the past. I've always found Joseph to be very congenial company, but reading the more waspish missive of twenty years ago, I can see of understand why some people think of him the way that they do.

"So that mystery man *was* Doc Weir, then? I'd seen the earlier bits of that correspondence, but hadn't been able to keep up. Personally, I think that an award that is intended to honour the unsung heroes of fandom (and which still seems to be just about as much of a fix as it was in Ken Slater's day) *should* be named after someone hardly anyone remembers - it just seems right. And a service has been done to fill out his biography.

"I do know Latin. 'Nexus' is a fourth declension noun, so the plural of 'nexus' is, in fact, 'nexus', but with a long vowel rather than the short one of the singular. So 'nex-oo's' instead of 'nexus'. And, according to the OED, that is the correct plural, but it doesn't really work in English, so I'm afraid 'nexus'es' is likely to stay."

Jim Linwood

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Dear Peter,

"I certainly wasn't disappointed at *Brumcon* as it was the first time I'd met fans the same age or slightly younger than myself. Alan Rispin, Brian Jordan and I became close friends and still remain in contact with each other. The absence of a large part of London fandom (Inchmery, Bulmers, Buckmasters, Tubb and Carnell) at the con remains a mystery to me. There was no feud that I was aware of, the hotel prices would have been similar to Kettering and even the hard-up could get there daily by train. It was Ted Tubb who, a few months earlier, had talked me into joining the BSFA - telling me how important it was for the survival of Anglofandom.

"Brian Jordan's recollections of the roof party makes me wonder if we started a trend at *Brumcon*; such parties were certainly features of subsequent cons amongst us youngfen. At Gloucester '61 things got really out of hand when OUSFG-founder Chris Miller lowered a firework on a string down to the window of Ella Parker's room where the SFCoL were holding a party, causing quite a bang. Previously Chris had been squirting everyone with a ludicrously small Lugar replica water pistol until Alan Rispin emptied the contents of a fire extinguisher over him (photo).



"Pat Kearney recently reminded me of other high jinks at the first Peterborough convention in 1963 when a young drunken fan was put into a dumb-waiter and sent down to the kitchen. The same poor wretch was later put into the bed of a married femme which caused some problem since her husband was somewhere else at the time, and came back to find strange youth in his wife's bed. Pat also remembers helping to drag a bed with somebody in it into the lobby. He found the hotel management the second time around at *RePetercon* far less agreeable to the shenanigans, despite having a blast and joining in the first time. It was at the same convention that Mike Moorcock and Lang Jones played noughts and crosses on Valerie Purnell's sexy fishnet stockings and later went on the roof with the rest of us to perform a pagan wedding ceremony. More will be revealed in my 'Britfandom Babylon' in due course."

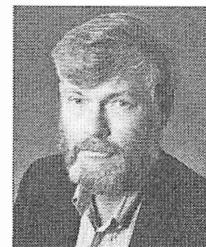
Well Jim, I think it's absolutely disgraceful that you wild young fans were rampaging around like Charles Platt. Shouldn't you have been sitting quietly in a room somewhere discussing SF? And are you sure that's not Howard Rosenblum with the water-pistol? We eagerly look forward to your 'Babylon' article, and I'll quote you again to explain the Atom illo: 'Doroti (Dot) Hartwell was my first serious girlfriend. She joined the BSFA in 1959 and started writing to Alan, Brian and myself. We first met at the Globe and were serious for a while. I don't know what happened to her. We hitchhiked around fandom and even met the infamous Pete Singleton before he committed murder and was confined to Broadmoor.'

Greg Benford
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Photo: from
Greg, 2007

Dear Peter,

"I've liked the issues, though my interaction with 50s Brit SF fandom was from far-of Frankfurt & Giessen. I was a classic kid fan, writing awful stories and envying the vast sophistication of the UK and especially Canada's Boyd Raeburn. As Harry Warner so well told, that was a legendary time of close connections, one I miss in fandom now. I recall in my 1957 visit to London (alas too early for the worldcon...) being struck at the war damage, worse than Germany's. Yet Art Thomson, Ethel Lindsay and all the rest were vivid, funny, thoroughly alive, unhampered by the hardships."



Thanks, Greg, nice to hear from you again. One of my fondest convention memories is of the Leeds Eastercon in 1985 when you joined me for breakfast with Tom Shippey and a rather left-wing colleague of his from the history department of the university. We talked and talked while breakfast was cleared away, and didn't leave until they started laying-up for lunch. One of the best argument/discussion sessions I've ever had. Goodness only knows what it was all about!

(Cap'n) Kevin Standlee
Standlee.Kevin@menlowworldwide.com

Photo: from
(Cap'n) Kevin,
Interaction 2005

Peter,

"Congratulations on publishing your Hugo-Award-qualifying-for-2008 issue of *Prolapse!* As a rules-lawyer and active participant in the politics of Worldcon and Westercon, I found your discussion of the 1966 decision to 'divorce' the BSFA from the organization of Eastercon to be fascinating. I am no expert in UK law, but it seems to me that the relationship of BSFA to the convention at that time was roughly equivalent to that of the International Olympic Committee to the individual Olympic committees. The IOC owns the rights to the event and licenses those rights to individual committees. Those committees are then responsible for organizing the events with no recourse to the IOC if anything goes wrong. If the 2012 Games are a financial bust, the creditors have no claim on the IOC, only on the London 2012 committee.



"My own experience with Eastercon is very limited – two conventions – but it seems to me that the majority of people who participate in them and care to express opinions over their organization are terrified of even the extremely weak form of 'government' that Worldcons have. I was astonished to hear people who seemed to think that WSFS has this heavily centralized organization that orders everyone about and saps independence and so forth. Well, I'm the chairman of the only permanent WSFS body, and nobody told me that I had that sort of power! Why didn't I get the memo?"

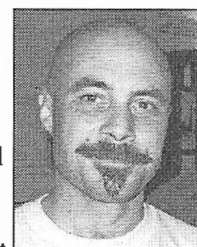
*Kevin, interesting stuff about the way American con-politics work (which I cut short), but very different from the way we run things over here. We specialise in 'muddling through'. Closest thing to your model is with the BSFG and Novacon which is a built-in, integral part of the club's organisation, although that nearly came unstuck in 1983, and again with the Scottish conspiracy the following year. You'll have been following our recent *contretemps* about Eastercon; it's only by good fortune that we haven't ended-up with two or three different lots of people, each proclaiming that they were running the 'true' Easter convention. 'Licenses the rights to the event' – you Americans, you're all lawyers! As for Hugo nomination (one of the very last things on my mind) I suppose it depends on how many Japanese fans are likely to be interested in British fan-history.*

Randy Byers
fringeaan@yahoo.com

Photo: from Randy
In 'Walkers' 2005

Hello, Peter,

"I continue to feel that fanzines are a paper medium, and that whatever evolves on the Net will be – and is – something different. (Some of it, like *wegenheim*, appears to be a breeding ground for fanzine articles). You make some rather shrewd comments on this topic, particularly regarding the proprietary nature of fanzines versus the information-wants-to-be-free nature of the Net. Your comment on feeling swamped by *eFanzines* also made me stop and think. I have a stack of unread fanzines around here that, because of sheer numbers, is likely to remain mostly unread, and is that really any different? Perhaps the big difference is that the stack makes me feel like I'm not keeping up my end of the bargain, whereas *eFanzines* doesn't make me feel that I've entered any kind of bargain (or obligation) at all. But Claire Brialey wrote recently about feeling some pangs toward the unread zines on the Web, so maybe guilt will soon join sin on the internets.



"So I guess I found your editorial the most interesting thing about issue 4, with the sense it gives of an experienced old hand who knows how to set the hook properly. One of these days I'll learn that trick! I was also impressed by the new wheeze of including photos of the loccers in the letter column, and I'm mostly writing in a perhaps-vain attempt to get my own photo into your zine. Anyway, while the welter of unfamiliar names makes the historical aspects of your project more difficult for me to get a grasp on, it still seems a worthy fannish endeavour to me. I may only nibble on your main articles, digesting what I can, but I find the conversation around them by people I do know quite fascinating. So please carry on, and the rest of us will try to learn the Lost Art of Writing a Good LoC. Good to see an old master back in the game to show the young Turks how it's played. By the way, was the cover **stolen**?"

Ah, Randy, flattery will get you (almost) anywhere, and as you'll see, you made it into my 'Rogues Gallery'. The cover was indeed 'stolen', as every British reader will have instantly recognised. It's a cartoon by the famous 'Giles', who graced one of our national newspapers for nearly fifty years. It just seemed to suit my subject so very nicely (in the original, the scruffy fan-types were actually would-be yachtsmen after a loan) that all I had to do was change the sign on the office door from 'Bank' to 'Hotel' manager and the cartoon was perfect. I really do need to get some new artwork into this thing!



Dear Peter,

Prolapse was a time machine. How else could I pick up a zine and read a letter from dear Bob Shaw in 1983 as if he'd just written it? And all those pictures of everyone as I knew back then, with Dave Langford looking like a schoolboy. . . they're making me feel quite nostalgic. Don't get me started on the 'I remember whens' or I shall tell you all about Black Easter 1976, *Mancon* 5, the infamous con where the programme ran so late today's items were on tomorrow, and the main topic of hushed conversation was the horror of the BSFA magazine library being burnt to ashes. I recall the halls of residence at Manchester University were rather sparse, some joker had changed the signs on the bathroom doors so they were unisex and we all showered together, (now do I remember that as good or bad – or merely horrifying?) and the rooms had little single beds, very hard, and with cabinets in-between. As *Mancon* was not only the first convention I ever attended – but also my honeymoon – every night we pushed the beds together, and every morning the room was made up with them separated again.



BoSh by Jim
Barker, 1977
(Steve Green)

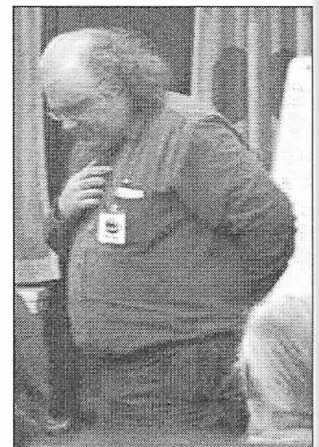
Well, it gave us something to do. That's where I first met the delightful Jim Barker (a little rotund back then) our good friends Christine Jennings and John Perry (still together, like us, after 30 years) and Ken & Sue Worrall – where are they now? And despite its privations *Mancon* had magic moments: Bob Shaw making his infamous 'Urin-8' speech, and Robert Silverberg reading aloud from *DYING INSIDE*. What the phrase: 'They don't make them like that...'?

"All David remembers is rushing around talking to people about the magazine library (he was BSFA membership secretary at the time) and how slow the programme was. I thought all conventions must be like that, and was very pleasantly surprised when we started going to *Novacons* at the Royal Angus and other cons, which all had proper beds, well-run programmes and lovely full English breakfasts (sometimes even with mushrooms.) "If I read *Prolapse* over again and cover up all the mirrors in the shall I stay 30 years younger?"

Oh dear! Fay, you've made me realise that it's possible to go to cons for thirty years without ever meeting other people who've been doing exactly the same thing. Once upon a time that couldn't have happened, you'd have known just about everybody present, but I suppose fandom has grown to the point where we all tend to move in our own circles without ever communicating, except by lucky accident. Sorry about that! Because of course I was at *Mancon* too, and remember that dreadful dormitory block at Owens Park – the hard beds, the communal cold showers, the line-up-with-a-tray breakfast routine! Wasn't it awful!! That was your honeymoon – and you came back for more? Gosh, you must have been keen!

Mark Plummer
mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

Taking a bow at *Novacon-36*;
Looks pretty Eminent to me!
Photo: Ian Whates



Peter,

"You may have forgotten this but you wrote: 'I've just realised it's the London meeting tonight, so expect you'll be home late; wish I'd been there! ... in an email reply to me back on 4 January, and I was going to get back to you then to say, yes, it was; and yes, I was; and yes, I wish you'd been there too, not least because I think you'd have been rather pleased to see James Bacon bounding into the downstairs bar all fired up and ready to discuss *Prolapse* #4.

"Actually – and, yes, I realise this may seem uncharacteristic – he didn't really bound. I don't know, maybe the ravages of time are catching up with young James; he certainly doesn't seem to be the constant bundle of incandescent energy of even a year ago. Maybe it's living in England that does it; maybe it's having a dog. Who knows? So, no, he didn't bound, but he was still... what was that phrase? Walking with a purpose, perhaps? And if you'd have been there I'm sure he would have walked straight up to you, but in your absence he had to settle for me, unworthy and un-Eminent as I am.

"Have you seen the latest *Prolapse*?" James asked. Contrary to any rumour I may have tried to start in the letter column of *Chunga*, he hardly ever says 'Begorrah' at all; and he rarely even wears his little leprechaun hat these days either. Yes, anyway, I answered his question in the affirmative, while refraining from pointing out that he knew that I had as we'd spoken about it only a few days previously. Because, you see, I could tell that here was a man who had something on his mind – and being James, even with his energy somewhat contained, he got straight to the point: did he **really** look like *Guardian* diarist Jon Henley?

"I said no, he didn't, and I think I said the right thing here because James wandered off all cheered, having concluded that you'd gone mad, and probably formed three separate Eastercon bidding committees to celebrate. And I did mean it. Indeed, if you look at a photo of Henley – (http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/jon_henley/profile.html) for instance – you'll see that there's no resemblance at all. (Coincidentally, I can't help noticing that there aren't very many pictures of Henley on the web, for all that he's a big-shot *Guardian* diarist. There are far fewer than there are of, well, you for a start).

"But as I'm sitting here typing this, and looking again at *Prolapse*, I do find myself thinking that the cartoon-Henley and the real-James do share if not a look then a certain air of... mischievousness, I think it is. Yes, Henley has the pleasant smile of a man who's making polite conversation with you in the pub while not mentioning that he has purchased a gross of skateboards at a knock-down price from a dubious Moldovan merchant seaman and is currently storing them in your garage without your knowledge or consent. Not that I've ever had the exact same conversation with James, but I have just remembered that there is this mysterious water butt full of... **things** in our garage which he asked to leave there last Easter and which is still there.

"So yes, Peter, you are perhaps onto something here and not mad at all. As you are, I think, in your editorial about your *efanzine* experience. Now I know you were sceptical when, on that *Novacon* panel, I explained that we have technical reasons for not placing PDFs of our fanzines on Bill Burns's estimable website, but I assure you it's genuine. I don't think the explanation is particularly interesting which is why I didn't go into it at the time – it's all to do with printer drivers and the way an issue of *Banana Wings* gets ported about between several (mostly very elderly) computers and what we can and can't do with each of those computers – but it is true. Or at least it was, until we got new computer kit and broadband shortly after *Novacon*. But at the same time you were also right in that if we'd really wanted to overcome those obstacles we could probably have done so, and so in that respect the reason we don't put PDFs on *efanzines* is because we don't want to.

"Why? Well, we like producing paper-artefact fanzines, and are lucky enough to be able to afford to do so. That's the simple answer. There's something about the moment when the finished copy crawls out of the printer, that sense that, 'Hey, we made this!' that I suspect couldn't be matched by a PDF. And personally, the arrival of a new fanzine through the letterbox, especially if it's unexpected as was this *Prolapse* and more recently Robert Lichtman's *Trap Door*, is just so much better than a new posting to the web, and I rather suspect that other people of our generation (gosh, I think that's the first time I've ever bracketed you and me in a 'generation') feel that way too.

"I don't think I'd be quite as troubled as you by the talking-about-me rather than talking-to-me kind of response that you encountered, although yes, I do see that it's irritating if it's done as if you can't see it. As a general principle, I think it's quite reasonable to respond and comment in a different place if that seems the best way to do so, and it can be a positively good thing, breaking the individual call-and-response loop in favour of some more cohesive joined-up-ness amongst fanzines generally (something I sense fanzines were pretty good at doing in the early eighties – before my time – and have been significantly less good at it in the last decade or so, which is the period when, er, I've been actively writing and publishing).

"And with me I also keep worrying at just how many people actually *read* *efanzines*? You know, if we set aside those produced by Earl Kemp who's very much a special case (in so many ways). And maybe you're kinda special like Earl too, in the 'Holy crap, a fanzine from *Pete Weston*!' sense. I'm sure there are plenty of people who felt that this re-emergence was about as implausible as, oh, I don't know, Harry Bell, Graham Charnock and Rob Jackson *all* turning up at this year's *Corflu*. But more generally, if you look at the letter columns of most of the *efanzines* you see the same clutch of names again and again – Chris Garcia, Eric Mayer, Lloyd Penney, John Purcell – and whilst there's clearly *a* community going on there, there isn't much obvious sign that it's large and I suspect that several of the people to whom we send *BW* and with whom we interact and whose interaction we value just wouldn't pick up on an *eBW*. Although maybe that's saying I'm buying my friends with a hard-copy fanzine, I don't know.

"I was going to go on to make the point through demonstration that one of the advantages of *efanzines* is that you can easily copy-and-paste the text that you want to quote but, would you believe it, I just cannot get into the bloody *efanzines* site right now. Hmm, do you think Bill knows I'm talking about him behind his back? But actually I only want to quote a few words in answer to your implied question, where did the BSFA go wrong? I wonder whether it might have been when, er, it picked its name. 'Cos to me, The 'British Science Fiction Association' does rather sound like a body more charged with 'promot[ing] and improv[ing] science fiction' than 'promot[ing] fandom'. I think I understand the rationale for the BSFA's creation but somehow it seems like a bit of a con-trick, luring in people with the promise of sci-fi and then socking them with the true intent: fandom.

"You may be interested to know that from time to time the notion that 'The BSFA Should Run Conventions' still resurfaces. But then again a lot of things resurface in the BSFA from time to time, only to submerge again after a decent interval. I don't think it's come up for a while, though, so maybe you could rejoin and propose it. I know I'm skipping over the more meaty content in *Prolapse*#4 which isn't to say that I don't appreciate it. To me, it's very much of a piece with The Book – you should mention The Book in *Prolapse*, as I don't think many people have heard of it – in that it's helping to populate a gap in British fan history as it's commonly known, that grey area between the heyday of the fifties fan scene and the arrival of the Rats.

"You do realise that as you've now done four issues you're eligible for the fanzine Hugos?"

Mark, why do I have this vague, irrational feeling that you're pulling my leg? And Great Minds Think Alike – you'll have seen from my editorial that I also think the BSFA's name caused it a lot of trouble!

Tony Berry
morbius@zoom.co.uk

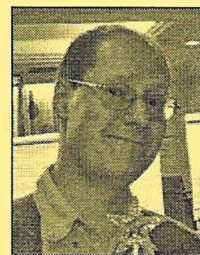
Hiya Peter.

"Thanks for the *Prolapses*, which stirred my memories of my first days as a Fan. I was never in Apa-B and didn't know Steve Green or Martin very well at that point, but I did start attending the Solihull group as well as the BSFG, and later the MiSFITs. I recall that WAM used to get drunk on half of shandy, then throw up, almost getting us banned from at least one venue.

"Yes I did turn up at Steve's place with a load of expensive paper and ink for my first fanzine because I didn't know any better! The stencils (top quality) were bashed out on a typewriter at my mum's house (I later learned that Sorensen happily stuffed stencils into his Amstrad printer with no ill effect) and I hand-drew the cover onto another stencil with a biro. I was certainly impressed with Steve's electric duplicator, having only seen Martin's crappy manual one – this was real technology!

"Thanks, Green for reminding me of the *Novacon 15* closing ceremony. Having lied to his committee all year that wanker Probert nearly ruined the con and deservedly won the COFF award. Of course then he and his equally cretinous girlfriend (and some other family member) walked out, leaving me to pick up the pieces. Couldn't have been that bad though, because I chaired the next one. Good to know that even in those far-off days plots were afoot to take over *Novacon* and "give it a new lease of life". Here we are in the year of *N37* and still they mutter darkly about staging a coup against the old farts who run it. That's us now. Oh dear."

Photo: from
Ian Whates,
Novacon 36



WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

John Hall, who said, 'Of the many writers in *Prolapse-3* I found Sandra Bond the most illuminating, largely for her portrait of Joy Hibbert, who I never met, but who has been brought somewhat terrifyingly to life (that's not a very felicitous phrase in the circumstances, but let it stand) by both Sandra and William McCabe.' **Robert Lichtman**, who commented on the same number, 'While it was most enjoyable to see these long-unpublished LoCs gracing the issue, there was a certain poignance to the sad fact that so many (more than half) of your correspondents aren't in a position to respond to this revival issue.' **David Redd**, who sent details of a cassette tape about Clevedon Pier – no thanks, David, not after the pile of stuff I've already had from Dave Wood! **Malcolm Edwards**, who said, 'It was terrifying to see the photos appended to the letters. I know you and I look exactly as we did twenty years ago, but all those other guys appear to have got older.' Malcolm also wanted to assure David Redd that 'my unfinished story from 1983 will remain forever unfinished – I decided to quit while I was ahead.' **Terry Jeeves**, who thought the *Brumcon* report was a 'real blast from the past, a king-sized chunk of nostalgia' and said that 'the 'Weir Tales' piece solved the Doc Weir identity problem and I am happy to see he looks like my memories of him.' **Bill Burns**, who wisely noted that 'the stories from our fannish youth, along with those of the older fans we met then, are now fading rapidly into the distant past and need writing down while at least some of the participants are still around.' Too true, Bill, I wish I'd started ten years ago. **David Hardy**, who cryptically mused, 'Interesting that all but one of your LoCs are by men. Unless you count Jinny, who perhaps should get together with William? (Or not. She could talk for both of them). Speaking of whom, has he received copies? If so, I wonder what he makes of these references to him as a 'social leper' and so on. Has he commented at all?' No, I don't know what Dave means either, and he declined to elaborate. And William has failed to reply, despite my encouraging him to do so. **Ian Williams**, who said, 'I suspect we only really change if we have a complete breakdown and need to rebuild our personalities so it's no surprise that Joseph Nicholas sounds pretty much the same now as he did twenty years ago. No doubt I do too.' I can only agree. **Lloyd Penney**, who wrote, 'I may have to give the apa-ish RAE, BNC, (Read And Enjoyed, But No Comment) mostly because of my feelings of being a foreigner standing on the edges of a local party, and not knowing anything about much of the chatter.' Which is a fair point, though I refer Lloyd to my reply to Ted White elsewhere in this issue. **Murray Moore**, who in response to my marveling by e-mail at the 'fanzine machine' thanked me for 'personalising' his copy by thoughtfully splattering gobs of undigested toner across several pages. For you, Murray, nothing is too much trouble! **John Purcell**, who said, 'the discussion of the Doc Weir Award was interesting.... An 'award' should be a reflection of that person's fannish career, which really should encompass a decent length of time, maybe something like a five-year minimum. But that seems so arbitrary. If so inclined, a fan can accomplish a lot in a very short period of time: witness Chris Garcia's output since early 2005. Based on his prodigious amount of fanac – zines, locs, articles, conventions attended, and official club activity – Chris easily placed himself as the front-runner in the recently aborted TAFF race. The internet helped his cause immeasurably, but I bet he would have cranked out a lot of material anyway, even if he had been restricted to utilising snail-mail. His energy level is – dare I say it? – astronomical. And I'm rooming with the guy at *Corflu*, which should be an interesting experience. (Sounds like a fan article lying in wait, doesn't it?)" That very same super-hero **Chris Garcia** writes: "It's a long and interesting article on *Brumcon*. The photos are wonderful and it's those things that really help you get a feel for the time. I love the way that people dress at old cons. Things have changed, that's for sure. I was once on a panel about getting on panels, and one of the people on the panel said that if you're gonna be on a panel, you should be nicely dressed. The woman sitting next to me and I exchanged looks and I noticed that the two of us were in t-shirts that had dual-meaning rudeness if properly read. Neither of us could stop giggling for the rest of the panel." Ted Tubb, who wrote "A Farewell" A reminder of a once-pleasant world now forever lost. A return of youthful enthusiasm and all the rest of it. But what really stopped me dead in my tracks was your front cover. Once again the BSFA had risen to haunt me!" **James Bacon**, in another handwritten letter (don't all do that, fans!) who said, "I thought the gem was your 'Doc' Weir piece, and after reading it and especially Ken Slater's enlightening words 'for past services' I understand the anarchic nature of fans a little more."



WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS ISSUE? Several possible reasons:

- ☐ You are a fannish hero (still a few about). But it would be nice to hear from you anyway.
- ☐ You've helped me with *Prolapse*, and it was much appreciated!
- ☐ You're mentioned somewhere inside – hope I have my facts right!
- ☐ I thought you might be interested – do please let me know what you think.
- ☐ You're on the Danger List and need to Do Something if you want another issue!

ECONOMICS OF THE MAD HOUSE

Pubbing a 'paper first' fanzine isn't a cheap hobby (if it ever was). I've just worked out that the lastish cost me £1.50 each plus postage – another 50p per UK copy and a lot more for overseas. It cost me £110 to print and send out just 50 copies and this one will be more expensive, so you can see I'm going to have to be tough with the mailing list and drop people if they don't respond in some way. It's nothing personal, just economics, and you can still tune-in for free via the web-site. If you like *Prolapse* but don't have much to say then you can always send stamps – four of those large-size ones will cover it nicely. But what I really want are your reactions, your stories, it's those that make it all worthwhile!