

"... this issue felt like a dormant sector of British fandom had suddenly roused itself and decided to put on a show." – Randy Byers, LoC



"And here's Sir Galahad, back from his joust!"

See Ken Bulmer's story of the Cheltenham Safari - *with apologies to 'Giles'*

INSIDE: 'Running up that Hill' – John Hall's account of life with the Brunners; 'When Knights Were Old' by Ken Bulmer; Dave Newman, Master of the Bar; **PLUS:** Roy Kettle; Bruce Burn; Jim Cawthorn & more.



PROLAPSE

This is *Prolapse* 7, completed rather later than planned, in mid-June, 2007 (but I've been busy gardening) by Peter Weston at 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS. I'm keen to get your response on this issue, and suggest you e-mail your I.o.Cs to me at pr.weston@btinternet.com. Again, we're 'Paper First' because I like to hold a tangible, physical article in my hands, but I'll gladly send you the pdf if you prefer, and this issue will go onto *eFanzines* a month after printed copies have been posted out. *Prolapse* is a Time-Travelling Fanzine, covering the many and varied aspects of British SF fan-history.

"... *Prolapse* is the British genzine favoured by all the cool kids" – Claire Brialey, *BW-30*

'It certainly is a wonderful thing', I thought, when I looked at the pile of fannish memorabilia I've collected since the previous issue. So much, in fact, that I'm now suffering from a peculiarly irritating form of memory loss – I can clearly remember an interesting article or snippet I read just a couple of days before, but can't recall *where* I read it. The remedy would be to carry a notebook and jot down every useful reference as I found it, but I'm simply not that organised. In fact my 'notes' for this editorial consist of just four scribbled names – John Hall, Lillian Edwards, Eric Jones and Terry Jeeves. An odd juxtaposition, you might think, but fortunately, enough to remind me of what I want to say.

John Hall first, (soon to be an international mega-star when news of his Brunner piece gets around) who made a remark in the lettercolumn of #5, something quite fundamental which no-one picked-up. Commenting upon my *Brumcon* article, John said, "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."

If John was right there'd be absolutely no point in doing *Prolapse*. But personally I'm fascinated with the things fans did in the fifties (for example) a particularly rich period for stories and anecdotes. In this issue you'll find a long piece from dear old Ken Bulmer (with additions from his pals) about a crazy weekend that Ken and Ted Tubb staged with the London Circle and the Cheltenham group. It's a good read and tells us a lot about the fans involved and their various relationships. I'd *love* to have been there! I wish I could have met Bob Richardson who seems such a decent chap; Ina says he crewed miniature submarines during the War – can you imagine the tales he might have told? I want to put my name on the visitors' wall in the Cheltenham club-rooms, help Eric Jones build a psionics machine, see Ted Tubb swing his battle-axe. I want to enjoy fandom at a time when it was a much closer and more intimate society than it is today. For the same reason I've been pestering the Chief Researcher for old fanzines, collecting information on another character with whom I feel a great deal of empathy – Dave Newman, who most fans won't even have heard of, but who turns out to have been a really important player. These people were real, we *do* have a great deal in common, they *are* worth remembering.

Which brings me onto Lillian Edwards, who turned up at *Corflu* in Austin this year and appeared just as I was giving a friend one of my few remaining copies of *Prolapse* #4.

"Can I have one of those?" she asked brightly. Not wishing to be mean, I handed over my penultimate copy and Lillian quickly scanned the interior.

"Oh, it's all about the old days," she said dismissively.

Now, at this point I was tempted to say that as she obviously wasn't interested, she might as well give it back, but (not wishing to be mean) I attempted a more positive response.

"It's fan-history, Lillian," I said, "and it's not just old stuff. I mean, it would be great to run something about later periods. What about doing an article for me about the 1980s, or the Leeds group, or something like that?"

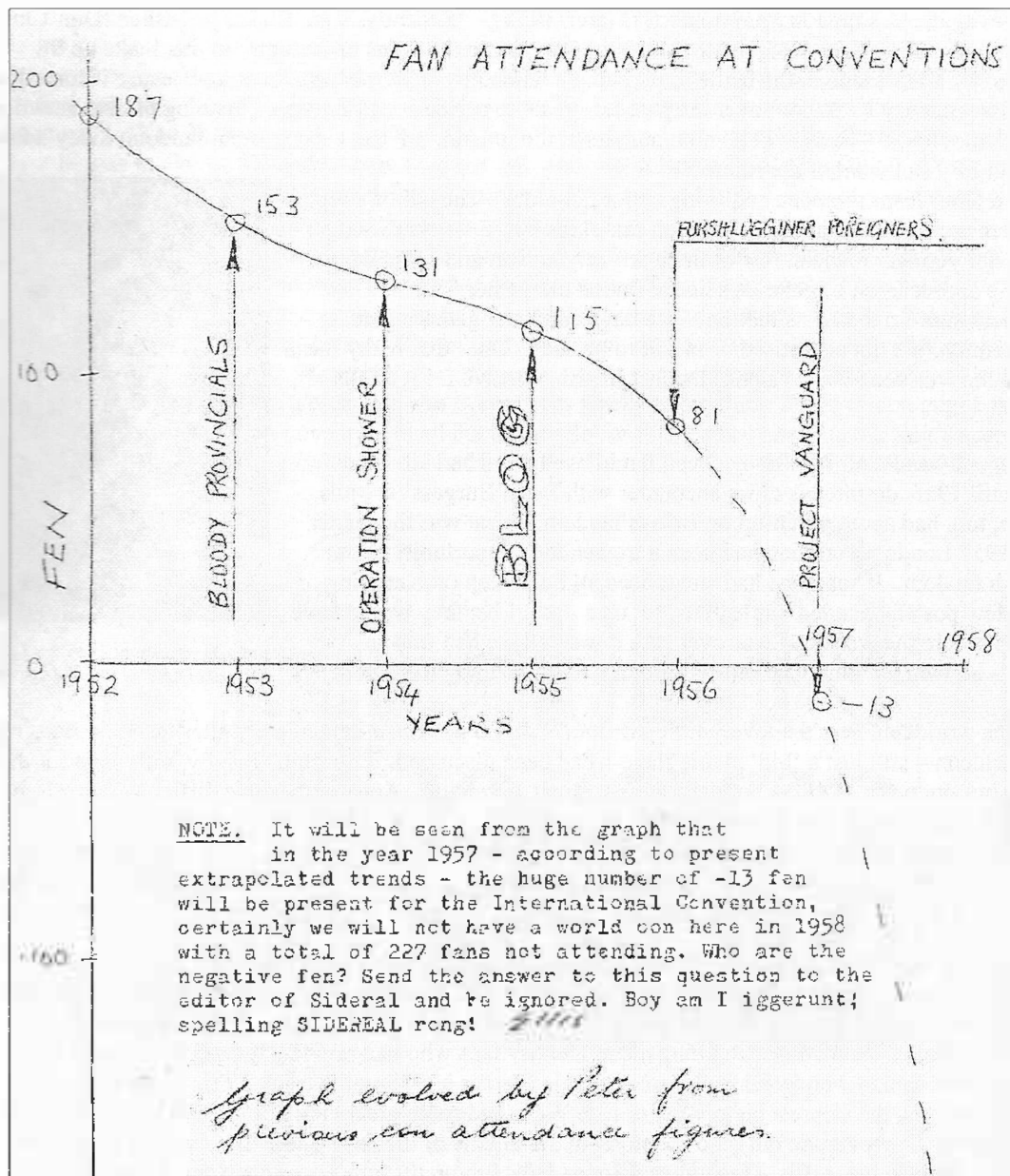
With a pitying look Lillian dismissed me from her universe and floated off, oblivious as always to the effect she has on people. Thank goodness I had one last copy in my bag for Mike Moorcock when he turned up unexpectedly the next day!

Perhaps I'm being unkind to poor Lillian – she doesn't share my interest and that's fair enough, but the point I was making is valid; this fanzine doesn't have to be all about 'old stuff', it's not just an exercise in nostalgia for those of us of mature years, it's intended to unearth forgotten facts and provide some insights into what fandom is all about. Even the venerable Mark Plummer might have got this a bit wrong (or he might be pulling my leg again) in his letter this ish where he mentions the 1998 Eastercon and adds, 'yes, I know, it's almost heretical to even mention such a recent event in *Prolapse*'. No, Mark, it's not – so far as I'm concerned fan-history began yesterday (a remark I made to someone at *Contemplation* who for some reason took immediate offence; don't ask me why).

So for Lillian, and Mark, and anyone else who's confused about this, yes I *would* like to run material on more recent events and personalities. I have a feature lined-up on the 1994 *MiSdemeanour* convention – that's only thirteen years ago – but it would be great to have more coverage of the eighties and nineties. There are stories to be told about the post-*Seacon* generation, about the *Silicons*, and the *Mexicon* experiment – but does anyone want to tell them?

That's two of my four names. What about Eric Jones?

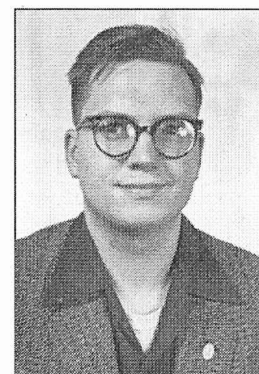
I've come to admire Eric greatly, and we'll be doing a little tribute to him in the next issue, but for now I want to exhume a few snippets from Eric's fanzines, *Sidereal* and *Spasmodic*, published between 1954 & 1958, which give some interesting perspectives on the times. The first item – upon finding which I literally whooped with delight – is the famous chart that Peter Mabey plotted immediately after *Cytricon II* to show the decline of fandom, which led directly through Vinçe Clarke's 'Don't Just Sit There!' to the formation of the BSFA in 1958 (described elsewhere in this issue). I'd read about the chart but had never seen it, and it's important because it gives us accurate figures for con-attendance during the early fifties. It includes comments made by Ellis Mills, a young American who was visiting Cheltenham at the time.



Death of Fandom?

Peter Mabey's chart, reproduced from *Sideral* π , a special issue produced immediately after the 1956 Kettering con. (*Cytricon II*)

Confounding the worst-case prediction, in 1957 about 40 turned up at the largely impromptu *Cytricon III* event, and according to Dave Newman's *Prodigal*, there were 43 in 1958.



Ellis Mills,
Photo by Terry Jeeves

Eric Jones wrote, "Something seems to be wrong with recent conventions. The graph above is a true one, and definitely shows a downward trend, culminating in a negative attendance figure next year. Why is this? What's wrong with fandom for it to be so off-hand where conventions are concerned? Here are a few facts which might possibly explain things.

"First, collectors of SF are diminishing every year. No-one wants to collect these days, it seems, and hence one of the most attractive features of past cons - the stands and tables - have gone down until this year only Ken Slater and five fan-stands were left. The excuse seems to be that publishers won't send reps out from London due to cost - which ties-up with the fact that there hasn't been a good display since the *Coroncon*.

"Second, it would appear that provincial clubs who hold cons break-up very shortly after the con is over (this particularly true of Manchester in 1954), thus robbing fandom of future support for other events.

"Third, perhaps the reason is cash, but it obviously shows that Southern fen are loath to travel out of their area when the con is held provincially. Come on! Follow Liverpool's lead!!"

Reading the above, I was struck first of all by Ellis' comment (an echo of something Eric had said earlier in the issue) about an 'International Convention in 1957', which was an odd choice of words. At first I thought maybe they imagined something special would still take place in 1957, even if London didn't win the worldcon for that year (Los Angeles was also bidding), rather in the manner of the 1951 *Festiventon*. Perhaps that was indeed the case. What's quite clear is that at this point there was no suggestion for any sort of convention at Easter, *additional to* the big event planned for the autumn.

Which leads me to Eric's three points, of which only the last one seems to me to have much validity; we tend to forget that back in the mid-fifties travelling to a convention was a major expense for most people.

But what I think Eric - and everyone else - missed, was that conventions were declining mainly because *no-one was promoting them properly*. The *Supermancon* in 1954 - 'in the provinces', as they would have said - showed what could be done when a local group made a big effort to put the word around; its attendance figure was really very respectable for the day. The first *Cytricon* didn't do badly - there was comparatively little publicity, but at least it was announced in good time by an enthusiastic local group. After that, however, the Kettering events became an exercise in creeping lethargy, more so by the year. No-one wanted to organise them, things were left very much to the last minute and details were circulated through fanzines which were only going to the in-group, anyway.

Here's Eric Jones again, this time in *Spasmodic II* (March 1958):- "Recently, Vinç Clarke published 'Don't Just Sit There' – a frantic call for a new SF society designed to inject new blood into the veins of fandom. In this I take up St Fantony's sword and stand by Vinç's side in the battle to perpetuate fandom; yes, *perpetuate* fandom, because if something isn't done to counteract the tendency in fandom over the past few years to deride constructivism ('reading or even mentioning SF is S&C fanning') fandom will die. There will be no mourners at the funeral. SF can exist without fandom; today's fandom can, perhaps, exist without SF. But what of the future?"

"*Nebula-26* has a letter from someone enquiring about fan-clubs. The editor's reply said, 'In Great Britain there are a number of science fiction fan-clubs but, to my knowledge, none of these is specially for younger readers, few of them are very active, and some have even grown away from the appreciation of genuine science fiction altogether.'

"Doesn't this about sum-up today's situation? We have an Easter gathering at Kettering. It isn't a convention, it's not advertised or meant to be such. Does that really mean that we have seen (unless the worldcon comes again) the last British SCIENCE FICTION convention?"

The editor of *Nebula* was Peter Hamilton, a keen fan himself, who had attended conventions every year until 1956, despite his close encounter with Brian Burgess' entrails, but it sounds here as if he, too, had about given-up on British fandom. What was the matter with these people? The 1957 London worldcon had been a tremendous opportunity to put some life back into British fandom. If someone had announced an Eastercon (at Kettering or anywhere else), put up a few posters, handed out leaflets, set up a desk, I bet they would have attracted 100 registrations before the worldcon was over. As it was, all we had was an unpublicised 'gathering' – no wonder Vinç Clarke was agitating for something to be done!



Peter Hamilton at *Cytricon II* with Pat Milnes of LSFS. Photo John Roles album

With regard to the worldcon, here's a lovely little bit from *Siderear π*, issued immediately after the 1956 Easter con, at which plans for the worldcon – still just a 'bid' at this stage – had been discussed. Eric said, "Briefly, the venue for the convention will either be in London or, if not, a holiday camp at Great Yarmouth. Apparently some difficulty has arisen in finding a suitable hotel in London, but investigations are still proceeding."

Once again I had to laugh out loud – can you *imagine* what visiting Americans would have thought of the austere settings of a Butlins' holiday camp, circa 1957, surrounded by happy campers! And yet didn't British fandom face the same problem in 1965, and again in 1979? You can read a little more about this on Page 23, with more to follow next time.

My last note concerns Terry Jeeves who I visited recently in Scarborough, where I thought he and Val looked remarkably well. After I'd finished admiring his collection of rocketry books, however, Terry pulled out his own convention photo-album which turned out to be an absolute stunner, possibly the best I've yet seen. The important thing is that in most cases Terry had dated and captioned his pictures, enabling me to identify fans who had previously been unknown, and to place them in the correct year. There's some wonderful stuff here – Archie Mercer in swimming trunks, Eric Bentcliffe on a pedalo, the very first St Fantony ceremony, the clearest picture yet of Doc Weir, and some great views of the 1963 *Bullcon* – would you believe they took the Fancy Dress Parade out onto the street in the middle of the day, where the Invisible Man and a half-dozen other costumed idiots stopped the traffic – the police were called! I'm pretty sure I can spot Tony Walsh and some of the 'Alicen' crew beneath the paint-jobs, and this will make a great photo-feature for another issue.

I've remarked before how fans used to circulate photographs to each other, and the way con-committees in the '50s arranged for 'official' photographers like Peter West or Les Childs to pass around proofs and take orders. This was a useful practice and it was a pity the custom died out some time around 1960, after which pictures are rare and generally poor quality. Consequently we have a great many more images from, say, the 1954 *Supermancon* than we have from the 1964 *Repetercon* – where almost no-one seems to have taken a camera. It also means that the same scenes occur over and over in albums from Vince Clarke, Ethel Lindsay and John Roles (yes, Roger Robinson did let me borrow that one). But Terry Jeeves was a keen amateur photographer in his own right meaning that his collection is quite different to the others, full of pictures I've never seen before. Terry kindly let me borrow his album which I'm scanning as rapidly as possible, and you will certainly start to see his work appearing in future issues.

Finally, I recently heard from George Locke, who said, "I'm in the throes of getting a very eccentric publication ready. It was supposed to be a book, but it's turned almost into a fanzine, with all the bits and pieces I chucked in to compensate for losing something. Long story. Has Jim Cawthorn illos." Sure enough it came last week – 'THE EDGE OF SPACE, impeccably printed and bound, and containing reprints of four 'proto-SF' stories from sources such as *The London Magazine* (1910), and *Strand*, (1913), together with some oddball pieces of George's own. It's a remarkable work, with a limited edition of just 250, at £50.00 each. It's also worth asking about his booklet, 'Scientifiction Days in Manhattan', a description of George's attendance during the auction of Sam Moskowitz's collection. Both Greg and I found this absolutely fascinating and I believe some copies are still available. (E-mail: george_locke@hotmail.com)

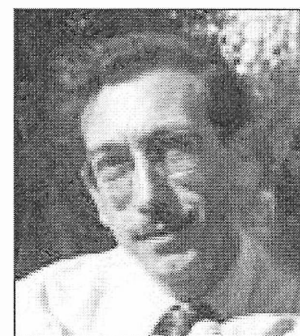
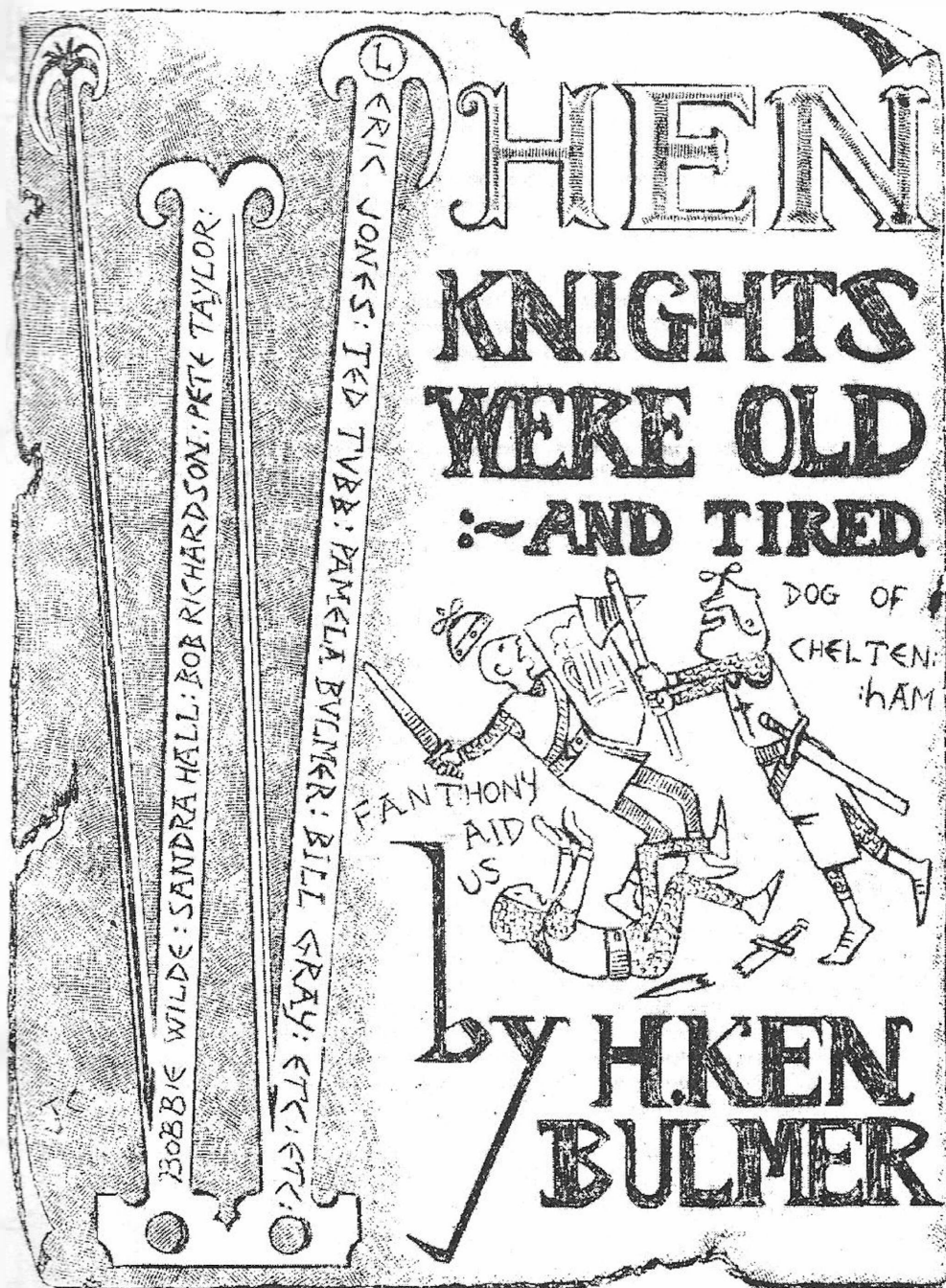
LOOKING BACKWARD:

The August issue (#8) will see the first instalment of Dick Ellingsworth's memoir of his early fannish days, and a special surprise piece by James Bacon on Irish Fandom. There'll be another instalment of 'Forgotten Fans', this time featuring Eric Jones, more on John Brunner, and Ken Slater's 'House of Horrors'. Issue #9 will be the special 50th anniversary number celebrating 'Kettering 57' (with the help of Tony Keen) and the origin of The Order of St Fantony. Other items promised include George Locke's account of the second-hand bookshop trade in London, and I'm still holding Dan Morgan's 'The Invisible Fan', and Ann Green's report of the 1994 *MiSdemeanour* convention (in expectation of additional material) – though Steve Lawson recently sent me a DVD of the Trial of Steve Green. Stay tuned, and please do keep writing! //

In the last issue Mike Moorcock wrote about the London Circle's visit to the Cheltenham Circle at Whitsun, 1959, for a weekend of jousting and pageantry. I was intrigued, so much so that I put the Chief Researcher onto the case with instructions to find out more. He was almost immediately triumphant, turning up George Locke's fanzine, *Smoke* #1 (July 1959) with accounts by Ken Bulmer and Cheltenham fan Bob Richardson, both beautifully illustrated by artist Jim Cawthorn, a report by Ivor Mayne in *Vector* #5, and George Locke's own account in Bruce Pelz's *Profanity*. Coincidentally, Chuck Connor sent me a CD of a 'Golden Oldies' panel from *Tynecon* in 1974 and suddenly I was listening to the chirpy tones of dear old Ken Bulmer once again, as he described the origins of that visit:

'The St Fantony people said to Ted Tubb, "Why don't you come down to Cheltenham and we'll fight you?" Well, Ted was never one to say no when that sort of challenge was flung, so he said, "Fine, we'll get our armour built and we'll come down and fight you in a proper joust." We spent a great deal of money for us – five pounds ten, at least – and made our armour, all painted-up with 'London Circle', got in the cars and down we went. When we arrived they said, "You don't really mean to fight us, do you?" We said, "Yes, of course, we've got our wooden swords, so come on!"'

This long-forgotten escapade was every bit as wacky as anything James Bacon might get up to in the present age, and in many respects it was a convention in all but name. So for this feature I have taken Ken's account and have added extracts from Bob, Ivor and George (with a couple of footnotes from me) to give the full flavour of this amazing weekend!



Top: Ken Bulmer in 1955; Photo from Jim Linwood.

Bottom: Ted Tubb in 1958; Photo from Terry Jeeves

Title illustration by Jim Cawthorn, originally drawn on wax stencil to fill a quarto (10" x 8") page, and printed in blue ink. Other illos also by Jim.

KEN: Have you ever spent a fortnight carefully planning and building various beautiful artefacts, to stand and watch cheerfully whilst they are bashed one against another until they are shattered? The mundane notion that all SF fans are slightly round the bend may not be strictly true – but when I own to doing not only that but of actually enjoying it and wishing there were more artefacts to shatter in mutual destruction – you may well believe the mundane world right.

The London Circle descended on Cheltenham full of good cheer, spirits, grub and camaraderie. Whitsun 1959 was spent in and around the Cheltenham clubroom, and when it was all over the loudest calls were for another 'do' of a similar nature as soon as possible. Yes, the whole Elsie Horde safari was a fabulous success.

There were three main lines of advance. A scouting force of Bobbie Wild and Sandra Hall caught the milk-train down in the early hours of Saturday morning, were met by Bob Richardson and wandered around the rest of the time without seeming to care where their lost sleep had gone. The main body of Pete Taylor, Peter West, Mike Moorcock, George Locke, Ivor Mayne, Sandy Sandfield, Barry Bayley and Tikwis Hall went down on the 9.05 from Paddington. Poker-dice, etc, occupied their journey. Apart from their own clobber they had two battleaxes and a couple of brass curtain rods. The rearguard set off with the liquor, the grub, the bulk of the weapons and the armour.

Jimmy Rattigan was at around Ted Tubb's house early and was shocked when Ted stuck his head out of the window, pyjama jacket still on and mumbled, "Whassa time?" This was a low-down Tubb trick – he was dressed and shaved but felt that a little Rattigan stimulation might not come amiss. They arrived at my place about half after eight and we set off just before nine. We'd been up until some ungodly hour packing the car so as to secure this early start. Picking up Ella Parker and more grub on the way, we bowled out of London and headed down the A40, with little traffic and a bright morning. Seeing people already lying about the edges of the road, we said: "Fancy picnicking there!" in a lordly and contemptuous tone.

A short word as to the kitting up of Ted's car, a pre-war Morris; the boot was crammed with food and liquor, and with armour, weapons and suitcases so that the lid section was open with everything strapped down. More armour and so on was stuffed in among the bods inside – or we were stuffed in among the armour. One item consisted of large shoulder pieces (with wings) and an enormous helmet, a casque, really, bolted to that, making up a complicated structure that looked like the unscrewed head and shoulders of Adam Link. I sat with our friend draped over my legs. In the back, helmets were worn and passing motorists tended to give us a wide berth.

Bowling merrily along the broad highway, Ted became a trifle unhappy with the steering. We pulled into the kerb – puncture! Oh, well, such things happen. Then the fun was revealed to us – in stages, so we'd not hurt ourselves laughing too much all at once. The spare wheel was embedded like a clam in its shell in the outside of the boot lid. This was hinged at the bottom and rammed down hard on the bumper because the lid was swung back. In order to pry the spare loose, the cover had to be swung up to clear the bumper. One word sprang to all minds – 'Unload'. So we unloaded, we spread the gear on the grass and gradually lightened the load until the spare could be winkled out.

Thankfully, there were hydraulic four-wheel jacks. The car rose, the punctured wheel came off – and then we discovered that the spare needed to go on the front as it had a gaiter* and wasn't tough enough to take the weight. So, a front wheel had to be removed and put on the back, the spare put on the front, the wheel with the puncture put back in the clamshell boot, and then we could load up again. As we were doing all this a large, shiny, finny, American-type car swept past and from it floated loud and jeering laughter at our predicament. Our bent backs sagged even more. Then a little van pulled in and offered assistance, thus restoring our faith in humanity. We'd finished by then, true, but the thought was nice. As we surveyed the armour, I remarked, in a lordly and contemptuous tone, "why are we picnicking here?" It comes to all, in their time, they say.

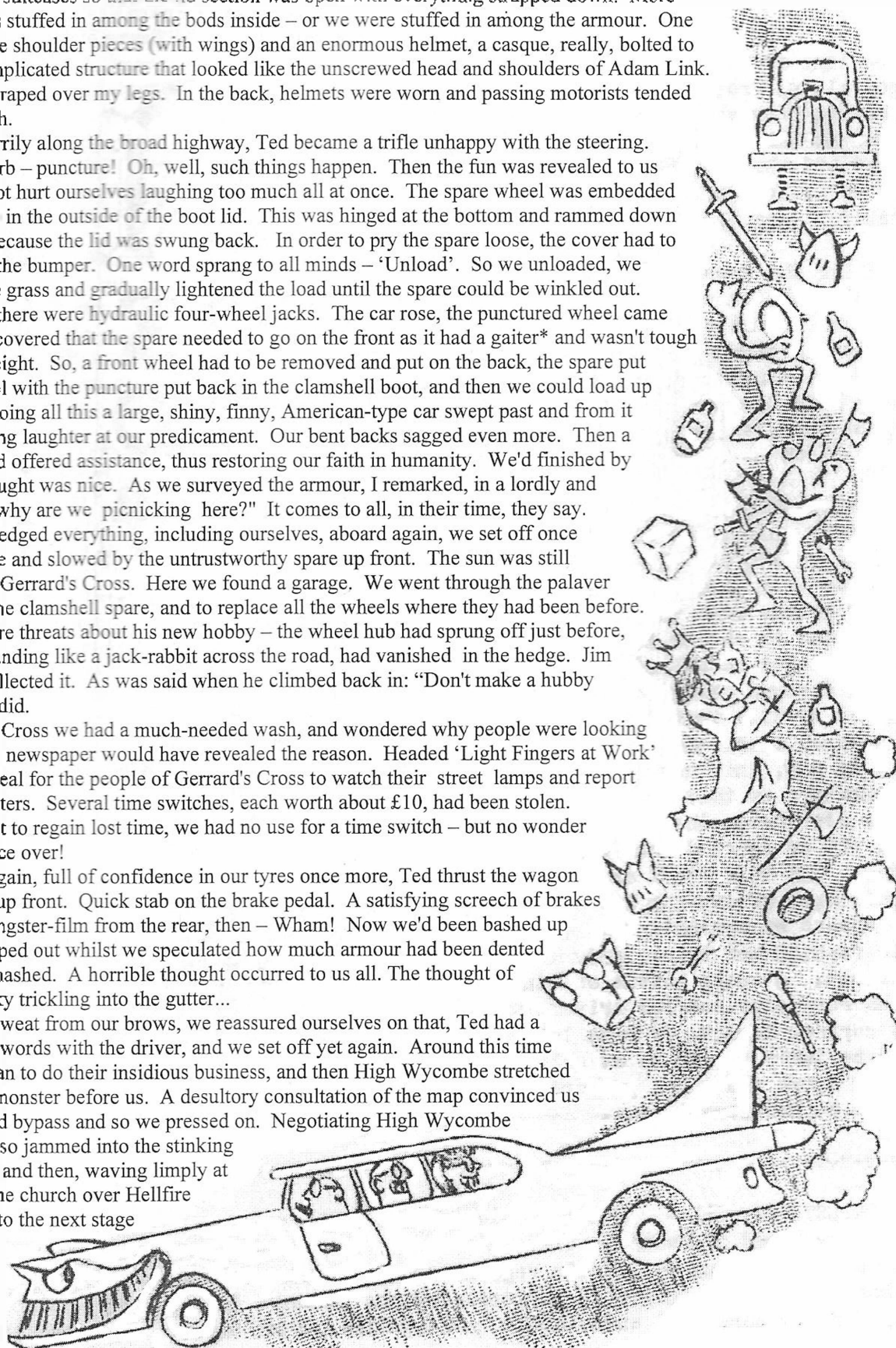
Having re-wedged everything, including ourselves, aboard again, we set off once more, behind schedule and slowed by the untrustworthy spare up front. The sun was still shining. We reached Gerrard's Cross. Here we found a garage. We went through the palaver of unloading to free the clamshell spare, and to replace all the wheels where they had been before. Jim was mumbling dire threats about his new hobby – the wheel hub had sprung off just before, in full flight, and, bounding like a jack-rabbit across the road, had vanished in the hedge. Jim had darted out and collected it. As was said when he climbed back in: "Don't make a hubby of that, Jim." But he did.

At Gerrard's Cross we had a much-needed wash, and wondered why people were looking at us a bit askance. A newspaper would have revealed the reason. Headed 'Light Fingers at Work' it carried a police appeal for the people of Gerrard's Cross to watch their street lamps and report any suspicious characters. Several time switches, each worth about £10, had been stolen. Unless we could use it to regain lost time, we had no use for a time switch – but no wonder we were given the once over!

Setting off again, full of confidence in our tyres once more, Ted thrust the wagon along. Traffic lights up front. Quick stab on the brake pedal. A satisfying screech of brakes from an American gangster-film from the rear, then – Wham! Now we'd been bashed up the bumper. Ted hopped out whilst we speculated how much armour had been dented and what had been smashed. A horrible thought occurred to us all. The thought of golden pools of whisky trickling into the gutter...

Wiping the sweat from our brows, we reassured ourselves on that, Ted had a few friendly Tubbish words with the driver, and we set off yet again. Around this time thirst and hunger began to do their insidious business, and then High Wycombe stretched like an all-engulfing monster before us. A desultory consultation of the map convinced us that there was no valid bypass and so we pressed on. Negotiating High Wycombe consumed an hour or so jammed into the stinking carbon monoxide fug and then, waving limply at the golden ball atop the church over Hellfire Caves, we bowled onto the next stage of the adventure.

*I have no idea what this bit of obsolete terminology means!



Skirting Oxford, we cracked up to seventy or so, and then, mercifully travelling at a lower speed, the familiar puncture sensations once again bunged us into the kerb. We pulled off the road and unloaded. Armour and swords scattered on the grass, we went through the wheel-changing drill. Jim went off to find a puncture-mending geezer down the road, and returned with a tale of a three-hour wait. It was decided to chance it and press on slowly, using the gaitered spare.

With everything once again reloaded we set off, only to have Jim darting about catching flying hub caps as they sprayed across the road. By this time our schedule had been shot and I remarked to Ella that, at any rate, all con reports concern themselves mainly with the journey and thus we were in the right tradition. We were famished by now, and then a garage hove up which would, with suitable greasing, mend the puncture so that we could travel fast again. Unload. We had the spare back in its clamshell, the back wheel on the front, the punctured wheel, mended, on the back, and we started once more. We had still thought we would make it in time, but this final emergency had made us irrevocably late. We began to talk despairingly of camping out and having our own joust – having all the liquor and grub aboard. We resisted temptation in a remarkably noble fashion though a spare bottle of wine was cracked, and we speculated what might happen if the road cops saw Ted driving along with a bottle up-ended at his lips. We were past caring, though. We were late – so we were late. The way we felt, Cheltenham would be lucky to see us at all. All we wanted was a wash and brush-up at the hotel, a quick snack and then, perhaps after forty winks, we might think of meeting the fen we had come to see.

What actually happened was rather different. Passing the headquarters of the CSFC at 130 London Road, we thought we'd have a quick look to see if anyone might be there. Jim and I nipped down the steps and hammered on the door, shouted and, as there was no reply, decided we'd better leave and carry on as planned to the hotel. Then the door opened and a group of London Circle-ites swept out, all furiously angry, shouting at us to keep quiet as the 'ceremony' was on. We said rude words about the ceremony; but then, dazedly, decided we'd better change since we were here. The rest of our mob had gone along to the clubroom at 3.00 as arranged and we, naughty, naughty, were late.

So, see us stagger in. Ted, Jim and I were kitted out as knights, with helmets, armour, swords, shields, and nightgowns and cloaks; Ella was togged up with a long train, Pamela in a bright-blue gown and a tall, brilliant hat that kept swinging in wide arcs. As you can imagine, we were hot, dusty, tired, hungry – and thirsty.

BOB: The London Circle burst in – and burst is the word – with an impact which stunned all of us, because I think we Cheltonians rather thought we had the edge on this ceremony and fancy dress business. They had first shocked Cheltenham Town by proceeding from the hotel to the clubrooms – a ten minute walk – in full costume. They were met at the basement door by our Herald, John Humphries, who escorted them to the door of the main club room, where he was then challenged by the Grand-Master (Eric Jones) and the Inner Guard played by Keith Freeman. The door was opened and spot-on three o'clock, in they came.

We knew they were coming in fancy dress, but I don't think any of us expected the outfits we saw that afternoon. It was straight out of the pages of 'The Once and Future King'. The costumes ranged from Mike Moorcock as Merlin to Sandy Sandfield as the Wandering Minstrel (in the very briefest of briefs) and George Locke in a most authentic costume as a Crusading Archer; but the ones who stood out were the women. Their costumes were really beautiful. Bobbie Wild came dressed as an Amazon, Sandra Hall was Queen Guinevere in a bluegown trimmed with ermine and a marvellous tiara, Pamela Bulmer, complete with wimple – I love that word – was Morgan-le-Fay, and Ella Parker also with a tiara, was King Pelinore's love, the King of Flanders' daughter, in a really lovely dress of white, blue and gold.



Bob Richardson, Knight Armourer
of The Order of St Fantouy.
Photo from Norman Shorrocks

IVOR: We arrived in Cheltenham by train, unloaded our weapons and other gear and started looking around for fans, and eventually found them in the persons of Eric Jones and Frank Herbert. We loaded the gear into Frank's car and then took the bus to the hotel. The hotel staff blanched visibly when we started leaving swords and shields lying around the lobby, and the manager looked a bit shaken when we asked if it was all right if we left our banner there. When George and I had been up to our room we went out to eat. First of all we had a look at an old bookshop George remembered (probably from a previous incarnation). It was shut, though.

Back at the hotel we changed into our costumes. George had gone to a lot of trouble with his outfit as a bowman, and looked very good in it. In my foolish optimistic way I had believed the rumour that costumes would be provided, and had only found out on Tuesday that I hadn't got one, so my costume was a very, very rushed job. I was supposed to be Lady Ella Macbeth's trainbearer, but she hadn't arrived when we left the hotel for the clubroom. Most of the people we passed studiously avoided looking at us, although some of them watched us anxiously from the cover of their eyes in case we got violent, I suppose. It's funny how undemonstrative the English people are. The only decent reaction I noticed was from two old dears talking in front of a shop. One wondered what we thought we were doing, and the other said: "Well, they're not asking for money, so it must be all right."

GEORGE: Ivor and I were sharing the same room. On arriving, we dumped our gear, and went off in search of a bite to eat before changing into costume. We'd been told to be ready made up at 3 o'clock which meant, translated into fannish time, between 4 and 5. Ivor and I wandered about for some time hunting for a secondhand bookshop I'd visited when passing through Cheltenham a year or so ago. At that time, it had had a copy of Sir Francis Younghusband's fantasy THE COMING COUNTRY in d/w and signed by the author, but I'd been too broke to buy it then. There was a minute chance it would still be there. The shop was closed for lunch, though. I peered through the glass front door, and scanned the shelves for my quarry. Suddenly I shouted 'Eureka'. A couple of passing dogs looked at me oddly, but I didn't care. I was able to scribble a note asking the bookseller to send me a quotation before Ivor dragged me away to continue the hunt for food, and we then meandered back to the hotel. The next half hour or so was rather hectic, with Sandra Hall, quite convinced that the ceremony would start on time, bullying us to get into our fancy dress. It was ghastly, especially when she started smearing greaspaint over my face to make it less pallid, and me having to beg every three minutes for another safety pin. Then at three o'clock

(note very carefully, fannish historians) we were all ready, minus the group from the car who, apparently, were insisting on fannish tradition of unpunctuality. Then, a gallant band, we marched in style to the shrine of St. Fantony at the clubroom, trailing a cloud of the local children. It wouldn't have been so bad if they hadn't persisted in calling me William Tell. I felt hurt, especially as I couldn't prove to them what a longbow could do, by virtue of a policeman being near.

BOB: Barry Bayley was very tastefully dressed – I am not sure what as – but I liked his recorder, not tape recorder, but the musical instrument which he played rather well. Ivor Mayne was a foot soldier of the period. Archie Mercer was, I'm afraid, only a serf. He was dressed in sheepskin jacket with Saxon-type bound legs, and went around informing everyone that he had the Plague, the Black Death, etc. Quite a number of people kept clear of Archie for a while. Doc Weir was dressed up as a Barbarian, wearing a fur cap with a Mongol-Chinese type jacket.

Ted and his companions were late because of troubles on their journey, but they soon got into fancy dress in our spare room and we repeated the welcoming ceremony for them, and allowed them to visit the Shrine before proceeding with the ceremony of Knighthood. The three chaps were dressed very much alike, a mixture of Crusader and Arthurian Knights. Ken had a very interesting shield. Besides having built into the back of it a place to hold his cigarettes, he also had near the bottom a small compartment with a penny inside covered by glass. This, he informed me, was for 'maidens in distress'. Unfortunately, he was unable to assist any distressed damsel as our toilet does not require a penny! But their dress – it's marvellous what you can do with silver paint, hardboard, cardboard. And hard work!

KEN: The Cheltenham basement is damp. They have to have huge fires blazing all the time. It was a hot, sunshiny day. And, to cap it all, there were hundreds of those filthy Joss sticks, incense-burning things, scattered everywhere. Ted liked these. No one else did. We had to stand up against the wall – thank Ghu there was a wall – and some part of the ceremony was re-enacted. I have very vague memories of this section – Pamela nearly fainted, the room was going round, Jim and I nearly passed out – but after a turn-up in an inner room that I won't mention because it may happen to you one day, Ted and Sandra were initiated.

IVOR: Humph met us at the clubroom and conducted us to an ante-chamber before the Shrine. Here the History of St Fantony was read to us, and we swore eternal allegiance to Him. Then we went one by one into the Holy of Holies to pay individual homage. We were warned of the frightful penalties for those who did not follow the correct ritual, but we weren't told what the ritual was, so I was rather perturbed about it. I was even more worried when I entered the Chamber, a darkened room with a motionless figure standing with crossed arms. For a moment I thought it was St. Fantony Himself. I didn't feel much like speaking to this individual, so I just made silent obeisance before the altar. I remembered to leave my joss-stick behind. Outside the Shrine, I found the other fans that had passed through before me anxiously comparing notes to try and decide what the correct ritual should have been. As other people emerged we immediately asked them what they had done.



GEORGE: One by one we filed into the basement of 13. London Road, and were introduced formally to the grand Master, Eric Jones. Les Childs read us the Lore of St. Fantony, we swore the oath, and then, one by one, we were asked to visit the shrine. As the line of LO warriors waiting shortened, I confess to becoming more and more nervous of the ordeal to follow. Various childhood memories came to me, skittering past in a maddening confusion. My turn came at last! I was told to enter.... Then finally, after what had seemed an eternity of terror sublime in the place of the Shrine, I was once more among my friends, a changed and broken fan. I gibbered a little, beat my head against the wall, fell to the ground sobbing.

BOB: We had specially written a Ceremony of Welcome to the Cheltenham Chapter of the Most Noble and Illustrious Order of St. Fantony (done mostly by Bill Gray, one of our newer members). The London Circle members were duly sworn in and they then proceeded one at a time to visit St. Fantony's Shrine, which was presided over by Bill in a really astounding costume rather resembling Richard III. His make-up, though, surpassed his costume. He really looked like Richard III! I hope he didn't frighten too many people. They left the shrine by another door – we have more than one in our clubroom, fortunately – and waited outside for the initiation into the Order of two of their members.

KEN: The CSFC gave Ted a drink from the Well of St Fantony, but it was obvious to all of us that it was only water, while Ted had expected vodka or some other strong spirit. So he parried the questions as to whether it had warned him or not, and then Eric Jones, in mock anger, said that he'd failed and told him to get out. Ted strode for the exit. Seeing the chairman of the Elsie Horde being thus contemptuously dismissed, I struggled to my feet in my nightgown, with my shield and sword wrapped about me and my helmet at a drunken angle, and said: "If he goes then we all go!" and started out. Only then did the suddenly-serious aspect of this strike me. I had an apocalyptic vision of the battle starting right there and then. But Eric showed savvy and said that there had been a mistake and 'Come back, all is forgiven' and amid a mutter from the LC, Ted went back and was duly made Sir Edward. Then, blessedly, could we get the gear off and go to the hotel.

The Belle Vue is a nice hotel and the manager was a personal friend of Eric's. Later on, when we went back to the clubroom again, Bob Richardson had gone, unfortunately, but Audrey Eversfield, Margaret Jones, and Pamela got cracking on the grub. Sandra had brought most of this, ham, beef, chicken and so on, and Ella had brought the bread, tea, sugar, etc. My only real complaint about the whole affair was that Pamela spent too much time working in the kitchen,



Eric Jones, Grand Master
of The Order of St Fantony
Photo from Norman Shorrocks

and these chores will have to be distributed more fairly in the future. But all in all everyone mucked-in as they saw fit and, I am thankful to report, there were no ugly incidents as have marred other conventions. We all meshed well and we were ONE group, not two, during Whitsun. Ivor, however, managed to slice the carving knife into his thumb instead of a roll, but Frank Herbert whipped the wounded hero off to hospital with Margaret acting as Florrie Nightingale. He came back with a couple of stitches and seemed none the worse for it, though he managed to miss the jousting completely.

As Archie Mercer and Doc Weir were there, the full BSFA committee was present and some time during the evening Doc called what everyone agreed was an official meeting to discuss next year's con-site. I made a proposition (which was carried) that the London Circle would run the next national Con at Whitsun 1960, in London, in conjunction with the BSFA, the BSFA to make up any difference in entrance fees for BSFA members, and the London Circle and the BSFA to split both profits and losses 50-50, the London Circle having complete authority in every phase of running the Con. Then followed an evening of roistering, punctuated by the first fight. First, though, a few notes on the armour. Ted had accepted the challenge of the CSFC, and Bob Richardson had replied with a letter giving details of weapons. We had decided that we had to have armour if we were to be struck by swords.

Ted and I had thusly prowled around Gamage's and other stores, trying buckets on our heads and holding up wire mesh strainers before our faces. We attracted odd looks. When two men dressed in sober business suits stop a car, step out, paw through a refuse dump in High Holborn and then solemnly place cardboard containers on their heads I think it fair to say that the LC is lucky to still have them around – free. So it was that Ted and I made armour from hardboard, pegboard and thick lino. This simple statement covers over a fortnight's solid work, bending pegboard, designing, cutting, fitting, and bolting together. We had a magnificent lorice and tasses (I think they might have been) with a couple of helmets – casques – with eyeholes from the pegboard. We had a corselet and arm pieces. We had three shields, eight swords and two axes.

When we discovered there were no crusading Red Crosses on our nightgowns, Ted was persuaded by Jim that he could fix one on in no time with his red paper and my Copydex. So Jim laid the white parachute silk provided by Sandra on the floor, slapped on Copydex, then the red cross. Only when it came time for Ted to try on the rig did they realise that the red cross, the front, the two middle pieces and the back of the surcoat were now stuck together in one solid mass. They finally got it unstuck, but Ted carried an interesting Copydex cross on his back throughout the weekend, and a close observer could see that it exactly matched the red cross on the front.

Pete Taylor and Ted dressed up and went at it, hammer and bash, on the lawn outside the clubhouse. Decent promenaders of Cheltenham Spa paused to watch. No one thought of taking a silver collection. We were all too busy dodging the wild swinging blows. We had always assumed the axes would be too heavy to use. Ted had once bashed me in armour; but lightly. Now he hit Pete and his sword shattered. He immediately drew another and charged on. The armoured giants battled and swayed across the green, tangling in bushes, smashing weapons, hitting and being hit. It was *magnifique*. This was the stuff of fantasy, straight from the pages of *Unknown*.



Ken dresses Bob for combat, while Ted confers with Merlin (Mike Moorecock). Photo from Keith Freeman

Certainly, the blows were solid enough, as witness the too-heavy axe we had brought merely for show, which had one blade smashed off. The armour stood up wonderfully, except that a hole was punctured in the blue helmet just on the cheekbone. When a number of weapons had been smashed and the fighters were wet and breathless, we retreated indoors. Somebody had thrust Bob Richardson's beautifully made wooden axe into one of the fighter's hands and this, too, had been broken. There were very few weapons left.

Then Bob returned, and nothing would satisfy him and Ted but that they should have a bash. If he had needed to rely on Cheltenham's own armour he would have been murdered; as it was we lent Bob the big blue helmet and lorice, and the titanic battle began again. Bob had his own beautifully-chased metal shield, but this was a trifle on the small side and an early axe blow dented in the edge and numbed Bob's arm so that he couldn't grip the shield for some time. We lent him our metal shield (with 'LC' and cross on it), while Ted was still using his hardboard shield. Bushes were trampled, spectators were scattered, plumes severed, and the combatants were now really putting some beef into their blows. Ted, being tall, took most of them on his shield; Bob got most on his helmet and breast. Ted's shield eventually split right down to his arm and he suffered badly grazed knuckles.

Have you ever seen that trick in fencing where one swordsman disarms his opponent? Well, in the first flurry of crossed swords (after the axes had been completely smashed) Bob's sword rose sweetly into the air, turned over and over, and he stood there, disarmed. It was very neat – but Ted didn't know it had happened! Vision tended to be a little restricted in the casques.

Robert E. Howard's Conan must have looked on approvingly as the blades flashed and glittered in the sun; with what emotions the citizens of Cheltenham looked on I'm not so sure. Then Ted thrust with his sword – the point struck past Bob's shield, on to the lorice, glissaded off and went smartly into his biceps. Ted was restrained and Bob stood there; slowly he buckled at the knees, the great casque bent and for all the world he looked like the Stricken Knight. But he recovered, and only when all weapons had finally been wrecked was the day of battle over.



The Mighty Tubb swings his battle-axe to destroy Bob Richardson's metal shield in the second battle of the Joust. Photo: from Keith Freeman

BOB: Unfortunately I had to leave because that weekend we were entertaining my in-laws and I am nothing if not diplomatic! But I returned in the evening and was informed by all and sundry that I should have been there as I had missed all the jousting. On looking at the litter of broken weapons around the clubroom I must have missed quite a bit.

Ted then took me away to show me the magnificent double set of jousting armour he had brought and, with a few words here and there, before I knew it I was being dressed in it by Ken Bulmer. Ted and I went out on the lawn and set to. Well, I must admit that Ted wields a very nifty and heavy weapon and after a while I'm afraid I had to retire with a slightly damaged left arm. We still have the evidence in the clubroom to show how strong Ted's blow was, because I used a steel shield – not a made-up one – an actual steel shield and Ted used a wooden battle axe, and the shield is dented on the edge. We are going to keep that as a memento. Anyway, the arm was rather painful at the time, but I had an administering angel who massaged it for me, bless her, and round about 11 p.m. I thought that as I had come along on the bike I had better return home before the arm got too stiff to use – not being experienced enough to ride with one hand up hills. That was the end of the evening for me and unfortunately I missed quite a lot of what was going on, quaffing of liquor, high jinks and dancing.

GEORGE: During the evening we had several not-so-mock battles in the armour manufactured by Ted and Ken Bulmer. Pete Taylor, the villain-de-luxe of a historical melodrama, with heavy black grease eyelashes and moustache, first had a set-to with Ted. The fight ended in a draw, however, the only casualties being almost the sum total of the wooden swords used. Bob Richardson then returned, and as Champion of Cheltenham, met Ted's challenge. So, a second fight. This one too was a draw, and again I think no blood was let, though both suffered bruises. Gradually, as the evening progressed, and the Cheltenham punch disappeared, both LO and the CSFC emerged from their costumes. The hooded figure of Death turned out to be Keith Freeman; the Arab (Peter Lorre, right down to the sinister smile) was Frank Herbert; the fearsome Black Knight was Bill Gray, one of their newest members.

KEN: The clubroom had to close at midnight, and the landlord and landlady arrived just before. Eric turned on the charm, and pretty soon they were inviting us all up to their house above. The clubroom was closed up by a volunteer group before we left, then we ascended, too. This was where Doc Weir began telling Ivor and George about Meropsis and I bent an ear to listen but was past it. All I wanted was bed. We staggered back to the hotel, then congregated in room 22 for a poker session which I did not join but kibitzed. Drink flowed, the noise was restrained, and banter passed back and forth. Peter West had ideas that varied from those of Ted on how you play poker. Barry Bayley said he'd not played before then went on to win. Ah, well.

I walked into Ted's room that morning to see a grey-faced corpse lying there groaning, and we were all worried about Bob. So Jim, Ted, Pamela and I rode out to Bishop's Cleeve in Ted's car, and after cruising about we discovered Bob living in a charming modern house. The keys of the clubroom had been entrusted to me, so persuading Bob's wife that we desperately needed him in the afternoon we left, returning to organise grub. Mike and Tikki went out foraging, returning in triumph with baked beans, spuds and bread. In the meantime Eric and Margaret turned up with more provisions. Another gargantuan meal was cooked up and the bods rolled in. Sharp on 3.15 the coach turned up, and we went off on a mystery tour.

GEORGE: Earlier, Pete Taylor had been trying to dig information about our destination from Les Childs, "I'll give you a clue," said Les. Pete waited. "A village within a village within a village." "*Bourton-on-the-water*," said Pete, promptly. During a period of his life which seems to come to most of us (and to me in a few months' time), Pete had been stationed in that area with the RAF. So of course he knew. Les was most unhappy that the secret was revealed so easily.

Bourton, when we arrived, we found to be one of those lovely English villages we Londoners, who think of the countryside as being Battersea Park on a Bank Holiday, almost never get to see. Set in the heart of the Cotswolds, it is quiet, peaceful, and has a small stream flowing through the centre. It even managed to retain its beauty with all the Whitsun hordes trampling over it. There were two main attractions; the Model Village, which most of us never saw because of the queue, and the Witchcraft exhibition. We all went in to see this, and it was a most fascinating show, though many of the exhibits were not at all exotic. I noticed certain femmes taking copious notes... apparently witchcraft is still going strong these days.

KEN: The day was brilliant with sunshine although in London I hear it was dull and cold. The Witches' Exhibition was filled with gruesome relics of men's ignorance and folly and we spent some time afterwards discussing the pros and cons of witchcraft. The torture exhibits made one ashamed to be a member of Homo Saps. One display of the Tenet mob with a wax model of a nubile girl spread-eagled with only a strip of scarlet cloth for covering drew a certain amount of technical interest. Apparently the young lady's abdomen was used as an altar in some form of fertility rite. We began a serious discussion about adapting some of this for future LC gatherings.*

A stop was made at The Frog Mill Inn where a group photo was taken, but we had to rush back to enable Doc Weir to return to his school. The evening festivities then began. There was some grub left after this the final feast – throughout the weekend there had been ample food and liquor for all, fortified by the CSFC punch – and this was now auctioned off by Ted. It was nothing less than superb. Truly a fine fannish performance.

Then I poured a libation to the gods and followed Ted's example (in catching everyone with a full glass and ordering a toast to the CSFC) by calling for a toast to all of fandom. I then called on Sandra to present a small offering to the CSFC in token of our appreciation. Added to the bottle fund and the auction proceeds, we felt we'd seen the CSFC right for their outlay and their good fellowship.

The spirit of amity was remarkable throughout, and the whole affair was like an enormous room party, with food and drink laid on, where you could buttonhole an individual and have a good ear-belting session and yet know you were one with the larger group. It was as good an example of a Gestalt as I've seen and it showed up particularly well in the last evening and during the auction. This was the true stuff of which fandom is made.

IVOR: Back at the clubroom we resumed the normal fannish round of talking, drinking and occasionally eating. This time after leaving the



Tea-time at Bourton; George Locke on chair, Barry Bayley, Mike Moorcock, Pam Bulmer, Bill Gray, Ted Tubb, Sandra Hall, Audrey Eversfield, Bob Richardson. Photo from Keith Freeman.

* Could this have been the genesis of the 'Virgin Sacrifice' in the Hum-&-Sway that Ted, Ken and Mike conducted at RePetercon in 1964?

clubroom we all went up to Bill Gray's flat. I walked down with Sandy Sandfield, who was playing his guitar. The party at Bill's place was a real swinging affair. Ted Tubb was again in top form until he decided to join in the game of poker dice that was going on in the corner. I was simultaneously trying to talk to Margaret Jones about fandom and Sandy about jazz and at the same time swap insults with Ella Parker. This herculean feat so exhausted me that when the party broke up and we moved back to the hotel I went to bed.

KEN: The mob then went off at Bill Gray's kind invitation to carry on at his place, while Audrey, Pamela, Eric and I stayed to set the place to rights. Cleaning and sweeping and getting the chairs ready for the next meeting gave me some idea of what a real club room for the LC would be like, and this idea had got over to the rest of the LC safari. I haven't said a great deal on the CSFC clubroom here; they have a wall for signatures, similar to the one we started at Tresco in 1955; but this one is giant-sized, with running cartoon fights and comments over the wall, which Bob paints in afterwards.

At Bill Gray's flat we lay about drinking and talking and then walked back to the hotel in dribs and drabs. We had to pry Ted away from a rifle shop's window; smashing display, but a little out of chronological order.

Back in room 22 began the last and greatest session. Poker languished and died, the drink was still flowing. What to do? Directly below the room (that of Mike Moorcock & Pete Taylor) was the room of Sandra and Bobbie. Although Pamela was Morgan le Fay, the two damsels below were witchlike enough for the lads, at that hour of the morning to try a few experiments consisting of a rope of sheets and so on, dangling a bunch of keys to tap-tap-tap at their window. This they did, with a row of bottoms upended over the windowsill and much bad language as various happy fen nearly fell out. Nothing resulted. This annoyed the lads. From later knowledge we know that the girls had firmly decided not to react; but in fact they did. When there was a procession down the stairs to their door, howling, Bobbie was standing behind the door with sword and shield at the ready.

Ted suggested that we scratch on the door to scare them, but that we'd better knock first so that they'd know what was going on. So, very quietly, we were saying; 'let's scratch on the door' and hammered away to let them know we were scratching. Pete Taylor, with orders to creep in and grasp Bobbie's foot in bed, caught a single glimpse of an upraised sword silhouetted against the window – dawn was yawning – and incontinently, we all fled upstairs.



The night porter was in his room, well stewed, and the succession of forays up and down the stairs didn't seem to bother him. Then the house phone was jolted off its bracket outside the door.

Up the stairs we fled again. Creeping down once more, we heard the night porter in converse with the manager, who had been a roused by a mere four complaints, plus the flashing phone we had dislodged. I nipped back and spread the word, telling Ted that the manager was about and that I was off. I left Ted just outside his own door. Fool! I should have known the Tubb better than that! He and Barry Bayley – who was playing his recorder and sending long ululating wails echoing throughout the hotel – were now outside the girls' door. Ted was on hands and knees, howling, clawing at the door. The sounds were most edifying. Then, possessed by some strange and compelling force, Ted turned around.

The manager said, "Are you completely insane?"

Barry hung his head. Ted drew himself up to his full height and said, "Non comprenez Inglese," and turning to Barry, went through the motions that although he might not be able to speak English, he felt that this strange man wanted them to go to bed. They shambled off. As I said earlier, the manager was Eric's friend. Had the drama been allowed to continue another five seconds he might have been further edified by the sight of an Amazon bursting from her room, shrieking, and wielding a sword and shield with murderous fury.

Sandra and Bobbie weren't really on speaking terms with the men-folk that morning. Paying the bill, Ted was informed by the manager that he was disgusted by the noises in the night. Ted said we were disgusted with the service offered by the breakfast waiter, and the two ended up hearts and flowers. Well, more or less.

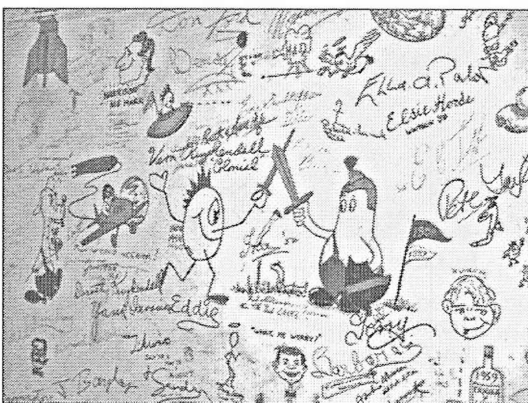
Back at the clubroom we loaded the remnants of the armour and were happy to make a presentation of the remaining shattered axes to Bob as a memento. Bob presented us with a group of model Greeks and Trojans – an allusion to the White Horse. Going back we had another puncture, right on a bend in the road where motorists were congregating for motorbike racing. Unload. It wasn't so bad this time, and as an interesting sidelight, my shield, which was silver with a red cross, was used in the middle of the road as a warning to motorists. So it came in useful, after all. When the puncture was repaired the villain was finally discovered: half a nail had become embedded in the tyre, monotonously ripping up the inner tube.

Illusion, magic, the whole was there. The magic of a wonderful Whitsun was no illusion, though, and thanks go to the CSFC and may they continue to flourish. To all of you who couldn't be there we extend our sympathy. Maybe next time?

BOB: Well, to sum it up, I would say that from the London point of view the weekend was a success, all that they had hoped it would be. From the Cheltenham viewpoint, this Con – I will call it a Con, I don't see why we shouldn't as, after all, we had



In Bill Gray's flat; Rear, Keith Freeman, Ivor Mayne, Margaret Jones, Archie Mercer. Front, Eric Jones, Lawrence Sandfield, Frank Herbert. Photo from Keith.



The Visitor's Wall in 1962 – showing clear signs of the London Circle visit! Photo by Peter Mabey.

as many people in our clubroom at one time as we had at the George Hotel, Kettering, in 1957 – was more than we had hoped for, and we are all the happier for that. The work, the money spent and the effort put in by the London Circle – well, I think somebody else should write about that as I am incapable of expressing exactly how I feel about it. But to me the important thing was that the LC entered so whole-heartedly into the spirit of the weekend. Nothing was too much trouble for them; there was nothing they wouldn't do if asked. They made this weekend a complete success and we Cheltonians are proud to have contributed to the Con. This new London Circle is going to be a force to be reckoned-with in fandom, and I think that's all to the good. We established bonds of friendship which will be maintained for a very long time, I think. We hope we will see them up here again.

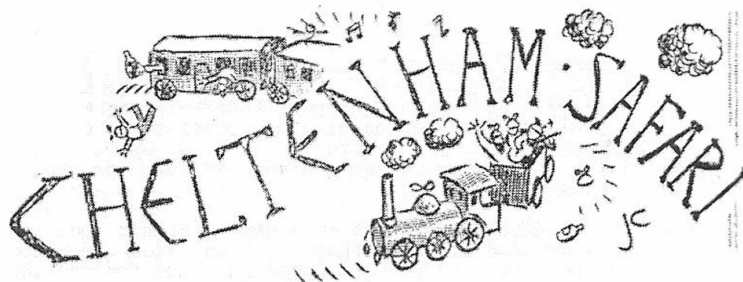
GEORGE: We saw Archie Mercer off on the coach back to the malleable iron works, feeling slightly sorry for the other passengers who were to endure his punning. Apropos Tikwiss Hall, known as Tikki:

"We will have to name this con after you," he said.

Poor girl, she asked, "Why?"

"Con-Tikki," replied Archie.

AFTERMATHS...



In London:

There was no follow-up visit; within six months the London Circle had collapsed. The Cheltenham Safari had been conceived in January 1959 as part of a general rejuvenation of the LC (with this in prospect, maybe it was one reason why so few Londoners came to the *Brumcon* at Easter?) Other projects had been planned, a *Conversazione*, or Symposium in October (which actually happened) and of course the 1960 Eastercon. But by November, as George Locke reported in *Smoke-2*: 'The London Circle is no more; the past few months have been bitter with unnecessary – in the eyes of a neutral body – feuds and recriminations.' Exactly what happened is unclear, though last issue Ken Bulmer's letter in 'The Doc Weir File' alluded to the break-up, but whatever the reason there were no further visits to Cheltenham, and Ella Parker was more-or-less left holding the baby for the 1960 convention. One result of the trip, however, was that at some time during the weekend Bobbie Wild and Bill Gray got together, and they were married six months later!

There never was a London clubroom; it was a pipe-dream, a mirage which hung around for ten years but despite efforts by Vince Clarke, Ted Tubb, Ella Parker and later by Mike Moorcock, it's hard to see how it could ever have worked in an area as vast and expensive as London.

But jousting continued in fandom; in *The Melting Pot* Bruce Burn refers to a battle at the Gloucester *LXIcon* (run, not coincidentally, by Eric Jones and pals) which will be covered in a future issue. Another joust took place in 1968 at Buxton, with the greatest tournament of all at the 1969 *Galactic Fair*, as Ted Tubb describes in a recent letter:-

"The interest in weaponry stayed until the Oxford convention where the London Circle had their own blazon on their shields, the result of Ken Bulmer's interest. The final battle was between myself and Brian Burgess of pork-pie fame. I was supposed to win but nearly had my head knocked-off. No harm done, but another combatant got carried away, swung up his sword and knocked-off his opponent's helmet – then slashed down and cut his scalp. Blood was everywhere, the police came in having been told the injuries had been caused by thug drug-takers. But innocence was established, the injured treated, and that was the last time gladiatorial combats were a programme item."

In Cheltenham:

Doc Weir died just before *LXIcon*, and in April 1963 Bob Richardson suddenly passed away, aged just 42. He was an authority on traditional armour, had been a naval officer during World War II, serving as a frogman and commando, and was holder of the "Dangerous" Certificate for in-fighting and close combat, being in addition a judo expert. (*Skyrack* 52)

Peter Mabey and other fans moved out of the area and by December 1963 the CSFC had to vacate its premises and the BSFA Library was dispersed, a tragedy after so much had been achieved and so many good times experienced at this fannish Mecca. Eric Jones commented that "the Club's weekly income is only just over six shillings, with a weekly expenditure of over £1. The club rooms will have to go but this does not mean that the Club will fold, only that we will have to revert to meetings in local pubs". However he did wonder at the reaction of the new owners to the decor of the basement! (*Skyrack* 54)

An Alternative Reaction....

"I was interested in the Cheltenham reports but in a rather depressed way. As a card-carrying introvert, I'm rather glad I wasn't there. As far as I'm concerned all this Fancy Dress and Armour stuff is all right for a laugh as a 20-minute convention turn, but for me it's not part of the fannish way of life. These long drawn-out and half-serious rituals and initiation ceremonies remind me too overpoweringly of the Masons or the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos, and I'd rather have seen the fortnight's work those Londoners spent pottering around with pegboard devoted to cutting stencils. Though indeed, that penny on Ken's shield was a lovely idea... however, as I say, this is just my personal preference and if other fans really like this sort of thing, well, good luck to them, armour is just not my cup a pie." – Walt Willis, LoC in *Smoke-2*, November 1959

Before John Brunner was a writer, he was a fan. Just seventeen when he attended his first convention, in London in 1952, he loved it and became a regular con-goer, joined OMPA, enjoyed fandom. But he was always difficult to get to know, and pretty soon everyone had an opinion about John Brunner. Love him or loathe him – there seemed to be no middle ground. Here for the first time is a chance to look behind the façade, to see what life was really like in the Brunner household:

Running up that hill Or, 'Life with the Brunners'

By John Hall

I'm not good on dates these days, but some time in the early seventies, I went to live under the same roof as John Brunner. It was about the time that John had finished *DRAMATURGES OF YAN* and was working on what became *THE SHEEP LOOK UP*. From circumstantial evidence I think the most likely period of my residence is spring 1971 to autumn 1973. I remember reading *DRAMATURGES* in photocopied MS, over a weekend. But that's about all I can remember about that book. I remember the beautiful house in Nassington Road, Hampstead, literally ten steps from Parliament Hill Fields and Hampstead Heath. And I remember John's study, and, best of all, I remember Marjorie. But let's try and get all this straight....

I first wrote about life with the Brunners in 1976 (that's the date on the manuscript). I think I wrote it up for Roy Kettle. That MS (I am quite ashamed of it now – it was a very sloppy effort) entitled *UP ON THE HILL* never saw the light of day. I don't know why Kettle didn't publish it, assuming it was him who commissioned it, but at some later date it fell into the hands of the Gannets, and Ian Maule (I think) wrote at some point intimating that no one dared publish it because it implied that Marjorie was an alcoholic and they feared the might of John's lawyers.

Actually it did no such thing. I have a lot to say about Marjorie as it was her, not John, who was the main reason I went to live in that house. But I would never say she was an alcoholic, any more than I would say she was a drug addict or a nymphomaniac. She liked booze, she smoked dope, and she loved sex. In my book, these were not, and are not, bad things. But I digress.

UP ON THE HILL was in Harry Bell's hands by 1985. He and Kev Smith intended to publish it. Harry, with his usual courtesy, wrote and asked if I would re-read it and make any alterations I thought fit. I made a couple of tiny changes and wrote a sort of introduction, in which I said:-

"Harry expresses some slight anxiety about the reaction of the Dramatis Personae who are still interested enough to read it. All I can say is that there is no malice in it. At no time have I ever suggested that anyone appearing was adulterous, alcoholic, sexually perverted or egotistical beyond the common run."



John Hall at OMPAcon, 1973.
Photo from Greg Pickersgill

In fact Harry and Kev didn't publish it, not because it was too hot to handle, but due to the vagaries of fanzine publishing generally. The ish never appeared. Soon after this, Marjorie had a stroke and died. By 1995 John too was dead.

In 2005, it was suggested to me that I write a 'full' memoir of those days. *UP ON THE HILL* was basically a collection of anecdotes strung together on the framework of one of John and Marjorie's Friday Night soirées. What was suggested was that I tell the true story of my involvement with Marjorie, and the nature of John and Marjorie's marriage. In other words, write up the sex. I did feel that it might, in these increasingly repressive and authoritarian times be worth writing about a time of freedom and licence. But I too now had some version of Cold Feet, and worried about the other characters still alive, specifically Marjorie's son Christian, Luise White, now Professor of African Studies at the University of Florida, and the folk music legend Tom Paley, still alive and living either in the U.K. or Sweden. Even Marilyn, since if I am unkind about anyone in *UP ON THE HILL* then it is her I really am unkind about, deserved some consideration I felt. (She is now the wife of a banker in the City.) So what I proposed was a novel – the names changed to protect whoever and only those in the know aware that it wasn't fiction at all. For many months I beavered away on a synopsis and a couple of sample chapters, and sent them to the person in the publishing industry who had made the proposal to me. Suffice it to say, that this did not meet with a favourable response.

So this memoir is an attempt put the whole matter to bed. What follows are rewritten excerpts from *UP ON THE HILL* and the sample chapters of the projected novel, which would have been entitled *PLANET TANZA*. But first, let me explain how I came to move to Nassington Road. It was Marjorie's idea. John introduced me to Marjorie at The Globe one night. I didn't, at that stage, know John that well and like a lot of people I suppose, found him initially a bit too mannered. I may be inventing here, but I suspect that I only ever went up and talked to him because Roy Kettle dared me to. Plus, the only book of his that I had actually read at that stage was *INTO THE SLAVE NEBULA*, which I had enjoyed. He was, as I recall, a bit dismissive of it, explaining that it was a rewrite of an earlier story.

He had a tendency to explain things like this with a touch of condescension, but I came to realise that actually, he didn't mean it. John had been brought up in a very Edwardian sort of home and sent to Public School. (Cheltenham where Lindsay Anderson, whom John knew later on, would film *IF...*) His manner was often at odds with the shy and sensitive person underneath. But then again, he could be monumentally insensitive in his treatment of other people, and the old "never complain, never explain" ethos that I believe was embedded deep in him, meant that he could carry on after dishing out such hurts as if nothing untoward had ever occurred. I found this very difficult personally, and it meant that while he and I could go along for many weeks perfectly amicably, he would say or do something that upset me, and then I would avoid him for equally many weeks.

Marjorie didn't always accompany John to The Globe, but she did that night. She was older than John and that meant she was a lot older than me. The whole issue of Marjorie's age was a sensitive one – she didn't actually lie about it, as far as I know, but she discouraged enquiries. However, it's my belief she was older than the official accounts may suggest. She told me that she was from a reasonably wealthy family that had branches and friends all over Europe before WW2. Against her parents' wishes, she married her first husband at quite a young age in Germany. When war came, they went to Switzerland, where Christian was born, and where the marriage fell apart. This was the early 1940's. She survived, isolated in Switzerland with a child until the war ended. During this period she earned some sort of living as a cook and learnt the excellent culinary skills that stood her in good stead for the rest of her life. By her account, she had very little money, since her parents had cut off her allowance when she married and she had no support from her husband and no access to the rest of her family.



John Brunner & Marjorie Keller at *Loncon I*, September 1957. Photo; from Norman Shorrock.

John and Marjorie appear to have met at some time in mid-1956. He attended the second Kettering convention that Easter by himself, but missed the following year, reporting that he and Marjorie were holidaying in Paris instead. They were married in the summer of 1958. At the time this picture was taken, John was just 23, Marjorie was 35.

Indeed, at the end of the war, only the English branch of the family was still intact and it was by then relatively impoverished. They did, however, pay for Christian's education when she somehow made it back here. She never made much reference to her family, and I never met any relative, apart from Christian. She implied that many members of the family had disappeared into concentration camps, and sometime in the 1950's she visited Israel. But on the other hand, I heard her make some fairly unpleasant anti-Semitic remarks about some people she had come into contact with in the publishing industry.

Marjorie and John met through CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and, as is well known, John wrote quite a famous anti-bomb protest song. In fact John wrote a number of songs, and could play the guitar reasonably – better than I could, certainly. Though CND advocated unilateral disarmament, which I personally always believed to be pie-in-the-sky even when I was more liberal in my political leanings than I am now, John was more pragmatic about the issue, or had become so by the 1970's. He told me once that he didn't believe that unilateral disarmament would ever come about, but that if there was no pressure for it, no disarmament of any sort would come about. Marjorie knew, and was very much inspired by, Dora Black who with her sometime husband Bertrand Russell, Michael Foot (another Hampstead resident) and Canon Collins founded CND.

Marjorie's political opinions, however, tended to change like the wind; at one moment all for Revolution and a workers state, and the next thundering about the need for hanging and flogging and a belief in proper social hierarchy. She was however constant in her feminist ideals (though she disliked the term 'feminism', since she believed that it implied that there might be a 'masculinism', whereas she believed that equality for women ought to mean that we were not divided by gender) and was passionate about women's freedom in relationships, the workplace and so on. She was never backward in being forward when it came to sex; if she fancied someone she told them so, and she was a creative, if dominating, lover.

Marjorie and John were a pretty formidable team. John had a work ethic (most unfashionable at the time) which I believe, in combination with his imagination, was the quality that underlay his success as a writer. Marjorie did everything that needed doing in order to get John behind the typewriter – she cooked, cleaned, did the books, rang people up, drove him around, socialised and organised, and pretty much managed him. The two of them were up early and went to bed late most days.

John was pretty good to fandom and fans, as I am sure many will agree. Marjorie more or less tolerated fans; she was aware they were his public and that to the extent that they bought John's books, they paid the bills. But to her, fans were a species of necessary evil. That was why she didn't always come to the Globe. But that night, as I have said, she did and while I started out talking to John, I ended up mostly talking to her.

So it was that, one night soon after that initial meeting at The Globe, Marjorie arrived at my bed-sit (it was the one in South Kensington adjoining Roy Kettle's) and made it very plain we were going to have sex. So we did. It was, indeed, amazing just how much and how varied the sex we managed was in the very confined space and single bed of that bed-sit. Soon after that she read a really rubbish short story I had written and on the strength of that suggested that if I moved into their house she and I could have a good time while I

advanced my writing career. I may have been young and very green, but I was not any sort of brassicca either. I didn't want any bother with an angry John Brunner, and wasn't about to give up even the cramped quarters I had just to have my sexual horizons broadened a bit before he threw me out again.

But Marjorie disabused me of this notion. She and John had an open marriage. They slept with other partners while remaining committed to each other. The actual nature of this relationship was a bit opaque to me then and remains so after all these years. When I moved in John was sleeping with Della, a lovely African nurse he had met. Marjorie had been sleeping with Tom Paley who is and was a big name in folk and traditional music circles, had met Dylan, Ochs, Fahey, Hillman and who knows who else, and was a revered figure in obscure music fanzines. He appeared to be in some sort of involuntary exile from the United States – that might have been politics or just that he owed a lot of people money. In those days he was a bit fat, a bit lonely and a bit boring, and treated even his devoted fans with thinly disguised contempt. He was still living under the same roof but was no longer favoured – I think Marjorie might have tired him out.

Anyhow, while the open marriage might well mean I could sleep with John's wife with impunity, in all honesty and much as I appreciated and enjoyed my time there, I never felt entirely comfortable living in the same house as John. I think now that John and Marjorie were actually in some sort of competition. It may have been about who could make the other the most jealous, but I do not offer that as a definitive answer. For instance, one Sunday morning not long after I had moved in I awoke to find Marjorie already up. She wasn't in evidence, but I could hear kitchen noises coming distantly from below; a pan being banged on the Aga, the sound of someone rooting in the cutlery drawer. I rose and put on a robe hanging on the back of the door. I went downstairs. As I passed the drawing room door, I heard muffled voices.

"Doctor Sausage had to put in a full shift last night."

"Mmm. He did, didn't he? Isn't the poor fellow tired?"

"He certainly bears the marks of hard labour. But it would appear he is not tired."

"He is indefatigable!" Della was laughing. Something made me pause before I stuck my head round the door. I was sure I would find John and Della wrapped around each other. "But the nursing staff generally gets breakfast before going on the ward."

"This hospital has poor industrial relations. In particular, the cook is on a go slow." There was a chuckle in John's voice.

"The management should take more care of the workforce. It does not do to displease the cook."

"I haven't displeased her – as far as I know"

"Some person certainly has"

I walked on and descended to the kitchen. There I found Tom looking hung-over and grim over a big mug of black coffee. Marjorie was poking at a sizzling pan with a slice. She gripped a smouldering Rothmans between grimacing white teeth. She saw me standing in the door.

"Get your own, would you?"



JB with Jerri Couzyn, at *Sci-con*, 1970. Photo by Bill Burns.

John Hall notes:
"I remember Jerri. She was Della's predecessor, I think. Or one of

"Hi John" muttered Tom "It's another beautiful sunny Sunday morning, as you can see."

"I only want cereal" I said, walking towards the Welsh dresser. "Can I get you some?"

"I bought the fucking cereal" said Marjorie, in a menacing voice.

"Oh. Sorry." I halted in confusion. Marjorie threw the slice onto the top of the Aga, tapped her fag ash onto the floor, then tripped over to me and threw her arms around me.

"You, lover, can have anything you want. Including cereal." She stepped back again. "That sponging Yankee disappointment has to get his own."

"Marjorie, my back hurts. I can't walk to the shop."

"Translation: I have a hangover from drinking an entire bottle of Southern Comfort which I purchased with my last remaining funds, and now I am hungry." Marjorie took an expansive draw on the fag, and blew smoke out of her nose at Tom. It was a message Tom certainly read loud and clear.

"I can't go right now"

"So for how much longer must I put up with your smelly feet under my table?"

There was no answer from Tom. The pan started to smoke. "The fucking bacon!!!!!" exclaimed Marjorie. I crept to the dresser and retrieved the cornflake packet, then looked surreptitiously around for a bowl. I feared the rage now directed at Tom. I dreaded turning into Tom!

Marjorie banged three plates on the table, and dished out bacon and greasy runny eggs. "John, my darling. Would you be terribly kind, and take those upstairs?"

"Uh huh." I left the corn flakes and bowl, and quickly picked up the plates of fried breakfast, balancing the third one on my forearm. Marjorie's voice rose to a piercing shriek "GET OUT OF MY KITCHEN!" I involuntarily quickened my pace, but it was Tom whose lumbering form found unsuspected reserves of energy and propelled himself

past me, almost knocking the precariously balanced third breakfast onto the stairs.

Halfway up, I met John coming down. "Is there a problem?" he enquired as he stood aside. "Um, I think she's..." but he was not really wanting an answer. Reaching the drawing room, I laid the plates on the oval glass coffee table. Della leaned forward from the sofa, her blue Chinese silk robe, all she was wearing, fell open a little way. I only glimpsed the large breast, the blue-black of her skin a shade darker than the robe but Della noticed my quick glance, and looked haughtily displeased. "Why have you brought three breakfasts?"

"Don't know." I was tempted to enquire if Doctor Sausage might need the one breakfast apparently surplus to requirements. "Isn't Marjorie joining you?"

"Oh! Is she?" Della had not thought of that. I turned to go, but John and Marjorie came through the door before I could exit, one after the other. Marjorie caught me and flamboyantly threw her arms around me again. "John, my lovely, divine, delicious. What are you having?" She paused, then added archly, "for breakfast, that is"

"Oh I'll just get some corn flakes." She let me go.

"Don't be long. We so like having breakfast all together, afterwards."

'Afterwards' made it, I thought as I went back downstairs again, a bit like some sort of sport. As if the game was over, and now we go back to the way we were. But that wouldn't happen, would it? I had probably had sex with Marjorie less than half a dozen times by then, and John had been screwing Della for a quite a while, I thought. What was the relationship then? Would they swap back again? Would we all swap around? Somehow I doubted it. Not that I wouldn't have minded fucking Della, but I was middle class, skinny and white, she was unclassifiable and black. I knew it would never happen; whatever I had to give Della, it was not what she wanted.

I came back with my cereal. Della and Marjorie were busy eating, John had already finished, leaving more than half on his plate, and was now holding forth on the themes he wanted to embrace in *The Book*.

"STAND ON ZANZIBAR left very little room for optimism. I don't know if this new book should be lighter in tone." Both women carried on eating; Marjorie shrugged. I did have a thought on that, but if I had been wiser I would have judged it better not to offer it. Benevolent Aliens.....!

No sooner had the thought crossed my mind than it was out of my mouth, only just relieved of the last spoonful of corn flakes. John, who had not really been discussing, merely impromptu lecturing, now stopped, and looked as if an unknown someone in the garden had shouted up at the window. Both women stopped eating mid-mouthful, and looked first at John, and then at me, waiting for the return shot. It did not come. My two stupid words hung like very improper laundry, swinging in the breeze. The silence stretched out – my spoon crashed into the surface of the milk and corn flakes, a dead ship only partially destroyed by re-entry, smashing into the ocean. John resumed his lecture, as if nothing had happened.

In my darker moments I was convinced that I was there to be humiliated. I was being humiliated by fucking the wife of the great writer and he not caring at all. Indeed I felt John was laughing at my efforts to satisfy the perverted alien sex

goddess he lived with. I was being humiliated by being treated as a naive unpublished (and probably unpublishable) neophyte. I presumed too much in offering plot advice to the master. I solemnly munched my remaining cereal absorbed in my pitiful self.

Somehow the women had got an opening and were now engaging John in a conversation about James Blish's *CITIES IN FLIGHT*. "No," John was saying, "I don't think that was Jim's intention at all. It's an adventure story, not a model for survival." Della and John were off on a discussion of the difference between a city and an ark-ship. Marjorie cleared the plates and winked at me "See you downstairs."

I followed her down the stairs into the kitchen. "You mustn't let John upset you, you know. He likes you really. Though I think interjections of 'Benevolent Aliens!' when he is thinking out loud might perhaps be ever so slightly injudicious. What were you on about?"

"Oh, it was just an idea I had."

"I had an idea too." Marjorie then outlined a startlingly lewd scenario involving herself, Della and me which that early on a Sunday morning I found a bit too advanced. "Fucking Hell, Marjorie! I think you think about sex more often than I do." Marjorie threw her head back and laughed at the top of her voice – she might have been heard half way over Hampstead Heath. "Why shouldn't I think about sex more than you?" She lodged her arms around my neck and shoulders. "Anyway, I don't think Della's that adventurous."

"I thought they were just going at it straight. They were a lot of pathetic jokes about a "Doctor Sausage" when you were cooking breakfast."

Marjorie's smile faded and darkened. "Shit! The slimy bastard. That was a private joke we had just before we were married."

"No copyright on erotic imaginings, I'm afraid," I said sententiously, shaking my head.

"Fuck off and do some work," said Marjorie, turning her back on me.

Work meant writing. I was bashing out a grim tale of space, as I had been for a long by this point. (This was the concept 'The Mile Long Spaceship on the Moon', the mere mention of which in Rat fandom would cause people to fall about helpless with mirth). When you only write in your spare time, writing takes a long time anyway. It takes even longer when your spare time has so much else to occupy it, like music, boozing, sex and, lets not forget, reading SF. Plus Chris Priest got me a pop music reviews column with Dicky Howett's doomed local newspaper in Essex which also needed a few hours out of my 'spare time' each week. Using that as a lever I got another similar column in a local paper in Hertfordshire, and got albums to do freelance reviews, which occasionally got published in the *British Cream* and *Let It Rock*. I am sure I should have said "Thanks!" to Chris (and in case I didn't: "Thanks Chris!") but writing columns on Top 40 singles depressed me. I got a lot of rubbish records each week in the post and as a general rule less than half a dozen were worth the plastic they were pressed on. However, whenever I attempted any cogent criticism, Dicky Howett either censored it or toned it down. This did me a favour I didn't want. Smiles, praise and more junk records from every record label press office in town, invites to press receptions, free drinks. I was the guy who almost never said a cross word about any company's product. On weekdays

John would complain that various folk from record companies were ringing him up (and thereby interrupting *The Work*) wanting me. I was actually out doing the day job – evicting mortgage defaulters – did they but know it. And a lot of nights I was being part of the social milieu, often at the regular ‘open house’ nights.

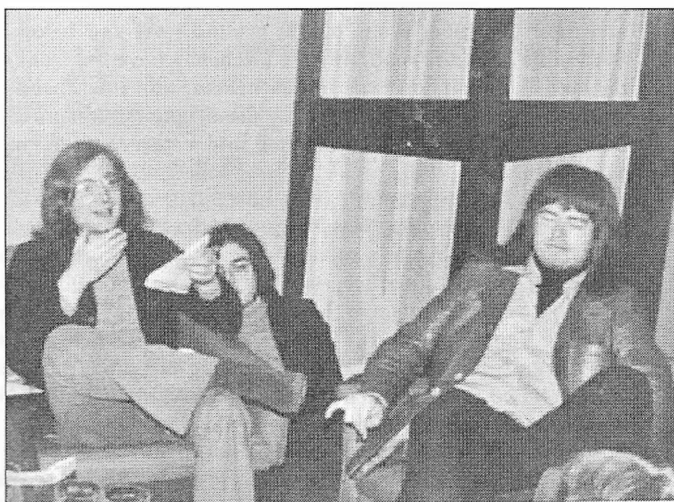
I would come home from the City after a hard days’ work listing absent payments on accounts and writing threatening letters, and doze in my armchair (instead of immediately hammering out more descriptions of people trapped in compartments in a huge unfinished space ship, with their air running out) listening to John and Marjorie argue the toss in the kitchen. Drink: we haven’t got enough of this nor enough of that. Marjorie would be down there clad in old red slacks and big shapeless CND jumper, marching up and down the kitchen floor, a glass of sherry in her hand, gesticulating, giving orders disguised as preferences, John wearied from whacking his IBM golf ball all day long, is worried and woolly headed and getting steadily more exasperated, but acquiesces. He still wants to do umpteen pages by seven o’clock and he might make it if he gets off now. “John, can you get me twenty Rothmans?”

“Surely!” He whistles the younger of the two dogs, and they rush out of the house for a few minutes freedom.

I am aware of all this but still dozing, without even a ritual curse upon Chris Priest passing my lips, slipping away into full sleep. Once, Roy Kettle and a few others had slept in my room in that house, on the floor mostly. So had Luise White, who had designs on King Rat and on that particular night had launched an expeditionary attack.

“The mating of elephants” John Brosnan, who had lain secretly awake throughout, called it. “Christ, the earth moved!” I had slept like a log, though some maintained I had sat up at a crucial point in the proceedings, uttered the word “Fuck!” and fallen back into the bed and even deeper sleep. The trouble with those Rat boys was you never knew what to believe and what not. At least with the Brunner’s one knew arse from tit, so to speak. (Mostly, it was arse.)

But I make an effort not to drift off completely, and rouse myself, run a bath and transform my person. I become the well dressed seventies hippy: green stars and stripes jeans and green appliquéd T-shirt. Decadent youth. Even smooth Chris Priest in his brushed denim jacket and shoulder bag thinks I look more decadent every time he sees me.



Those Rat boys; King Rat and John Brosnan, with John Hall lurking in the corner at *OMPACON*, 1973. Photo from John.



Chris Priest with Marjorie & John at *Heicon*, 1970. Photo from Chris

These Open House nights attracted a few regulars such as Ted, a fifty-ish lonely intellectual lecturer in something or other, who drank too much, laughed too loud and bored everyone to tears. Gerry Webb and Ann Keylock came quite often. Then there was Michael and Valerie: he a teacher, folk musician and CND veteran, apt to be patronising, and she an editor for an educational magazine and a woman who long ago gave up trying to do anything with her appearance. They were the sort of couple who cooed “darling” and “ducks” at each other every five seconds, while he openly flirted with every female who came near and she looked more and more depressed and very often went home early with a headache.

But sometimes Jimmy Ballard would come by, or James and Judy Blish. Tom Disch came once or twice, I think, Fred Pohl when he was in London once, Brian Aldiss – and when they did John and Chris would monopolise them in a corner, which irritated me somewhat, but no one, of course, asked or cared what I thought. Indeed lots of people came whom I no longer remember, charlatans, neurotic women, would-be poets, a lesbian couple (a rarity in those days) a big Nigerian printer that Marjorie fantasised about, and Marjorie’s son Christian, a very gay hairdresser. Another regular was Marilyn, who was a lithe but large-chested girl, a single mother to Annabelle. Marilyn was very attractive, but a bit scatter-brained, and spoke with an unfortunate lisp.

It was probably her I was looking at, or at least her chest, when Chris Priest sidled up. “Heard the new album?” I had to think which album he might be talking about, but I didn’t have to think for very long: “*Status Quo*?”

“Yes!” he exclaimed with an idiot grin. This was the subject he was most likely to be talking about, if he wasn’t talking about his novel or his iniquitous publishers who kept him in penury. “They play – they are utterly lost in the music!” He cross chops his hands deftly without spilling his wine. “One feels that nothing would stop them – not even a power failure!” He would then draw himself up to his full height, turn sideways and face the room rather than me, appearing to stand on his heels. “Rossi was talking once.....” I had no idea, without asking him directly, whether he was talking about an actual conversation he had had with Francis Rossi or whether he was just recounting an interview he had read. “..... blindly about on stage as ever, collided in front of the kit. Parfitt collapsed backwards across the drums and Rossi fell off the stage, nine feet down into the audience.”

I knew how difficult it is to articulate the ecstasy of Rock'n'Roll and while *Status Quo* might be seen as rather outmoded dinosaurs now, then they were as good as any band to experience that ecstasy with. "Yeah," I found myself saying, "they are good. But they are a bit predictable. Will they ever do anything different? Now the latest *J Giels Band* album....."

I might as well have been murmuring at the wind. The great young hope of British Science Fiction had lost interest, his mind elsewhere. Finally, he says "I must have a word with Jimmy before I go," indicating James Blish who was deep in conversation with John. Chris disappears. I move on and sit on the floor with Marilyn and Christian. They are talking about hair, while munching on nuts and savoury bits from the table. Marilyn waves a hank of her long dark hair with its touch of auburn continually under Christian's nose, inviting his inspection.

"I don't think you can frizz it very easily," he says, guardedly.

"Oh well, I thorth I could geth this lovely black cath I know to frith it a bit, and then I could get some gwoovy avi... er, aviat.. you know - specs!" It was apparent to me, and I knew nothing about hair, that Marilyn's 'Lady of Shallot' look would never be converted successfully to enable her to assume an 'Angela Davis' look. I think Christian certainly knew that.

"Darling, it will never frizz, not in a million years."

"He'th ever tho good," says Marilyn, looking hurt.
"Who?"

"This black cath I wath telling you about. He used to work for Sathoonth." That was the wrong thing to say.

"Well, Jesus!" said Christian, his professional jealousy button now firmly pushed. "Those people don't know anything. Any riff-raff can get in there!"

"Well, I fanthied a gwoovy look." Marilyn looked so hurt, as if she might have burst into tears. I felt sorry, and tender towards her - anything, indeed, that might further my long-term ambition to get those tits out. I opened my big stupid mouth: "Me too. I want to look like the Jackson Five."

"You, dear" said Christian, giving me his full camp Monty,

"You look like the End of The Earth. You really do! Just look at those split ends!"

"Split ends?" I didn't even know what split ends were. I tried to have smooth (if wavy) long brown hair, and I had carefully washed it on purpose so it wouldn't look, as it very often did, greasy. It looked fine to me.

But my protestations were obviated by Marilyn who, having ceased for a moment to be the centre of attention, charged back into the spotlight by holding aloft a gnarled and bent cheeselet. "How thallic!" she announced. I and my split ends got up and wandered off.

In another room, the Brunner dope ceremony had begun. Actually, in those antediluvian times we called it 'Pot'. It was exceedingly good home-grown stuff that John and Marjorie had christened 'Hampstead Green', and for much of my sojourn in Nassington Road the plants that had furnished this valued commodity were grown at the bottom of the garden overlooking the railway embankment. But one day, while Marjorie, assisted by the dogs, was out lavishing care

and attention on some other part of the garden, she observed a number of uniformed police clambering over the railway. Generally, the only people who would see any plants at the bottom of the garden without actually going down there would be passengers on passing trains, and even if any passenger recognised them for what they were, what of it? The likelihood of a member of Her Majesty's Transport Constabulary wandering about on the railway line had never been considered.

In fact, these were local cops as became apparent when one of them cleared a path through the plants to peer into the garden. "Excuse me, Madam."

A startled and somewhat concerned Marjorie regarded the policeman through a blue cloud of exhaled Rothmans while the dogs settled back on their haunches growling and uttering sporadic woofs, wanting to be given a signal to bite the legs and arse of the intruder. The policeman sized them up and gave them a stony eye. Marjorie was in her best gardening



53 Nassington Road - a recent photograph by Jim Linwood

John Hall explains: The picture shows the place very well. But the "attic" window with the curved top, right at the top of the house, wasn't there in my day. That was the loft (where the pot plants went) and presumably that's been converted since the place was divided into flats. My room was the window underneath that new one, the master bedroom was underneath me, the front room is the one at ground level and below that, not visible from the road, was the kitchen. Above the front door, the first-floor window was the bathroom, and the second-floor window was a little kitchen for my use originally, but since I ate downstairs mostly, it was converted into a storeroom during my time there.

At the back on my floor was Marjorie's dress-making room and office, and Luise White's room. Below, same floor as the master bedroom, was John's office, (very large - more of a library) and another two bedrooms. On the ground floor at the back was the drawing room (where the soirées were mostly held) another very large room and down below, during my time, the kitchen was extended into a garden room, creating a kitchen diner, with patio windows giving access to the garden.

John and Marjorie bought this entire place in 1957 or 8, I think for peanuts in today's money - a couple of thousand pounds? - if that, and did it up themselves. They sold it soon after I left for what then was a massive profit to a developer, who made another massive profit. What do you think those flats go for now? £300-400K? Probably.

attire, check trousers, shapeless anorak with holes in it, and compared to the bulk of the policeman, who looked like he lived on saloon bar pies, she looked slight and vulnerable. But Marjorie's secret weapon was her voice, and she managed to say "Yes?" in her best cut glass tones, as if she was a Victorian lady-of-the-manor addressing a smelly serf.

Actually she claimed to me later that she was ready to blurt out "Yes officer, they are indeed cannabis plants. It's a fair cop. I'm guilty!" but I doubt myself if she would have done so. This was a woman who, if she had never quite had the courage to sit in the road in front of trucks coming out of Aldermaston, had nevertheless faced down officialdom in war-torn Europe, and I think she was only slightly intimidated by a fat policeman blundering about in her garden.

"A break-in has been reported three doors up, and we believe a suspect has got away by running along this railway line. Have you seen anything or anyone suspicious?" Even if Marjorie had not been engrossed in her gardening, it's unlikely she would have seen anyone on the line since her view was obscured by the very cannabis plants that the copper was standing in the middle of. So she could truthfully answer that she had not seen anything, which she did, still in her most affected drawl, and the policeman puffed back down the embankment without sparing a further glance at the garden or the plants. But Marjorie was sufficiently unnerved to start transplanting the pot to indoor containers in the attic as soon as the coast was clear.

The Brunner dope ceremony consisted of John retrieving from his safe a large old-fashioned sweet jar which contained the prepared Hampstead Green, and then with due pomp cutting it with tobacco from a packet of ready-rubbed Golden Virginia. ("Yes m'lud. Pipe tobacco.") He then divided up the whole in quarters, one of which he tamped into a ghastly common or garden pipe, by which means he smoked his entire share, leaving me or Tom to roll up the other three quarters as joints. If there were any more than four of us in the room, the only one to get well and truly stoned would be John; sharing the well-diluted and ill-smoking joints meant you wouldn't get more than the odd good hit. But no one wanted to share John's horrid gobby pipe, as he occasionally offered. I can't think why! Still, on a good night we could get stoned, rolling on the sofas in the front room, telling bad jokes and listening to John Peel on the radio. By about two in the morning, as often as not, we would become ravenous and descend to the kitchen, where, if Luise had not beaten us to it and devoured just about everything readily edible, Marjorie would cook some simple but delicious Mediterranean repast the gorgeousness of which would be beyond description, before we all went to bed, to sleep.

It was on nights like that that I got on best with John. Stoned, John dispensed with the reserve that was his habit, and talked about ideas for stories, or reminisced about his and Marjorie's days in CND, or his adventures at Cons. You couldn't get him to talk like that at all, usually. Moreover, Pot was all John would ever take. My office in the City was awash with speedy pills and stuff like amyl nitrate, which we called Snap, as you had to break open a little thing like a sherbet saucer to inhale it, and I would bring some of this back and offer it round when I had it, but John never touched it. Marjorie, who on occasion swallowed speed in what even I might regard as excessive quantities, told me that John had used Bensedrine in the past, to help him meet deadlines. The implication was that he had a bad time coming down off it. And then there was the living object lesson that was Robin Farquharson.

Robin was one of John and Marjorie's old CND buddies too, and he was a chap of blinding genius, and certified madness. He had, among other accomplishments (which were largely in the field of mathematics) pitched a book to Allen Lane of Penguin who had bought it on his description alone. It is forgotten now, and may well be out of print, but DROPPING OUT was one of those seminal titles which defined an entire state of mind, maybe even a generation's state of mind. Robin wrote it in some incredibly short period assisted by far too much speed which I assumed was a contributing factor to his current residence in a large mental hospital in Surrey. Or, at least, he was resident there when he hadn't gone on the lam from it. The first time I met him, accustomed though I was to decadent personal hygiene having been in close proximity to various Rats, I found Robin to be on a whole other level. It didn't look as if he had washed for an extended period, and it didn't smell like it either.

He had appeared one day at the front door, having somehow walked from Surrey and right through London (he had no money) and probably slept in one or two unsavoury places and eaten some rather unsavoury things along the way. He was very well-spoken and terribly polite, but coated in filth over the substantial distance between head and foot. Marjorie took one look at him and decided he had better have a bath and borrow some old clothes.

Having ushered him into the bathroom, run a bath and removed his clothing to the incinerator she went off to make dinner and get ready before another evening 'open house'. Thus, it was only two or three hours later that she remembered Robin was somewhere about. On checking the bathroom, he was not in evidence and finding the situation hilarious, she then went round the house, which was filling up with guests, roaring out "Anyone seen a six-foot naked man?" at the top of her voice. Robin was eventually discovered in John's study, speed-reading books off John's shelves at a prodigious rate, quite oblivious to his naked state.

On that night, or possibly another like it, the whole house was roused due to Robin being on the phone. There were a number of extensions, and phone technology in those days was such that if one person picked up a phone in one room, all the other phones clicked and tinkled in sympathy. So it was that John lifted a receiver half asleep and heard:

"My name is Farquharson and I am the President of Camden..... Yes, that's right... Camden has declared UDI. I am the President....."

John hopped into his bath robe and headed downstairs to remind the President that both he and the Brunner phone bill were mortal.

"Hello, operator.. I want to put a call through to the United Nations in New York." Robin demanded imperiously. John shrieked "Robin, you haven't asked me if you could dial New York!"

"Hello. New York? I want to speak to the Secretary General of the United Nations."

"... and if you had asked me I should certainly have refused."

"Bloody Americans!!" exclaimed Robin as turned to look at John at the same time as insouciantly depressing the hook and enunciating in his Battle of Britain vowels, "Hello? Hello? Who am I speaking to? Who am I? Farquharson, President of the newly independent Republic of Camden."

"What, look old chap." John was trying the reasoning approach now. "Camden isn't independent. It's a London Borough."

"What do you mean: there's no such place?"

"I didn't say there was no such place....."

"Impertinence, madam. I live here....."

"No you don't!" said John, but Robin had his fingers on the hook again.

"Operator? Get me the Washington Post. Failing that, the White House.... and the Headquarters of the European Economic Community in Brussels.... and....."

Marjorie had now appeared on the scene, and sizing the situation up at once, remembered that she still had some pills of Robin's that he had been prescribed by her doctor, but left behind when he was last reclaimed by the Surrey hospital. Something needed doing fast, as John was losing it and turning different colours as his rage and frustration heightened. How though could she persuade Robin to take a pill? Well, why not just ask?

"Robin, would you like a pill?"

"Monsieur Le President? Bonjour. Je suis la President de Camden....."

"Robin - why don't I get you a drink? And you can have a pill?"

"Herr Chancellor? Goodentaag....."

"ROBIN!!! PUT THE FUCKING PHONE DOWN!!" Such was Marjorie's volume and John's evident despair, Robin at last became aware of his surroundings and relented. The phone went down with a single Ting! and a long silence seemed to envelope the house. I was sitting on the stairs, Luise was on her way back from the kitchen, several pirated delicacies from the fridge in hand. We all stood in reverent silence as Robin took his pill. Then we all went back to bed, even the President of Camden, and in the morning, the rain was falling and the street signs still read 'London Borough of Camden' and the President was plain old Robin again, starting at any knock on the door, knowing that that big male nurse from the hospital would be here, any time now.

Actually, I cannot remember if Robin was always on the run when he visited, or was legitimately discharged. I do remember the hot summer Sunday when Marjorie decreed that we would eat dinner at a table in the garden, and how we had a perfectly lovely meal, and how in the middle of it, and also in the middle of a perfectly rational conversation John and Robin were having about agents, publishers and the usual woes of writers, Robin got up, walked down the lawn a short distance, dropped his trousers and began energetically bashing his bishop. Marjorie, like the rest of us, merely looked on not terribly surprised, but then sat back in her chair and drawled, "Robin, I know my cooking is good. But not that good!"

The taking of pills in one form or another very often precipitated drama in that house. Marilyn was a very nice girl really, but she had a few problems which prevented her from sleeping- unless she took pills. But then again, taking sleeping pills when you have a seven year old daughter may not always be wise. John and Marjorie had found this out before. Marilyn having no babysitter, they were happy for her to bring Annabelle. When her bedtime came, the little

girl could be put to bed in one of the spare rooms.

But Annabelle did not always sleep the whole night through, and if she woke up from a bad dream in a strange house, she quickly became distressed. For this reason, John made a point of asking Marilyn not to take any pills. Marilyn was not terribly good at listening, however. Moreover, on this night Marilyn had crashed in the front room, and for some reason had locked both the door into that room from the hall and the door from the back stairs. Well, there was no figuring out Marilyn sometimes.

The inevitable then occurs: "Mummy!"

It's a very scared and frightened voice on the stairs.

"Mummy, where are you?"

"I'm asleep," I said to myself, well under the duvet in the massive expanse of the bed in Brunner master bedroom.

"Mummy, it's dark!"

"I'm asleep," said everybody else to themselves, rolling over in their various beds.

"Mummy?"

"Shit!" says Marjorie, sitting up and reaching for the Rothmans. I open my eyes then shut them again as she clicks her lighter.

"Mummmaayyyy!!" And this is too heart rending to ignore. Marjorie slips her robe on and goes out to comfort Annabelle. A disturbance across the landing, and John leaves a well-stoned Della in bed. Annabelle refuses to be dissuaded by Marjorie and proceeds downstairs. All three of them try to get into the front room. John thumps on the hall door, shouts "Marilyn?" very loudly, Annabelle wails, "Mummy! Mummy!" But no sound issues forth from Marilyn.

John marches off downstairs to the kitchen and thence up the back stairs to the other door to the front room. He bellows "MARILYN!!" and slaps the door with the flat of his hand. Lights go up all over Hampstead, but no sound can be discerned from inside the front room unless it be a faint snore... with a lisp.

"MARILYN!!" Still nothing. So John stomps bumpety-bump back down the back stairs, into the kitchen, up the front stairs, along the hall, past Marjorie who is trying still to comfort Annabelle outside the front room, and out through the front door. He is still wearing nothing but his bathrobe. And it is the cold small hours of an Autumn night in North-West London. The neighbours are now peering out, wondering what could possibly be the matter. "MARILYN!!"

This has become rather like the famous end titles on the Flintstones by now, with John rapping on the front window while standing on the front steps. Finally, he stomps down the steps out into the street and finds a brick lying on the opposite side of the road. John picks up the brick, walks back across the road and heaves it through the front window. Crash-tinkle-tinkle it goes and then a loud scream, at last, from Marilyn who leaps from her bed wrapping the sleeping bag around her, unlocks the hall door and runs out, straight past Annabelle and Marjorie, going "Help! Help!" John comes stomping up the front steps, and back through the front door, and Marilyn jumps up and down going "John! John! Someone's thrown a brick through the window!"

So how did it all end? Not the business with the brick and

the window. That ended in high words, and Marilyn taking herself and Annabelle off in a taxi at five in the morning, leaving John to lament the cost of the repairs to the window. No, what happened to this commune of sex and science-fiction, freak-outs and free love?

Probably, it was my fault. I did indeed get to sleep with Marilyn. I was, perhaps, a bit sneaky about it. I would go out with her straight from work, and she stopped coming to Nassington Road. John had some designs on Marilyn himself, Della having gone, and then come back and then gone again. I knew there would be fall out when one evening at Marilyn's Fulham flat, she asked me to answer the phone when it rang, and I picked it up only to find myself speaking to John.

Nothing was said directly about it, but it was soon after that, that Marjorie announced at dinner one Sunday that she and John had decided to look for a house in the country. Tom was long gone by this point, Luise was about to go to Kenya – it felt like things were ending. I said as much to Marjorie, and she simply shrugged her shoulders and smiled. She showed me the sleeve for George Harrison's classic album which was on the stereo at the time – *All Things Must Pass*

I answered an ad in the evening paper for someone to share a house in Stoke Newington. By this time Roy Kettle had left South Kensington for a distinctly insalubrious bit of Hackney, and Stoke Newington was a only five minutes on the bus from there. Seemed like a good idea, even though by then my philandering ways had caused controversy in Rat fandom as well.

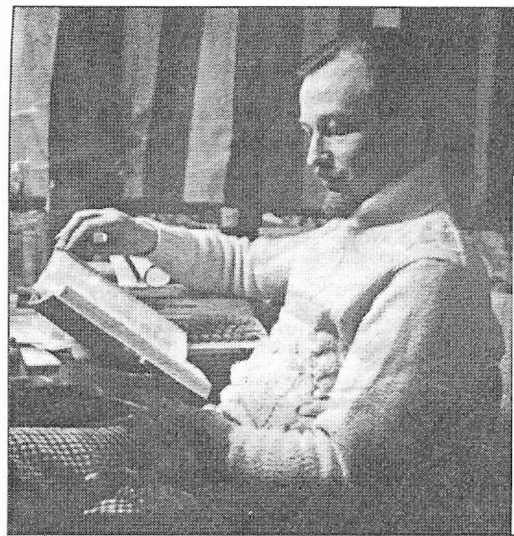
Within a couple of years both James Blish and Robin Farquharson were dead – Robin died tragically in fire at the squat where he was staying in Kentish Town. Unsurprisingly, I never finished the novel about the mile-long spaceship on the moon. I kept on writing record reviews, but to less and less success, and it all petered out eventually. Although I still write this and that, the only book I ever got published professionally was a short treatise on the Taxation of Lloyd's Underwriters in the 1980's. (And that's both out of print and even longer out of date). It has never been quite the glittering literary career, I dreamed of, or that John and Marjorie believed I might be capable of.

That's very much my fault, and in no way reflects on them. I lack application, as my Teachers had said long before. In many ways, life under John Brunner's roof now looks like a lost Elysium, but that is to rewrite history. We had fun, and in the early seventies, having fun was more important than most things. But there were tensions and arguments as there always will be when a number of people live in one house, however large. Had I gone ahead and actually written a novelisation, I would have been a lot more graphic and said a great deal more about the arguments and bad behaviour, and for those in the know, that might have been surprising. But I realise now that it does not do to speak ill of the dead, as otherwise the good that men do really does die with them.

The stories I've recounted here, I hope, will be seen as an honest and amusing attempt to convey what it was like. As I said in the introduction for the earlier piece in 1985, there is no malice in it.

This piece is dedicated to John & Marjorie Brunner with fond memories, love and respect.

About JOHN BRUNNER



In 1968 John produced his own publicity leaflet, from which this title, picture and text is taken:

John Brunner was born in Oxfordshire on 24th September 1934. He was educated at Cheltenham College, where he specialised in modern languages. While still at school he sold his first paperback science fiction novel, of which he says, "Mercifully it appeared under a pseudonym and sank without trace."

His interest in the field to which he is now such an outstanding contributor had begun at the age of six, with the discovery of a copy of Wells' *WAR OF THE WORLDS*, though it was not until he was 13 that he collected his first rejection slip. Between leaving school and being drafted into the RAF he made his first sales to American magazines, starting with 'Thou Good and Faithful' (under the name 'John Loxmith') in the March 1953 *Founding*. Following his National Service he made a few more sales, and on the strength of them – as he puts it – "under the mistaken impression that I was already a writer" – moved from his Berkshire home to London.

"I was living in a two-guinea-a-week room on an income which averaged £4 a week," he recalls. "I learned an awful lot of ways of cooking potatoes." In the nick of time a job opening appeared and he went to work at the Industrial Diamond Information Bureau, under science fiction writer John Christopher. Both in that post and for two years subsequent when he was an editor with the Books for Pleasure group – working under John F. Burke, likewise the author of much noteworthy SF – he continued to write in his spare time, and upon making his first novel sale to the U.S. in November 1958 decided he could again risk trying his luck as a freelance.

Meantime, he and his wife Marjorie ("my keenest fan and most astute critic" whom he married in the summer of that year, had become closely involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, for which he wrote the song that has been described as "the national anthem of the British peace movement," 'The H-Bombs Thunder'....

A good deal of the time he has left over from his work is devoted to administering the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize, which he founded within a few days of Dr King's death, but among his other interests are playing the recorder, banjo and guitar ("all badly") and touring Britain and Europe in his 120-mph sports convertible.

David Redd gave me the idea when he commented last time on our bias towards 'written fandom'. And obviously, yes, fanzine fans tend to make more of a mark on fan-history, are more likely to win TAFF or get GoH invitations, while con-runners and club-fans get overlooked. They also tend to be more easily forgotten. When I noticed that Rob Hansen, normally pretty hot on all matters fan-historical, couldn't identify one individual who appeared prominently on Kettering pictures, I thought I should delve more deeply into the career of someone who was, for a few years, one of the biggest BNFs in British fandom. In the course of doing so I discovered a genuine, for-real, mystery:-

Forgotten Fans #1

Dave Newman, Master of the Bar!

Dave & Ina dispense their 'Poleaxe Punch' in saucepans from the hotel kitchen, at the 1957 Kettering convention

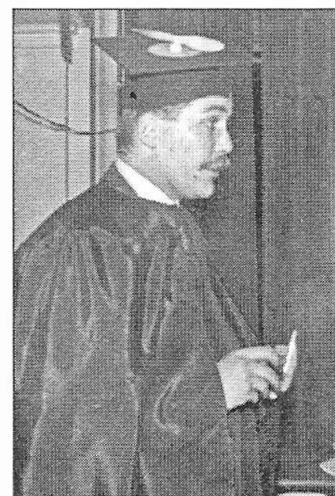


So who was Dave Newman? He's very visible on photographs from mid-fifties conventions, a chain-smoking genial-looking character with an air of authority and a distinctive handlebar moustache. I think he probably entered fandom in 1953 when, from the pictures, he looked to be in his late twenties. He may possibly have attended the *Coroncon* but he was certainly present at the one-day *Medcon* in November 1953, and co-edited *Bang*, a one-shot fanzine put out for the event. But by then Dave was clearly well-established in the London Circle because he was one of the bad lads at the special September meeting when the LC conceived 'Operation Armageddon', designed to disrupt the *Supermancon* the following year. A one-sheet flyer announced, among other things, that:-

'Dave Newman will be supplying chemicals for making explosive paste, smoke-producing chemicals, explosive top hats, etc. Also wanted in this line... explosive cigarettes, 'snowflake'-producing pellets, etc. Suggestions wanted. Nothing fatal though.'

In the event 'OA' fizzled out – the Manchester people managed plenty of disruption without outside help – although Mal Ashworth reported that Dave did take along a klaxon, obviously with mischief in mind. He was called 'Judge' Newman after serving in that role during the 'Trial of Bert Campbell' on the Sunday afternoon (Bert had referred to the Northerners as "Bloody Provincials" the previous year), with Ron Buckmaster in beard as a poorly-disguised Campbell, who never actually got to the con. But Dave's main role was custodian of the London Circle drink cupboard. Concerned at the likely high prices and poor availability of alcohol in the con-hotel, the LC had organised a communal supply for which all participating members paid 10/- (and received a cleverly-made 'passport'). According to his report in *EYE* #2, Dave arrived early and with Stuart Mackenzie he stashed an impressive array of bottles in the wardrobe of room 123 – which promptly became one of the two watering-holes for the entire convention (the other being the Shorrock's room). Dave dutifully provided drinks to the thirsty hordes and in the early hours of Monday morning had to dispose of 47 bottles, 34 of which had contained wine or spirits. The problem was solved by throwing them out of the window into the canal, four stories below!

Dave by now was 'Extra-Mural Barman' to the London Circle and he did a great job at the so-called 'Hallowe'en Convention' at Stuart Mackenzie's house in Hans Place, Chelsea, an all-night affair during which twenty-six LC members (including Messrs Camell, Tubb, Brunner, etc) drank themselves silly. Dave concocted a 'ceremonial punch' which was dished out during the first-ever 'Hum-&-Sway' session, master-minded by Bert Campbell. Afterwards, Dave noted in his report in *EYE* #3 that the punch was made from the following ingredients; 5 flagons cider, 2 bottles sweet Martini vermouth, 1 bottle medium-dry sherry, 1 bottle gin, 9 bottles lemonade, mixed in a two-gallon cider jar and iced before serving. The general consensus was that it was 'Very good stuff, albeit a trifle powerful'. One imbibor subsequently spent fourteen hours in a comatose condition, only regaining consciousness on the Sunday afternoon!



'Professor' Dave Newman in gown and propeller beanie.

At the end of 1954 Dave moved to Liverpool with his company (Plessey, where he was an electronics engineer) and immediately joined the Liverpool SF Society, at that time the strongest group in the country. By coincidence Stan Nuttall, a long-time member of LSFS, joined the same office a few weeks later, and at Easter the whole club travelled by train to *Cytricon I*, organised by the 'Kettering Astronautics Society'.

This was the year of the 'beanie' when many of the attendees strolled nonchalantly round the town wearing their fannish headgear. Dave did one better, sporting a mortar-board and academic gown, in which guise as 'Professor' Newman (with a remarkable resemblance to 'Professor' Jimmy Edwards of 'Light Programme' fame) he introduced a recorded 'tapera', ('The March of Slime') from the Liverpool group, which was received with great applause.

It's perhaps not entirely coincidental that in 1955 the Liverpool group made a big thing of publicising their mythical fannish drink 'Blog', about which Dave wrote, "Blog Mk I was created by Peter Hamilton at a LSFS party. It comprised a brandy and egg-flip base, to which was added blackcurrant puree, Alka-Seltzer and Beecham's powder. It was a dark, viscous, brownish-looking fluid with a mild effervescence, highly alcoholic and not unpleasant to the taste. Blog Mk II was produced by the hotel barman to satisfy members of the public who had seen the notices. This potion comprised a half-pint of cider to which was added a measure of rum."

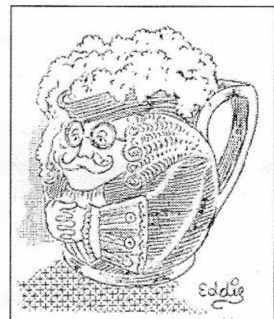
At *Cytricon II*, LSFS presented 'Last And First Fen', but by this time the 'Professor' had grown a villainous beard to add to his moustache, possibly so he could play a more convincing 'barbarian' in the great LSFS costume event that year, though it was shaved-off before the end of the convention. Additionally, Ken Slater says our man was drawn into an impromptu fancy dress event as the 'Illustrated Man', with biro ink all over chest and shoulders which, of course, he discovered wouldn't wash-off.

In the summer of 1956 Dave, John Roles and Norman Shorrock were invited to form the Programme Committee for the proposed London worldcon the following year, and Dave produced four issues of *Natter*, a discussion newsletter, between September and January 1957. He was responsible for starting the revolt against the main Committee's choice of the Royal hotel (scene of the 1951 & 52 cons, and of *Sci-con* in 1970), suggesting instead that the worldcon moved out to the coast, to Brighton or Margate. In the end they did drop the Royal but stayed in London.

Dave also wrote an excellent 10-page report for *Triode* #8 which recounted how he and other members of LSFS came to appear on an ITV programme with Ted Carnell, coincidentally titled, 'Meet the Professor'. He also appears to have been involved with *Cytricon III*, the 'forgotten' convention,

where he resumed barman duties by producing his 'Poleaxe Punch', the recipe for which he gave in 'A Topper's Treasury' a column he wrote for the LSFS's fanzine, *Space Diversions*.

It "comprised three bottles of Polish White Spirit (140 Proof), one and a half bottles of Jamaica Rum, one bottle of medium-sweet sherry, half a dozen lemons, three large cans of fruit salad and ten small bottles of sparkling lemonade. Served by the half-pint it very soon injected its own note into the party spirit. Incidentally, the name is courtesy of the Cheltenham mob who managed very nicely to combine major ingredient and effect."



Eddie's heading for 'A Topper's Treasury', *SD* #10

The Cheltenham Circle was in the ascendant that year and staged the very first 'St Fantony' ceremony during which Eric Jones 'knighted' thirteen well-known fans, most from LSFS, and including Dave Newman among their number.

However Dave's finest hour probably came at the London worldcon itself, where he handled the 'techie' aspects of the convention, battling recalcitrant sound equipment, lights and tape-recorders during the Banquet and Awards ceremony. Wally Weber describes their first meeting: "Dave was a well-built fellow wearing a fine red moustache. He had a friendly, man-to-man attitude in his conversation and manner that reminded me of the heroes in George O. Smith stories, and he was always a pleasure to associate with."

During the Business Meeting Dave was elected a director of the World SF Society, Inc., but as if to show he didn't take this too seriously, part-way through the convention Dave shaved-off *half* of his moustache, as he had done at the Kettering cons, the remainder following on the final morning!

In early 1958, Dave stood for TAFF (against Ron Bennett and John Berry), with nominators Ted Carnell, Ted Tubb & Eric Bentcliffe from the UK, and Steve Schultheis and a mysterious 'C.L. Barrett' from the USA. His 'platform' pretty well summed up his achievements over the past few years:-

'In Dave Newman we find a fan who could well represent nearly all of the aspects of British fandom at the World Con in Los Angeles. If American fans want to meet a typically atypical British fan, known for his wonderful personality - if British fandom wants to send an active science fiction fan, a trufan, a fan active in organizing the Kettering Conventions and the past London World Convention, a fan author of no mean abilities, and first British director of the World Science Fiction Society, no better choice could be made than Dave Newman. (Has own glass. Will travel.)'

By this time Dave was Secretary of the Liverpool group, and perhaps in reaction to his triumphal progression through fandom Stan Nuttall and John Owen decided to make Dave the villain in their 'Harrison' saga. This was a series of fantasy adventures in which William Makepeace Harrison - a sort of futuristic James Bond, modelled on their pal Bill Harrison (who always looked vaguely bemused by the whole affair) - battled the evil Kurt von Neumann, interstellar master criminal. Here's an extract from *Triode* #14, Summer 1958:-

The plot so far: Neumann, having previously been consigned to the piranhas (but the fish couldn't take the low-grade alcohol in his blood), reappears as the villain who has stolen the new prototype bomber, the NGW-111, which is carrying a Cobalt Bomb. !

Harrison in his rocket manages to rendezvous with the bomber and cut his way into the craft, but 'some sixth sense must have warned Neumann. His hideous, bloated, piranha-nibbled face contorting with fiendish malice as he caught sight of the Master... He lurched suddenly from his seat and hurled himself at Harrison with a foul oath. The great man stepped back adroitly and Neumann, his features alight with hellish hate, stumbled forward, unable to save himself, towards the already-opened bomb doors. With a ghastly, blood-curdling scream he disappeared through them.'



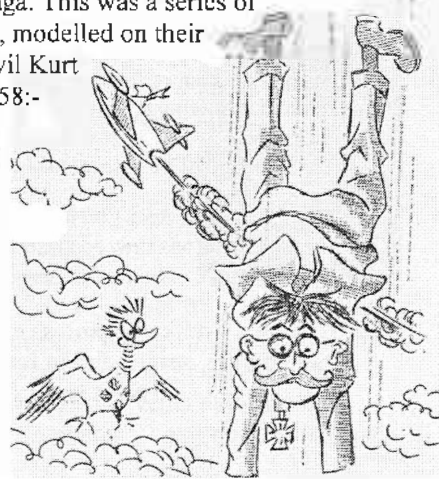
Above: Don McKay, Ina, and Dave Newman rehearsing in their outfits for *Cytricon II*



Above: Dave faces 'electrical spaghetti' with the PA/recording system at *Loncon I*



Seconds after shaving off half his moustache, Dave asks his girlfriend and Bob Richardson, 'Do I look silly like this?'



Back in the real world, Dave seems to have been largely responsible for organising the fourth *Cytricon* (see Mike Kilvert's letter this time) where he brewed-up another punch, known as 'Fred's No.4', rather less sweet and more intoxicating than the previous 'Poleaxe Punch'. But his greatest achievement was to oversee the formation of the BSFA. The events are noted in *TIEN*, but Dave Newman describes the inaugural meeting in his own words in his *OMPazine*, *Prodigal*:-

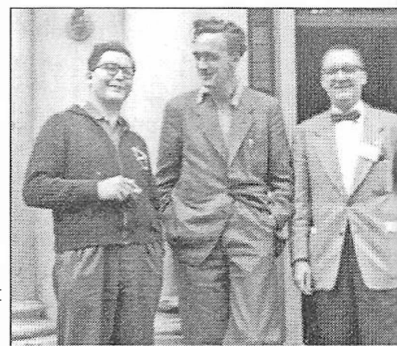
'Norman Shorrock and I probably knew more of the overall background behind the meeting than anyone else present as we had heard Vince's tape which gave a very clear resume of the comments he had received from a considerable number of fans, and had discussed the subject exhaustively between ourselves. Somebody had to start the meeting off, and it seemed logical that it should be one of us two.... Norman resolutely refuses to do any sort of public speaking so the honour (?) therefore fell to me.

'I've never considered myself to be any great shakes at this sort of thing, mainly because I suffer a particularly hideous sort of stage fright – silly, isn't it? – and normally can't manage to put more than half a dozen words together in an intelligible manner when confronted by an audience. For some reason though, even though I still feel nervous starting off, I find that I can talk to fans and, once started, keep on! On this particular Sunday, it was if anything better than usual as the gang were obviously in sympathy with what I was trying to say... Anyway, after a brief and rather halting analysis of the situation to date, I threw the meeting open to discussion and from then on it more or less looked after itself.

'It was getting towards tea-time when it became obvious that conditions were ripe for something really constructive to come from the meeting... The matter was more or less taken out of my hands when Pete Chappell got up and framed a tentative motion that some sort of an organisation should be formed. I took this, edited it verbally and presented it to the meeting who adopted it almost unanimously!'

Dave showed a previously-unseen 'serious & constructive' side to his character at the meeting, and was subsequently elected as first Chairman of the BSFA. Reading *Prodigal* makes it clear that not only was he enthusiastic, but that he had a certain toughness of purpose which was just what was needed to set the new Association on a sound course. He said:-

'The committee has endeavoured to follow the recommendations put forward at the inaugural meetings and, as a result, the BSFA is a serious organisation devoted to science fiction. It's immediately obvious that this statement of fact will bring forth a certain amount of howling from the more rabidly trufannish types among us. Nonetheless, the inaugural meetings showed, quite inescapably, that a very large proportion of the fanzine-reading and fanzine-publishing field regarded a return to science-fiction proper as essential to the continuing welfare of fandom as we know (& love) it today. As a result the Association is endeavouring to cultivate the attention of the science-fiction reader and to provide a service which he will appreciate and which will, at the same time, be appreciated by our friends the faans as well. It is the opinion of those who inaugurated the BSFA that the longest way round, in this case, may well be the shortest way home and that readers, once they are given a sense of belonging to the field as a whole, may find their way into fandom. I should also add that officially we regard fandom as being a part of the BSFA, and not the reverse as some people seem to think.'



Dave, with Walt Willis and TAFF-winner Madle, outside the *Loncon* hotel.

Prodigal appeared in mid-July, 1958, and in nine well-written pages spelt-out the entire rationale for the BSFA, gave a list of the 37 people who were present at the inaugural meeting, and outlined its hopes for the future. On the very last page Dave made two late additions; the first, to announce that Ron Bennett had won TAFF, and the second that 'due to a variety of reasons' he would be moving to Bournemouth. 'Probably the biggest single reason', he wrote, 'is that I have been away from home for over ten years and I want to live at home for a while. Just suddenly made up my mind and handed in my notice at my job in Liverpool..... Hope I can find a decent one in, or around, Bournemouth.'

And with that, Dave Newman vanished from fandom. This, to me, is very odd; at some time or other nearly everyone reaches a point where fandom just seems too much trouble and one has to take time off, but I think it's rather peculiar that Dave should go out so suddenly, at the very top, taking with him the hopes of so many people. According to Ina Shorrock he also took the record books of the LSFS, while Terry Jeeves still bemoans how Dave went off with the membership records of the nascent BSFA, causing a crisis almost before the new Association had left the ground!

I asked Stan Nuttall if he knew why Dave had disappeared, but he was equally bemused. Dave wasn't fired from his job, there wasn't any big row with a girlfriend, or any major upset in fandom, he just suddenly left the area. "In fact," said Stan, "there's a little story to that. That summer – it must have been at the end of July – I was going to drive down to Cornwall for a holiday with John Owen and Bill Harrison, and planned to stop-off at Cheltenham to see our friends there. Dave begged a lift with us, got out in Cheltenham, and we never saw him again."

There's no real answer to this mystery, though I do wonder whether Dave might have been rather more upset than he admitted about losing TAFF to Ron Bennett, who was younger and hadn't done nearly so much (though probably was much better known across the Atlantic). Perhaps he thought that he'd given everything he could to fandom and yet still wasn't appreciated, so to hell with them! A year later, Ron published a note in the first issue of his *Skyrack* newsletter:-

'DAVE NEWMAN didn't show up at the *Bruncon* but he did send carbon-copy letters to members of the BSFA Committee. Dave tells of his bad luck since moving from Liverpool to Bournemouth. First he suffered a breakdown in health because of overwork and had to drop out of fandom as well as giving up his honorary posts with the Hoylelake, Cheshire, rugby and sailing clubs. Later when things were pulling round, Dave was put into hospital after a cycling accident.'

And in *Skyrack* 62, January 1964, there was one final reference:-

'One time-Liverpool SFS Secretary, TAFF nominee and 1957 *LonCon* PRO Dave Newman came out from the woodwork just before Xmas, visiting Ted Carnell and Ted Tubb in London. Ted Tubb reports that Dave had a brand-new wife with him. Well, it's the current trend.' *Skyrack* gave a CoA to a Southampton address. //

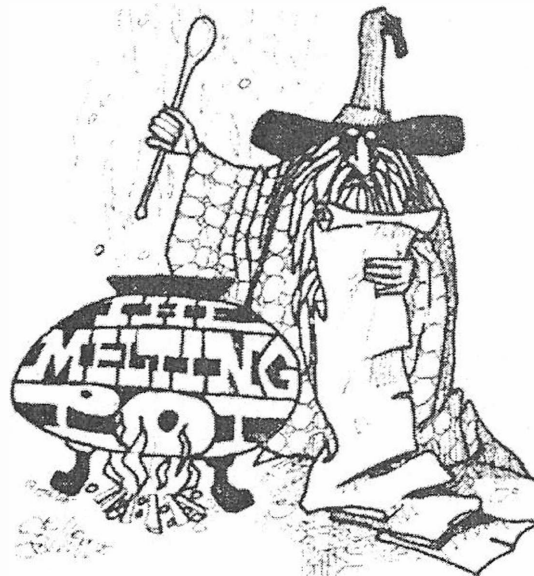
I'd like to express my appreciation to Greg Pickersgill (Chief Researcher), Rob Hansen & Stan Nuttall for help in writing this article, and to Ina Shorrock for providing the photographs from Norman's collection. – Peter Weston

Next issue: 'Forgotten Fans #2 – Eric Jones, Gentleman of Fandom' by Keith Freeman.

The Melting Pot

Or, looking for 'that indefinable spark',
(as Tom Perry used to say).

If there's any magical ingredients in the *Prolapse* mix they have to come from *you*, casting a spell from your personal grimoire of memories and anecdotes. So get writing! Editorial quibbling in italics, like this, and once again a few new faces.



Illo by Ivor Latto, recycled from *Speculation-24*

"You've opened a floodgate and I'm surfing down memory lane at the moment" – Chuck Connor, Letter

Let's start with the story of the BSFA Magazine Library, which in 1974-5 went missing under suspicious circumstances. I haven't been able to get to the bottom of this, but one former committee member said it was rumoured that 'something underhand had happened, because years later, what folks said were copies from the library collection appeared for sale.' Peter Mabey was librarian in those early days when the combined BSFA collection was safe in the Cheltenham cellar; here's his comments:-

Peter Mabey
PeterMabey@aol.com
Peter,

Peter the Librarian.
Photo by Bill Burns at
Re-Repetercon, 2004.



"I never did discover the truth about the loss of the Magazine Library – unfortunately there wasn't anyone who was able to visit the site where it had gone, and discover whether anything was salvageable – at the time it was assumed that any magazines that had escaped the flames were irrecoverably damaged by water. Although I did once have a listing of the stock, I can't find it now – it was probably sent away with the magazines. As far as I recall, most of them were U.S. ones which had been returned after circulation round the BSFA magazine chain, so they were fairly well-read. There were a good many pre-War U.S. ones – mostly the 1936-39 pulp era, and a few earlier, dating back to the early 1930s. In addition, there was a pretty substantial non-fiction collection – the first few years of *New Scientist* complete, a long run of *Scientific American*, and an American one concerned with aviation and rocketry. (*Missiles & Rockets?*)

"I can add a bit to the Doc Weir award history in *Prolapse* 6. At the meeting to decide what the award should be given for, there was a general feeling that it should be something distinct from all the categories for which awards already existed. There was a suggestion that the fans could determine it themselves, by having a voting form with the wording "I think that ___ should receive the award because ___"; however, after some discussion we concluded that it would probably be unworkable, as it would require a decision on which worthy reason would be best. Finally Ken Cheslin's suggestion was adopted, and has worked pretty well.

"When Archie passed the administration of the Award over to me in 1973, I adopted Beryl's suggestion that all BSFA members should have a vote, though I don't think that there were ever enough postal votes to sway the decision, as they tended to be for an assortment of people. The scrutinising and counting of votes was done by me and a previous Award winner (usually Ethel Lindsay) – it was rare for a vote to be rejected, usually because the voter could not be identified as qualified. When the 1982 convention refused to include the Award, I came to the conclusion that responsibility should be formally passed to the BSFA, and sent them all unused voting forms and blank Award certificates, although the latter had gone missing by the time the Award was reinstated.

"My recollection of Charles Platt's 'suicide' at the 1965 *Brumcon* was that he had previously reconnoitred a window from which to make his dramatic exit, seeing a flat porch roof a couple of feet below. However, the window he actually used was a similar one which was one or two floors further up, so he found himself on that narrow balcony, desperately needing to get back in. (As all concerned were pretty drunk at the time, I don't suppose anyone thought how serious the situation was.)"

And now for a nice bit of flattery; I like flattery, flattery is good. Take it, Chris!

Chris Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
Peter,

Chris the Historian
His photo!



"It's another great issue of *Prolapse*, what might be the best fanzine going today. It certainly fills the hole in my heart where *Mimosa* used to live, filling that fannish history need. Again, there's a cover that is just plain wonderful. I have to say that the outfits in the illo set me up for the photos later in the zine.

"And there's a nice bit from Kari about what us historians do. The easiest form of history, my old Boss once said, is the one that simply tells you what happened. The least-interesting form of history, he also added, is the one that tells you why it happened. That's an interesting note. People always want to know what happened, in the case of our museum it's always the same question: who invented the computer? There's no single answer, just a series of invents and events that led to the computer as we know it, none of them strong enough to singularly call the 'Invention of the Computer', but try and make that

point, getting folks to understand what happened with the whole invention thing, and they'll glaze over like an Easter ham. It's an interesting problem as the real important stuff is in the 'why?', while the real interesting stuff to the widest audience is in the who/what/where/whens.

"I'll join you in your enthusiasm for Rob Hansen's THEN. I've been looking it over (on orders from Mark Plummer) and have found it beautifully done. It's very vivid and almost painfully thorough. The e-mail with *Prolapse* attached binged at exactly the moment I was about to start in on the fourth chapter of THEN. Go figure! You mention of being from a fannish generation without a past. That's an interesting take. I'm of the generation where History doesn't really matter to many folks (much to my annoyance) but it's everywhere waiting to be sniffed out by those of us who do care. Things like the issues of *Mimosa* that are on-line. THEN, *fanac.org* and *eFanzines.com* have made so much more material so much more available that it's easy for someone who is just coming in to find history...but most just aren't interested. It is only when something becomes easy that it is truly discarded...or so they say.

"I am desperate to read the next issue. John Hall was one of my TAFF nominators, and his piece sounds most interesting. I have to say that the bit where you talk about what's on top for the next issue is one of the most alluring things. It makes me wish I could instantly order it up and have the material in my mailbox by the morning."

The 'Giles' cover cartoon came from a 1977 newspaper so those outfits were roughly right for the Season 12 pictures. As Peter Sullivan remarks, 'the decade fashion forgot' – but they don't really match the caption; that is, not quite what modern-day young revolutionaries (the '3rd row' gang) are wearing, right, Niall? As for John Hall's article, here's David Redd, who couldn't wait to comment even before he saw John Hall's piece, but David's remarks do add rather a nice little supplement.

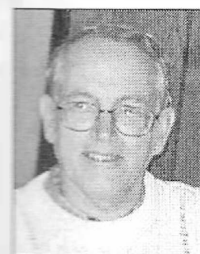
David Redd

dave_redd@hotmail.com

Dear Peter,

Taken the Oath

Photo by PW, 2003



"Thanks always for the zine. If I say my favourite reading in No. 6 was from Mike Moorcock (article) and George Locke (letter) that's no disparagement to the rest! Look forward very much to John Hall's epic on the Brummers. I didn't know John Brunner well, but like most fans I met him several times at cons and writers' workshops and soon became aware of both the talent and the contradictions.

"John was a founder member of the UK Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference, but unfortunately as I have taken the Milford Oath of Professional Secrecy I cannot tell you how John would freely admit needing the bol anaesthetic to sleep, would wander off with the youngest blonde present or would import one ("Who's that?" – "She came with John Brunner" – "Oh, there we are then."), and would reminisce about what passed for sex education at his public school ("Find a decent working-class girl, set her up in a small flat, and..."). What I can say is that he enjoyed the silly writers' games and was surprisingly kind (like Brian Aldiss) to a very new writer. However, thanks to those notoriously helpful bar arrangements I can't recall early Milfords clearly enough for any further details.

"Actually, what I remember best about John was that he clearly considered himself above all the general low-life, and above sub-editors, yet barely mucked in with so many fannish or neo activities: plugging a *Novel* magazine with a hastily-planned chat on 'Why Things Don't Work' (plus an audience plant primed to question/heckle in pauses), passing on stacks of interesting ephemera gratis, sending up his own book titles in a *F&SF* competition; giving good advice to people he needn't have bothered with, and so on. Everyone who's been around must have these JKHB stories.

"In the *Encyclopedia* John Clute described John as "a significant dissenting voice in the West's increasingly urgent debate about humanity's condition." A perceptive comment to fish out from so much routine adventure SF in John's oeuvre, and having thought about it I'd go further. With hindsight, John's life (rather than his works) might well exemplify the lost opportunities of core Western society. Like William F. Temple his work demonstrates the failure of literary ambition to withstand commercial pressures, but his life and career might also throw light on the failure of human intelligence to withstand those same pressures.

"So even before I read John Hall's memoir, I think the promised 8,000 words (gasp) will be valuable, but most importantly of course, in the light of the *Prolapse* mission as interpreted by D. West, they'll be fun. As was #6, of course. I speak as a fan for whom the book-room has remained the centre of the universe.... at one Brum group conversation, to my subsequent amazement and horror, I never actually found the bar. You and I didn't meet at that particular time, obviously...

"Oh, and thanks for your note at the bottom of my previous letter, pointing out that fan-history is written by the fanzine 'subset' of fandom (as the Eastercon site calls the various cohorts) because "well, that's what we do." Yes, exactly, I admit. In strict historical terms *Prolapse* would be material for a framework of fan-history, I suppose, but to repeat myself repeating D. West, it's meant to be FUN. Which it is. (The photos have come out well, too.)"

*David, everyone who knew John Brunner does indeed have stories, but not all, alas, like yours. Kind, considerate, and helpful he might have been to new writers like you, Chris Priest, Ramsey Campbell, Dave Langford, and so on. But to many of us he was rude, arrogant, cold and repellent. After innumerable snubs while doing *Speculation* I gave up trying to talk to him in the early seventies, which was a pity because I did enjoy many of his books. But excuse me, where did that reference to William F. Temple come from? Care to explain? Oh dear, now you'll have us talking about SF again, and before you know it this will become a sercon fanzine; you know my record! Especially if more writer-types get involved like the other David, below, who kindly sent me his outrageous new novel, BIKINI PLANET.*

David Garnett

davidgarnett@onetel.com

Dear Peter,

'I was there!'

Photo: Tony Carter



"Thanks for *Prolapse* #6 – and that's more like it, being more in synch with my own dusty memories. First thing I read was MM's piece, of course. Bristol '67 – I was there! Yes, I remember Graham Hall getting me to vote Charles Platt for the Doc Weir award. London '70 – I was there! Yes, I remember Mike Dempsey throwing his glass at John Brunner. Brighton Arts Festival, '68 – I was there! Yes, I remember getting thrown out of that pub. It was called Henekeys, and a few minutes ago I googled "Henekeys" and "Brighton" – and found a reference to myself. Turned out to be a piece I'd written for *Ansible* #32, a mere 25 years ago:-

'The best Brighton SF event was back in May '68, as part of the Brighton Festival, when they invited the whole *New Worlds* crew down for 2 days. There were about 20 people on the stage and a similar number in the audience (which included Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer). On Saturday night everyone went to Henekeys... but got thrown out, which could have had something to do with pouring drinks from the balcony on the multitudes below. Tom Disch threw his drink in the manager's crotch, and when the police arrived he got in the Black Maria as he said he wanted to be arrested. We all wandered off to another pub, The Heart & Hand, and Brian Aldiss ordered 20 halves of bitter, and there was change out of a pound note. Those were the days!'

"Thinking back on the Brighton Arts Festival, it seems obvious that the Other Lot were responsible for the Henekey's incident. The troublemakers were louts like Asa Briggs, Robert Conquest and Edward Lucie-Smith, and the innocent SF people just got caught up in it all. (Tom Disch said he got into the Black Maria for research purposes. He'd never been arrested before, so it would be a new experience – but, as MM reported, the Brighton constabulary refused to oblige.)

"And I can even remember writing to you at *Speculation* about the Arts Festival. (Mike Kenward wrote it up for *Vector*. Last time I saw him was 1970/71 on an escalator at Tottenham Court Road tube station, and he was just going for a staff job at the *New Scientist*. He must have got it, as he ended up editor.) Graham Hall was also at the Brighton bash and – somewhere – I have the photos to prove it. A few years later, he moved to Brighton when he was at Sussex University. We hired a van together, because we also had stuff to move from London down to Brighton, and I remember collecting his assorted belongings from two or three places, from Notting Hill down to Chris Priest's flat in Harrow."

Those were indeed the days, Dave! And just to be absolutely fair, here's a brief extract from that Vector report (July 1968) which mentions a couple of things Mike Moorcock forgot last time: 'In the words of Tom Disch, "The old-timers have had their say and now they're saying it again. They're like corpses wired for sound" Mike Moorcock said "These writers had subject matter that was interesting but their writing was appalling. Somehow a story by, for instance, Van Vogt, would be written, read, processed and appear with sentences that were totally incomprehensible. This was due to the fact that writers and editors were pig-ignorant illiterates." As I noted in Speculation-19, Ken Bulmer and Ted Tubb were in the audience, and at this point, sorely provoked, Ted stood up to make an impromptu speech which various sources said was probably the best given in the whole weekend. And here's someone else who was at Brighton...

Brian Aldiss
aldiss@dial.pipex.com
Dear Pete,

"I don't know why you think I would not be interested in the great forthcoming Brunner issue. I am immensely interested and could feed you many and hilarious anecdotes on the subject. But I am also greatly interested in your strange publication, *Prolapse*. It's not quite a history of British fandom nor is it entirely a fanzine. You may have stumbled upon a new kind of what one must call literature. Though of course, I can see it's closely related to Egomania!

"I read with particular interest what Mike Moorcock had to say. I am convinced that it was through Mike that British SF changed for the better. Directly the issues of *New Worlds* that he edited were published, the readership changed by a large percentage. Instead of the old shags who showed up at meetings, new shags appeared, and they were much more interesting, and interested in literature and theory, even if more untidy than the previous mob, the drinkers of Ted Tubb's concoctions. Oh, what fun they had dropping beer bottles down the chimneys of a seedy hotel in Kettering! I wouldn't mind seeing more extensive references to Harry's and my frequent distribution of free meat pies at several of those ritualistic gatherings long ago.

"Mike mentions the conference in Brighton, which was chaired by Asa Briggs, a perfectly sensible and well-known academic. That, I think, marked the occasion when the SF creature arose from the swamp. You have a photograph of us on Page 12, and although we may look funny then in the 60's, we look a lot funnier now. As Mike says, a police inspector mistook us for gentlemen."

I see Prolapse as an exercise in journalism, Brian, taking British fandom as the subject matter. Certainly it seems to have struck a chord with older fans, who've responded enthusiastically even after having been out of things for many decades. I suppose the attraction is partly nostalgia but I hope there's a bit more to it than that; if I can pull it off I'm hoping it will also have some appeal to more recent fans, even though the actual names and situations are foreign to them. And I don't entirely agree with you about the importance of Mike's New Worlds. While it was a brave effort I'm pretty sure the times were changing fast, anyway; as I said before, from the mid-sixties new recruits into fandom tended to be better-educated and more articulate, which changed the nature of cons from the old-style social events into more outgoing affairs. And here's Mike himself (I just knew we'd end up talking about science fiction!):

Mike Moorcock
Deep in the heart of Texas
Dear Pete,

"Any memories I have left are going into the memoir I'm writing as part of a set of books I'm preparing for my publisher at the moment. Not of much interest to *Prolapse* readers, anyway, though it's been interesting to trace my early reading, which had very little SF in it, apart from comics and ERB. I went from Wodehouse to *The Magnet* by an odd route, for instance, and my first main wave of fanzines were *Book Collectors News*, mostly dealing with old boys' books – a phrase which has come to describe the story papers rather than books – and I came to Sexton Blake via *The Magnet* when I started reading Edwy Searles Brookes without realising at first that he was also 'Berkley Gray' who wrote thrillers heavily influenced by Wodehouse and then turned out to be a neighbour, living in the same somewhat posh road as my Auntie Connie, close to where I lived.

"That's when I first learned that authors didn't really live in Mayfair luxury flats and on yachts but, if successful, had more or less the same life style as a family GP. From Burroughs I went to *Planet Stories*, which specialised in sword and planet fiction. That's really what I enjoyed as a kid. I'd read Sprague de Camp, of course, because I'd enjoyed his Krishna



Graham & David on Brighton beach, 1968
Photo: John Parker

Looking funny now?
Photo by PW at
Brian's 75th party.



Deep in the heart of Texas!
Photo: Bill Burns



via Harold Shea and so on. I came to know Sprague pretty well and was a great fan of his fiction. He was the person who got me writing adult fantasy, by proposing I write a Conan story for *Fantastic Universe*, which he edited. When I told Ted Carnell about it, Ted proposed I do something for *Science Fantasy* – and so Elric arrived in my life and kippers for the rest of my life... I think I brought a sort of SF sensibility to my fantasy. I didn't believe in magic, but I did use the form to look at social behaviour and the like, especially from THE ETERNAL CHAMPION onwards, and most of the other stuff I wrote is strictly science fantasy rather than Tolkien-like fantasy – HAWKMOON and CORUM both employ SF devices and HAWKMOON is pretty much straight post-apocalypse future stuff with a bit of fantasy. What 'science fantasy' really is, and what appeared to be renamed 'new weird' for a while.

"The SF in *Astounding*, for instance, never interested me. I not only couldn't finish DUNE, I could hardly start it. When I took over *New Worlds* I happened to come upon a long, long run of *Astounding/Analog* and *Unknown* in the shop from which I'd been buying second hand books for most of my life. I'd read a little Leiber, but not much had come my way. And I'd read a little Vance. I decided I ought to read some SF to get myself properly educated. Ploughing through those *Astoundings* was shocking to me. The writing seemed in general pretty terrible and few of the 'classics' worked for me. I was genuinely astonished at how bad they seemed. I've never really changed my mind, though I've read a fair amount of SF done in the 60s.

"I enjoyed Phil Farmer's GREEN ODYSSEY, Miller's CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ and a few others, but about the only SF with spaceships in them that I could get on with were Aldiss's and Bester's – and they weren't strong on space fiction, either. Same goes for the movies. I'm clearly just not a spaceship guy. My taste appears to be for well-written exotic adventure stories and they don't have to have an imaginative element, even. I suspect my father read along the same lines. He only really liked my 'Kane of Old Mars' ERB-esque stories. I did write some interplanetary fiction, but I think the reason I developed the multiverse idea was because I couldn't stand the notion of so much emptiness and wanted to fill it all up!

"But I never got on with Ursula's LeGuin's stuff, maybe because it missed my window – my intense period of reading SF/fantasy was really only up to about 1962 or so. I did do a blurb for THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, but I wasn't really enthusiastic about it. Something a little too abstract for me, maybe. Having said I like metaphysical physics, that's contradictory, too. Never been sure why I don't get on with her unless it simply is that I stopped reading most SF and fantasy, except for research, review or submissions actually before I started editing NW. Which could explain my editorial policies! I should have stopped editing NW because I couldn't really tell an SF story from a non-SF story. When I finished the 'Alien Heat' set I realised that I had written THE END OF ALL SONGS and completely left out the SF element. I had to go back and put it in. Not bad SF, either, according to those who enjoyed it. But there it is.

"I have no attitude towards contemporary SF but I have no impulse to read much of it. I read China Mieville's because I'd read KING RAT and thought all his stuff was going to be like that, but while I thought THE IRON COUNCIL was very well written (strongly influenced by M. John Harrison but with better narrative skills) and dealt very well with political themes, it could as easily have been set in South America without all the weird stuff, though it was very good weird stuff. If you haven't tried him, you might give one of his a shot. He became better as he went along, but has some of the mind-set I enjoy in Leiber and Vance. From a different political standpoint, but it doesn't really interfere with his fiction. Apart from him I like Steve Aylett because he is so strangely idiosyncratic. I like some of Jeff VanderMeer and Jeffrey Ford, too. Ford can write well and some of his fiction has that quality I enjoy in Leiber. All of these are writers I was originally asked to review and found I *could* read. Most of those I get for review just pile up in the Shed of Shame and are eventually donated to the local library, which, like all libraries now, is having trouble with budgets.

"I still have a very, very battered first of THE CARNELIAN CUBE which I lent to a young lady over forty years ago and which she recently returned. I also have some Ace doubles and so on. I keep very little SF or fantasy, having given my collection to the SF Foundation many years ago, but de Camp, Vance and Leiber I still have, mostly in original paperbacks which I discovered at book sales in Northern California where all the old sixties hippies (who were also keen SF readers) went to die. That way I built up a little shelf of favourites including Sheckley, early Zelazny, a couple of Brunners and, of course, my old favourite, Leigh Brackett (I already had Ballard, Disch and Aldiss), pretty much all in the original paperbacks I first read them in. I had to stop myself buying books at those sales because I would have wound up with all the books I'd already passed on to other readers or libraries. Vance is well represented in Ace. In fact I did buy a few Ace doubles by other writers (Edmond Hamilton's A YANK AT VALHALLA b/w Ross Rocklynne's THE SUN DESTROYERS) because I couldn't resist them, but not the Howard/Brackett one in which I first read Conan, I think, and which was pinched by Lemmy when the band stayed over at my house in Yorkshire (he left a far more valuable Conan comic No. 1 behind...)

"There's quite a lot of Pohl and/or Kornbluth, bought because I mean some day to write about their rather accurate social predictions and felt they'd been rather ignored by the general press, who seem to think Phil Dick came up with all the stuff which was really a group effort by *Galaxy* writers. In this they have rather missed what was original about Dick, his own barmy, idiosyncratic vision, which is what we celebrated in NW (I got Brunner to write the first piece singling Dick out and also did a piece myself and encouraged Cape to publish him in the UK). *Galaxy* was about the only SF magazine Ballard and I liked in the 50s and 60s, but it took me a while to get into that. The only issues of the British SF magazines I saw were those I had stories in or which featured Ballard or Aldiss. I shouldn't forget my enthusiasm for Charles Harness, which I shared with Brian. Between us we got Harness back into print and writing again. Brian pushed THE PARADOX MEN and I published THE ROSE in book form, along with a few of his best short stories.

"Looking at that list, I seem to have read rather more SF than I thought! It seems to have been a period of enthusiasm matched by that of all the other old hippies. Enjoyed with a similar enthusiasm for the blues, R&B and good rock and roll. I probably should have moved to Northern California rather than Central Texas in 1994. As it is, we spend a couple of months there every year and half the rest of our time is spent in France (Paris is also where you find a lot of surviving peers, though I wonder if Sarko will drive us all out now). One day we'll probably come back to Texas to find a tornado has swept up the house, complete with books, computers and any remaining memories, and taken them off to Oz where they will be read by whoever's still there with some amazement; 'Those Texans must be a really weird and exotic bunch of people!'

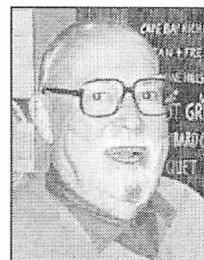
"I note that an offshoot of *Wizards of the Coast*, *Planet Stories*, is reprinting every sword-and-planet story they can find (including mine) and rather wish they'd do them the way the Ace doubles were done. Or *Two Science Fiction Adventure Books*, the pulp-size version, which gave John Brunner his start as 'Killian Houston Brunner' – THE WANTON OF ARGUS.

"But most peoples' nostalgia is now for my generation of writers. Someone rang me up the other day to ask if I felt like doing another of those great old Ace Special novels – short, fast and packed with imagination, like early Zelazny, Delany, Disch and others. I shared their enthusiasm for books which fitted into one's pocket rather than needing a forklift to cart them around, but couldn't see myself reviving those times any more than I could reviving *NW*. They were, in many ways, more optimistic days, created by a number of factors, including the fact that real wealth had spread across a far broader middle class, giving many more people real power, better educational and job opportunities and therefore optimism (between 1920-1970 wealth had moved from capital to labour for the first time ever). We blew it, of course, as maybe *Galaxy* had known we would. Unimaginative unions dug their own graves. Opium AND religion became the opium of the people. Thatcher and Reagan helped speed the reversal of wealth back to capital and the majority lost their optimism, even if Reagan's deregulation DID improve the beer in America. So even if we're more depressed, at least we can drown our sorrows with a better pint..."

Mike, you realise that I stand with my friend Julian Headlong and his immortal words "They will have to prise my Astoundings from my cold, dead hands". I cut my fannish teeth on that magazine; for many years it was my lifeline in an uncaring, mundane world. Strangely, though, I agree with you entirely on DUNE, and my favourite 'classic' SF/fantasy authors also happen to be Vance, Leiber & DeCamp even though I'm essentially a 'hard' SF man. But now let's have a word from another old devil:

Harry Harrison
Brighton
Hi Pete,

Mephistophelean!
Photo by PW



"Plenty of nostalgia pix; Chris Priest as a long-haired hippie. Me as Mephistopheles in a tux. Jimmy Ballard in a Harry Truman shirt; quite a trip down memory lane. I'm impressed at your ability to tickle voluminous responses from the unlikely sources. Tom Shippey on his fannish history. John-Henri Holmberg as a neofan in Sweden. Very much like me as a neofan in USA.

"First contact was by post at the age of 13 with other damp creatures through addresses found in the prozines. Meeting in Jimmie Taurasi's basement in Flushing, (in Queens, one of the counties of New York City) to found the Queens Science Fiction League. Fanzines, fan feuds with Fred Pohl and the Futurians in Manhattan. Even a feud with Sam Moskowitz and the Newark fans in the distant state of New Jersey. Only the war and the draft slowed all this down until 1946.

"A fannish note; the QSFL almost vanished when the treasurer ran away with all the money. Many years later in Ireland I was one of the founders of ISFA, the Irish Science Fiction Association, which almost vanished when the treasurer decamped with all the dues. A few years later I, Sam Lundwall and some Swedish fans took the ferry to Helsinki where we helped found the Finnish SF society. Which almost foundered a few years later when the treasurer... You can write the ending yourself. Look forward to the Brunner issue."

Steve Jeffery,
Srjeffery@aol.com
Pete,

"Hmm, I'm either going to have to learn Photoshop or get Sue Mason to draw an idealised version of me (with or without leopard-skin stilettos) before I send another picture for the loccol. I liked the modified Giles cover. I was in the Cartoon Museum in Little Russell Street (near the British Museum) last Wednesday, just before this year's Clarke Award ceremony. There was an original Giles cover on display. Fascinating to note that Giles had a habit of doodling and trying things out all over the margins of the board, and just how many overpaintings and corrections you can see close up. Highlight of the current exhibition was Brian Talbot's 'Alice in Sunderland', an impressive labour of love that takes in local legend, history, folklore and the intense rivalry between Geordies and Mackems on either side of the Tyne.

"Fantastic letter from Mike Moorcock. It's good to see that the art of long, discursive and literate letter writing is still alive and well in these days of compressed and barely comprehensible instant messaging. A rather younger looking Mike was also on TV a couple of weeks back, on a BBC 4 program about arch space rockers 'Hawkwind'. Now there's a band riven by more internal and longer-lasting feuds than fandom (with the possible exception of 'Pink Floyd', who probably have more money to squander on lawyers).

"*Prolapse* is starting to appear as a stick to beat the BSFA with for things that happened before the present members and officials joined, or in some cases were even born. I think you're being rather unfair. The BSFA now bears little relation to the BSFA of the 50s, 60s or 70s. Part of that, it has to be said, is an almost complete split from fandom, although it's arguable whether the BSFA rejected fandom in search of sercon street cred, or fandom rejected the BSFA as irrelevant to the desperate fun of fanac, conventions and silly games, especially given most fans' boast that they hardly read science fiction anymore. In fact this was almost a *de rigueur* disclaimer (with a few notable exceptions) for most fnz colophons through the 80s and 90s.

"And I can't see how the BSFA can be a recruiting arm for the highly diverse and fragmented fandom(s) we have now. I rather suspect that when people used the word 'fandom' back then, the implied reading was 'active fanzine fandom'. But that, in the bright shiny 21st century, can hardly claim to be a representative, let alone pre-eminent, part of fandom as a whole. Especially when the number of actual printed titles in the UK in the last year is barely sufficient to fill the Nova eligibility list for voting. The battle is lost. The BSFA has gone one way; fandom in myriad other directions and, apart from half a dozen stalwarts, UK fanzines have almost entirely abandoned paper for the cyberspace of the e-zine and blog network.

"If we want to entice general SF readers into a wider community of written fandom, you probably couldn't do better than plop a copy of *Steam Engine Time* or *SF Commentary* into their hands. Something that is recognisably a science fiction magazine, with strong SF-nal articles and reviews, and also a bridge into fandom. I believe once you put a loc column, or a series of good fanzine reviews, with contact details, in front of a proto-fan you've pretty much won. It worked for me."

No vendetta, honest! I just find the past trials and tribulations of the BSFA to be interesting, amusing, and sometimes a bit sad. My heading last time had a double-meaning – let me spell it out; 'time to have another go at [reviving] the BSFA'. As I think I said before, the BSFA has managed to come good in the end and it now fulfils a useful function for a lot of people for whom fandom has become too esoteric. But Steve, you've got it wrong about its original mission; in #5 I noted that the Association was set up at a convention very specifically to recruit for convention fandom – fanzine fans were a minority group, even then.

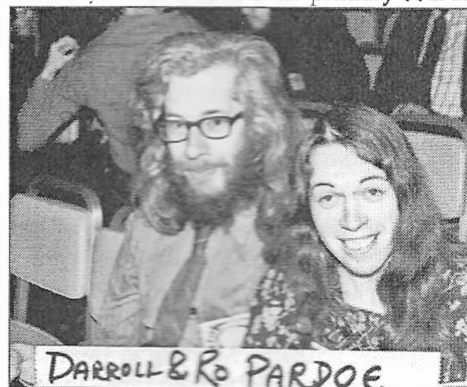
Darroll Pardoe
pardoe@globalnet.co.uk
Hi Peter,

"The Doc Weir material is a fascinating read. This is all good primary historical material, and I never thought we would get a chance to see the inner workings revealed to such an extent. It comes over very clearly that the whole thing was a mess from the start. At the time, to my recollection as an ordinary and very new fan, it didn't seem like that. I did feel that the people running the Fund knew what they were up to. Silly me! (Mind you, since Ken Cheslin was enthusiastically pushing the project with his flyers I should have suspected something – even in 1961-62, I was quite well aware that Ken's approach to organising *anything* was refreshingly chaotic).

"I find Mike Moorcock's comments interesting – I thought at the time that the award at Bristol (1967) smelled a bit but if Mike is right the whole thing was rigged without reference to the actual voters, which is quite a charge.

"Good old D – he came up with the actual figures, which prove that my '400 or so' was spot-on. I agree with his letter on the basics of fan history. A history of anything *has* to be based on the evidence, and that means the primary source material. In our case that means what is recorded in fanzines of the period, photographs, surviving letters, and so on. Another source, somewhat less reliable, is the recollections of people who were there at the time and have survived until later, which makes what you're doing with *Prolapse* so valuable. As you said to me at this year's Eastercon, if nobody gathers people's anecdotes now, they'll be lost for ever: a lot of information about fifties fandom and earlier has already gone beyond retrieval with the deaths of the people involved.

"Finally: well, well, there we all are, Ro and myself and everyone else, at that fanzine discussion at *Seacon 75*. That's a nice photo – who took it? You don't seem to have provided a credit. 1975 must have been the first con at that electrifying hotel in Coventry, though we came to know it quite well later through *Novacons* and *Fantasycons*. *ENDING*



Yes, there you are, Darroll!! The photo here, and that of the Fanzine Forum last time, was of course taken by good old Sam Long, with some editing by Bill Burns to stitch together two or three separate pictures into one panoramic view. He's shown me how to do that, now!

Dick Ellingsworth
rwe@blueyonder.co.uk
Hello Peter!

"If I responded to everything I'd like to, this LoC would probably be as long as *Prolapse* itself, so I'll content myself with commenting on Mike's piece. I vaguely recall the campaign for 'Charles Platt for the Doc Weir Award' episode (at Bristol) but was definitely not one of those who voted for him. He was one of only three or four people who have ever been able to stir me to thoughts of violence and, in fact, the only time I can recall ever saying anything to him was in the form of a threat. I seem to remember the words 'ram', 'teeth', 'down' and 'throat' were involved. If I was involved at all on that occasion, it would have been as part of the anti-Platt conspiracy.

"The 'disgusting designs' Mike was supposed to have had on me have, sadly, now worn away, so I can't make a small fortune by selling my body on eBay. The '57 Worldcon photos in *Tarzan Adventures* and Mike's accompanying article were what originally alerted me to the fact that fandom was not a peculiarly North American phenomenon. I sometimes wonder if anyone else was lured into fandom by that spread.

"Mike mentions a *Vector* collating session at Sandra Hall's grandmother's flat. Hardly the party he claims – apart from Sandra, Mike and myself, I can only remember Pete Taylor being present, though it's possible Barry Bayley or George Locke were there, too. (Mike knew some really nice people before he fell into Bad Company.) I'd duplicated some of the pages at work, which Mike had already collected from me, and turned up with a huge parcel of duplicating paper which had fallen off the back of a publishing company. I don't remember how many reams it was, but it was almost as big as me. Being built more like Blueborde than the Incredible Hulk, I was exhausted when I arrived. Mike and Sandra had seen me coming from the balcony and gone down to the lift to meet me, but the hall porter, eyeing this scruffy looking individual with barely disguised loathing, had directed me to the service lift, and I spent about ten minutes hammering on the kitchen door before they realised what had happened. I think Sandra finished off duping the last few pages while Mike, Pete and I started on the collating. Sandra was a nice person. The last time I can remember seeing her was on a news reel at the cinema when Ted Heath became Prime Minister. She was at the forefront of the crowds cheering him into Downing Street.

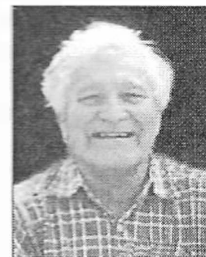


"The film involving Pete Taylor, Ivor Mayne, Pat Kearney, *et al* was something that originally Diane and I were going to be involved in. I think it was probably around the time we followed Jim and Marion Linwood to Nottingham, though, so we wouldn't have been much use. Mike's recollection of what happened to the footage doesn't seem to gel with Pat Kearney's though, as he wrote to me recently that he didn't know what had happened to it and he'd like to see it."

Dick, both Mike and I would love to see that issue of *Tarzan Adventures* with the 1957 worldcon feature, but so far we've been unable to track down a copy, even from the ERB people. Maybe someone can turn one up for us?

Bruce Burn
bburn@xtra.co.nz
Hi Peter,

So much energy!
Photo from Bruce



"Mike Moorcock's reminiscences were a delightful reminder of the youthful zest and innocence of those days. We all had so much energy! Seeing the names of so many old friends in the article brought back many memories. Of the time I lived in Balham in south London and frequently visited (and sponged dinner off) Pete and Chris Taylor. I watched the first episodes of 'Coronation Street' and 'Z-Cars' in their tiny lounge! Boozed with the best at the Liverpool Clubrooms (and also missed the Beatles...). Recall,

regularly, nights at The Globe – and especially one winter night when Mike and I for some reason invented a game called ‘Losing Brian Burgess’ in all the back alleys around Oxford Street (can you imagine anyone doing that now?).

“I arrived in the UK too late for much of what Mike describes, but did get a chance to put on armour for a rousing challenge of the SFCoL knights against The Enemy (whoever they were) at the Gloucester *LXIcon*. I remember a rather uncomfortable/ painful episode at the convention involving getting into some ‘armour’ that we’d made from cloth and pegboard slapped with silver paint. Pictures? I have a couple, which are small prints of a couple of faceless armoured idiots (me and Jim Groves and others) standing around feeling a bit silly. Do you know how much it hurts being hit with a wooden sword? It hurts enough that you don’t really want to hit anyone else!



Bruce Burn, Don Geldart & Pat Kearney are ready for the Joust at *LXIcon*. Photo from Joe Patrizio. Full report in future issue.

“I was never part of the BSFA. Dunno why. I think the sercon aspects of most members rather turned me off. On the other hand, many fans I knew well were keen members... most of the younger brigade that Ella Parker encouraged and worried over... Jim Groves, of course, who was a very keen member and editor of *Vector*. Ella was particularly concerned that the BSFA should survive. I don’t think I ever met Doc Weir, although I realise he was alive for part of the time when I was in the UK (from August 1960 to April 1963), but I knew his name well enough.

“I’m very glad you’ve got George Locke going again. You know, in my last couple of months in the UK he was so kind to me. I had forgotten how brief a time passed between my getting evicted from Kingdon Road and actually leaving England: only a matter of a few weeks. I moved into the front room of a flat he had in a building called, curiously, ‘Chelsea Gardens’, parked my Lambretta scooter round the back, spent much of my time sorting out OMPA affairs and packing my bags for the big trip, rushing to Peterborough for the *Bullcon*, and generally taking a last look around London with my sister-in-law Olive and her children.

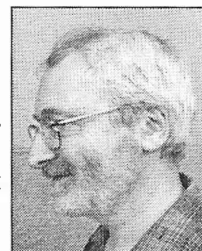
“George, of course, had a whole other life in the stacks of numerous book shops. I was virtually oblivious to all that, having essentially limited my booky expeditions to Foyles, but I was amazed at some of the huge collection George had gathered in the rooms of his flat. He kindly let me stay rent-free, realising I’d need whatever I could scratch up for the trip. All I could offer him was the Lambretta, which I hear was stolen a few weeks after I left. So, George was a friend indeed, and I’m just sorry we lost touch until about the time of *Re-RePetercon* in 2004.

“I think the scholarly Jiminy Nicholata, Don West, and yourself (and Prof. Kari) are all making a bit of a mountain of a rabbit dropping over this ‘What is Real History’ blahblah. Of course, there can never be a Complete History – that’s an Ideal, and Ideals are impossible to achieve. What is achievable is to get as near as humanly possible to the Ideal. That allows for the whole range of achievement: from the barely acceptable and one-eyed memoir of one party to the closest proximity to truth as the reader may perceive it to be. The pioneers in any field of study will do a rough dig over the territory, and later scholars may plough over the same ground yet produce different possibilities. Sometimes a scholar gets a second chance to go over the same material, refining his view of the events concerned. With the usual chaos of human procedure, gradually a description will emerge that outlines the events and the thinking of the participants concerned. Actually, in my opinion, it doesn’t matter that people will find one history unsatisfactory or partial, or that they will argue over the conclusions to be drawn from any work of history. The only important point is, as you stress, that someone makes the effort to put something down on paper, “that a necessary job has actually been done”. Later historians can then make what they consider to be improvements on what might be called the framework text. I suppose the subtext to this argument is that (a) things have to start somewhere, and (b) if you don’t like it, change it.

“This debate would not have arisen if Historians stuck to their job and stopped trying to pose as magi. In my opinion their craft is to record events not interpret them, so I tend to favour what Prof Kari calls ‘narrative history’. The danger of what I will call ‘interpretive history’ is that the historian may inadvertently (or even deliberately) impose his own attitudes on those people of an earlier age, and then draw conclusions based on his attitudes not theirs. The list of chronological facts and events is history; everything else is argument. From all this, you might gather I think Rob Hansen’s *THEN* is an important work, and you would be correct. I was there when some of the events he details were happening, and although our views on some events and the relationships of some of the people concerned might differ, the essence is there. Rob may be first to plough these fields, but there’s plenty of territory left for later fossickers.”

Roy Kettle
roy.kettle@ntlworld.com
 Hi Peter,

In charge of shelves;
 Leroy Kettle, OBE.
 Photo from Roy



“Thanks for *Prolapse*. I’ve had a few fanzines in recent years but none quite so enjoyable (though I think Rich Coad’s *Sense of Wonder* might develop that way). I particularly enjoyed Mike Moorcock’s letter with its fascinating wealth of detail and memories but was a little puzzled as to the loss of all the back numbers of *New Worlds*. I’m not sure when the fire was but at some point there were enough spare copies for heaps of back numbers to be left outside the house in Portobello Road for the edification of passers by. Greg and I liberated quite a few for our understandably doomed attempt to set up a mail order book and magazine service. If anyone genuinely wants copies of *New Worlds* 189, 190 or 195 I have some to spare...

“I feel I ought to be able to offer something to add to the wealth of human knowledge about *Seacon* ’75 other than demonstrating an inability to pose for a photograph without, well, posing. Maybe there’s something about standing up that brings it out (Peter Roberts clearly is tending that way and Pat Charnock a little too). The seated members of the committee just seem pretty cool though John Piggott is slightly bemused and Rob Holdstock looks like Malcolm Edwards’ pet gonk.

“Rob Hansen’s piece was entertaining and brought back a lot of what it was like going to cons then, though even with the help of a pretty disparate collection of photos not a lot of detail about this con comes back. I remember other ones better, oddly enough. As it happens, I’ve recently been ferreting through those boxes which the wasps haven’t yet made into nests,

many unopened and certainly unferreted-through for 15 years or more, and I came across a folder of *Seacon* '75 committee material including copies of most of the minutes. Minutes being what they are, there's a lot in them which would only serve to generate tedium (as it did sometimes then) but here are a few vaguely interesting extracts.

"From Andrew Stephenson's immaculate, detailed and very formal three-page report of a second visit to the De Vere Hotel, I'm reminded (without any feeling of nostalgia whatsoever) that the available beers were to be Double Diamond, Skol, Whitbread Tankard, and Worthington. It was like watching the cinema adverts which praised the uniformity of the chain pubs ("Watney's doors are all red now") and lied about the blandness of the beer all coming to life simultaneously. Two decisions shone through in the next minutes: "It was proposed after a lot of silly names, that the name be left as *Seacon 75*". There were obviously enough committee members prepared to let common sense prevail than you might expect. The other related to the GoH. Robert Sheckley had declined and Mike Moorcock comfortably beat Damon Knight and Tom Disch on a vote.

"A moment of unprofessional angst from the minute-taker in June 1974, under the heading 'suggestions for fannish items': "Secret Master of Fandom (SMOF) – would run during the Sunday – you are the secret master of fandom and I – oh Christ what the hell am I doing, a bloody forty-year-old man playing kid's games, I must be frigging stupid, I must be stupid to even come to these goddamn things, drinks at 24p a pint, parties with middle-aged women trying to bait me and hairy young boys chasing after famous Liverpool femme-fans...oh God...oh mother...oh John Nielsen Hall, what's it all about..."

"In October 1974, dimly recorded in what seems to be the 10th carbon copy of the original, there was much discussion about 'The Play' which was to be written by Chris Priest. Naseem Khan (the writer and long-time promoter of diversity in the area) apparently thought the plans would be too costly. The London Theatre Group might do it or possibly the Ken Campbell Roadshow but we would need a grant. In the event, what seems to have been an ambitious idea didn't materialise because of various reasons.

"The *Rob* mentioned regretfully in his con report, Mike Moorcock resigned as GoH for a number of reasons which were recorded in a short and rather depressing set of minutes from November. (I recall a committee meal which *Malcolm* attended, where the seeds of his resignation might have been sown, not least judging by the look of horror on his face when the Secret Master of Fandom item was mentioned and referred to as a sort of Lobby Ludd event.) Replacements included Harry Harrison, Philip Dick, Richard Cowper, Robert Sheckley, DG Compton and Edward Hamilton, all fine first choices for replacements. Philip Dick declined because of hypertension. RL Fanthorpe was added to the list of replacements but Harry Harrison easily beat the opposition. (I also see that my committee folder has Robert Sheckley's name scribbled on it: 'c/o Sandy's Bar, Ibiza'. Who'd be a writer?)

"A multi-media event, run by Centauri-Maya-Nexus, was voted in (eventually appearing on Friday and Saturday) though sadly we missed out on Neil Hornick's 'Phantom Captain' because their fee of about £70 was too much. You could have bought a house in Hackney for that then of course. There was unanimous agreement to Graham's suggestion of a Kilgore Trout award for the best 50-word plot for a Trout novel. Did this happen? Was it awarded? Has Graham ever written it?

"Also in the folder were a number of blank *Seacon* '75 badges with Andrew Stephenson's rather nice design. (If anyone wants to pretend that they were there too – perhaps someone whose nostalgia about things they haven't experienced needs a boost – then names can be accurately filled-in for the current price of a house in Hackney.) One badge identifies me as one of the Secret Masters of Fandom (clearly for the purpose of the game): with dynamism. Scribbled on a copy of the programme were what seem to be three other characteristics of the SMOF: secrecy (well, yes), other-worldliness and versatility. Nothing really very masterful. I also have my membership receipt which has me down for various extras including "rubber goods, as specified" with accommodation in The Rising Sun, Rangoon. We knew how to have fun then. Or, at least, the secretary liked to think we did.

"We generally eschewed formal titles being free spirits without serious jobs (or in my case any job at all) though the Secretary was Rob Holdstock and the quotes all very much his style, but I deliberately avoided naming him because of some uncertainty surrounding the reference to "a bloody forty-year-old man". That would make Rob now 75 (which even he isn't, quite) and I thought it more likely that the older and more relaxed Graham had indeed written that bit. But a little more excavating has shown it to be RPH himself. Anyway, it might generate a bit of correspondence from those of the committee who are still alive (by which I include not residing on Canvey Island). As to other people, until his resignation Andrew Stephenson was Venue Organiser and, as you rightly point out, Malcolm was Chairman. I don't think there were other named jobs. We all did various things (John Brosnan did films for example). I was in charge of shelves."

Chuck Connor
chuck@boople.com.co.uk

2000* member
Photo from Chuck



Now here's an odd bit of synchronicity. At breakfast on Monday at *Contemplation* I was talking to Greg Pickering about the massive Harry Warner collection, 'All Our Yesterdays' a copy of which I'd sold at the fan-auction for £30.00. Out of curiosity I asked Greg about the mysterious Chuck Connor character who'd published AOY, where he came from, where did he go, because all this happened while I was doing my Rip Van Winkle act. After hearing Chuck had become very important in fan-history before, in turn, disappearing, I resolved to try and track him down – but when I arrived home he'd beaten me to it. A long e-mail from Chuck was in my In-Box, quickly followed-up with five more, a 4-page letter and a box of audio CDs. Space precludes all but a small fraction of this concentrated enthusiasm.

Hi Peter,

"It was nice to slowly start getting back into fandom again and find P#4 and P#5 on *minutes*. It was good to see so many old familiar names – though as John Hall says, some have worn better than others – and Andy Sawyer looks more and more like some dodgy Scouse car dealer, than when I had the pleasure of meeting him and his family about 15 years ago. Worse yet, Steve 'Boy' Green looks like Joe Grundy from The Archers... :)

"I originally came into fandom via the two seemingly most reviled routes – *SF Monthly* and the BSFA (membership number 2000). Admittedly, I didn't hang around the BSFA for long, but the one thing it did do for me was introduce me to fanzine reviews and fanzines themselves. From there I was able to go on into 'fandom proper' – buying my first duplicator (a Gestetner 125 Schoolie – I was always a Gestetner fan, never a Roneo or a Rex Rotary) and getting a load of dodgy paper from Keith Framman back in 1979. I teamed up with another Navy guy, Alex Butcher (alas killed in a car accident way back in the

late 1980s), and put out four issues of a fanzine (*In Defiance Of Medical Opinion*) between September 79 and September 80. It didn't work for me, so in October 80 I re-launched under the same title, and ran the zine solo for a further six years and seventeen issues (about three issues per year – which tied in with the three leave periods the Forces work to.)

"I was already collecting old fanzines in the 80s, and by 1986 I had produced a very raw listing of fanzines in the then-prototype lending library concept. I sent it off to Vince Clarke (we had been regularly letterhacking to each other for years) and it was that which finally pushed him into kicking off his lending library – he had been contemplating it for a while and felt that if I was going to do something then he would throw open his own collection in order to augment things. As it was, things/deployments got too much and I dropped my idea – he carried on to great success and instilled a lot of interest in old time fanning/fan history. Come 1986 I had basically had my fill of fandom to a degree and so dropped down into apas and generally letter hacking.

"Your comments about Vince Clarke coming back into the fold once more failed to mention that – if it had not been for Terry Hill infusing Vince with his own Gosh-Wow-ness – then Vince would probably have remained inactive until his sad passing. Terry had been a quiet, low-key SF fan who found some re-bound editions of a prozine in a second-hand bookshop somewhere. He entered into correspondence with Wally Gillings and I think it was Wally who mentioned that Vince Clarke (still well gaffiated) might be able to help Terry with his personal research. Terry contacted Vince (I think there was also something about the old *Vargo Statten Magazine* – Terry and I had a love of obscure music and 'sleazy' pulp-style SF) and that was when Vince slowly started coming back into fandom. He had literally sacks of mail in the attic that he'd just received and never opened. Most, if not all, of his fanzine collection had been packed away and left. Vince found a very ready ear, and with Terry's love of history and his Gosh-Wow then undamaged, they sparked off each other until Vince was looking around and getting active again. Early on, Terry produced a zine called *Microwave* (not sure if this was just before he met Vince, or just after) and the first two issues were... welllllll, let's just say that the first two issues were, and leave it at that. This is a quote from *Ansible* #26 (June 1982) in which Dave Langford let Abi Frost do some reviews of the-then new crop of zines to come up after *Channelcon* in 1982. Anyway, here's the 'review':

'One can always tell a crudzine because ... well, maybe not. Never mind, one can always tell them. Terry Hill's *Microwave* amazed me. Internal evidence suggests that it's based on the fanzines of pre-Fouler days; remind me never to tease Kettle or Pickersgill again. The cover is a rebus which does not take pronunciation into account; the inside is littered with jokes from those graffiti books. Hill intends, apparently, to start a column called 'Cunning Stunts'; I don't object to 'that kind of language' in fanzines, but a certain feminist theatre group might sniff a bit.... One of the true stigmata of the crudzine is its editor's assumption that he is the first person ever to have heard these jokes, or (perhaps) that they have some kind of ritualistic Ur-funniness. Another is the cheery bit by spouse about the editor's obsession with rocket-ships; yes, kids, there's one here too. Still, *Microwave*'s faults seem to stem from utter naivete, a disease which tends to cure itself. The productions of what the ever-felicitous Leeds Mob call 'university shitheads' are far more culpable. Two of these are to hand....'

"The reason why it was 'pre-Fouler days' was that Vince had not had the pleasure of experiencing Ratfandom, and so his concepts of what a zine was (and therefore Terry's formative role model) were still 1950s. Terry was in new territory and to some degree Vince should have had a more guiding hand at the start, but *Microwave* ran for three years and eight issues, and became a sort-of magnet for 50's fandom/old-school fandom. By 1985, with their son (I think?) born and into the terror-tot stage things were getting a bit much for him. I think he was made redundant as well. Mind you, by 1985 Vince was in full swing again, and going by the few letters I can recall, Terry was feeling a little bit pushed-out/pushed onto the sidelines. The last I remember Vince saying was that Terry had moved on to another of his loves/hobbies – photography – and had sort of drifted into the Glades.

"I have to admit that the Doc Weir material was of little interest to me – apart from seeing mentions of Ken Cheslin. At the time when I had that file for personal research Ken was still alive and kicking, and I remember the first time I met him at one of the *Novacons* or *Mexicons* back in the mid to late 90's (it was in Birmingham) he was forever doing things with elastic bands and bits of string – paperclips even – so that mechanical arm of his looked like some kind of Heath Robinson/Victorian Alternative Universe concoction. Probably scared the hell out of some people, but Johnny Rickett and myself kept him company whenever he was around. John and I used to help finance the printing of Ken's *Olaf* stuff, and the John Berry material. I miss his hand-coloured covers (and even he admitted over the weekend I stayed with him and Jean, his disabled wife – baäck when they had all the cats, rather than Daisy, the Jack Russell that Jean got and which Ken never quite took a shine to, if his apa contributions were to be taken as gospel – that yes, he had taken in his fanzine covers to school, and got his classes to colour them in as part of their art lessons...) One of their children went off to play with the band 'Ned's Atomic Dustbin' – Ken was proud when they finally got the USA tour. Sadly, he died of a heart attack in a shop doorway. Jean was having to use a mobility cart by then and had to just keep shouting for help until someone noticed and finally did something. I miss him for his complete and utter fanarchy, and for the fact that he still kept on fanning even though others (who should have known a lot better) insisted on slagging him down every chance they got.

"I'll move on to 'The Melting Pot' and your reply to Robert Lichtman about Harry Warner Jr's writings being subject to criticism. At *Attitude*, when I was giving out some of the last scraps of the AOY thing, there was an Aussie (Kim Huett?) who took one, and then mailed it back from Australia with a very snotty letter saying that it was nowhere near factual, some of the information had been discredited in fannish articles of recent times, bitched that he couldn't use it as a reference book because of those 'flaws', and totally missed the fecking point. It was Harry, being Harry, and just letting it flow as good conversation. It was never designed as a be-all and end-all reference work, and I repeatedly stated that both in the forward and also in the 'advertising' that went out when we finally got the first paper release going.

"To me, fandom was – and still is, dammit – about having fun, a laugh and a joke – and it is not about sitting down and memorising every last itty bitty micro-fecking-sopic detail so that it can be recounted ad-nauseam as if in some kind of fannish version of 'Mastermind'. I don't particularly care who sawed Courtney's boat. I can respect it as a 'fannish artefact', but I keep it in its rightful place – I pray at the temple of FIJAGDH, before going off to the bordello of Fundom. I still treasure my copies of *Warhoon 28*, the Harry Warner Jr hardbacks, *The Enchanted Duplicator*, along with *Fancy/Fancy II* and *THE IMMORTAL STORM* – and in the same 'boat' I'd place Rob's *THEN* – because they are of their time – they are not the definitive history of the world as we know it, and it would be wrong to assume that they contain the One True Word by which any and every act of fannishness should be tested."

Mark Plummer
mark.plummer@btinternet.com
Peter.

The venerable Mark at
Houston airport
Photo by Rob Jackson



"*Prolapse* remains a pretty much immediate cover-to-cover read, accompanied by several 'Good God, did *** really used to look like that?' boggles, but this time I was most interested in those snippets of Doc Weir Award lore. I think I've seen the basic outline of the creation myth elsewhere – probably in THEN – but I do like the splendid imprecision of the Cheslin/Mercer original statement of purpose, that fans should vote for the person they would most like to see win the award, which comes without any intimation as to why they might so decide. You can see why people are often confused about what it is for.

"And I am intrigued by the only-hinted-at story represented by Eve Harvey's 1982 letter to Peter Mabey. This touches on something about which I've been curious for some time, albeit in a very low-level way such that my curiosity never actually rouses me to enquire of those who might know. But just what did happen to the Doc Weir Award in the 1980s? When Claire and I were working on publications for the 1998 Eastercon (yes, I know, it's almost heretical to even mention such a recent event in *Prolapse*) we thought to include various convention-related lists in the programme book: the chronology of previous Eastercons of course, but also the roll of TAFF and GUFF winners and the past recipients of the DWA. I pretty much had it in my head that these were all standard features, so I was a little surprised to discover that a list of Doc Weir winners hadn't been published in any of the programme books to which I then had access and which covered the previous decade. I think that in the end I actually got the list from Roger Robinson who'd copied it from the cup itself when he won it in 1992. You can see why many fans were uncertain as to what it was all about when their only knowledge of previous winners came from those presentations that they'd attended.

"But I remember wondering back then what had caused all those 'No Award's back in the 1980s. I know there was some contemporary criticism of Ina's win in 1976, but from my perspective the 1970s list looks pretty solid, and not at all representative of an award that was out of touch or in decline. I've read Greg's piece (in *Stop Breaking Down* #7) criticising those who voted for John Brunner in 1981, so I'm guessing that Eve's letter maybe represents a related sentiment. *Ansible* #26 says 'Doc Weir Award not presented at Channelcon as a result of recent dissatisfaction; a BSFA working party is supposed to be working toward Electoral Reform' and there was, as you note, no presentation in 1983 either but in 1984 the DWA reappeared in *PR* when everyone thought it dead. This because a BSFA chairman who shall be nameless had the trophy valued, found it to be solid silver and worth £1000, and understandably decided it had 'better' be presented to get the responsibility off his hands' (*Ansible* #38). After presentations in 1984 and 1985 (Joyce Slater and James White respectively) there was another hiatus in 1986 – a letter from Vince Docherty in *Conrunner* #6 says '[W]e had tremendous problems at *Albacon III* in trying to ascertain who was supposed to run the Doc Weir Award' – then a return in 1987 (Brian Burgess) and another gap in 1988, and then Vince won it in 1989 after which it's been an annual thing again.

"I did notice in the course of writing this that while many earlier winners are still thriving – such as yourself – every 1980s winner of the Award is now dead. Another noteworthy point is that this year's winner, Sue Edwards, is the first female recipient of the award since 1995 when it was won by Bernie Evans. I'm rather embarrassed to admit that the recent dearth of female winners had to be pointed out to me, although I take some consolation from the fact that none of the people (female and male) to whom I subsequently pointed it out myself had noticed it either. It becomes particularly obvious when you look back at the list of earlier winners and see that female winners were relatively common: four out of the first ten. I wonder if there's some truth in the theory that the Doc Weir Award acknowledges the unsung heroes of fandom and men are generally better at being unsung in a nevertheless visible kind of way...

"And I suppose I shouldn't be surprised to see that Doc Weir uncertainty continues. This year's ballot form introduced what I believe to be an entirely new rule, that you can't win the Award twice. It's true that nobody's ever has, and to be honest I think it's actually pretty unlikely that anybody would, but I'm not aware that it's ever been a 'rule'. Still, the idea's out there now and so I suppose it may yet resurface. I keep waiting for the statement that the Doc Weir is an award for con-runners – made overtly at one of the presentations in the late nineties – to reappear..."

Some criticism of Ina's win in 1976? – well, yes, I'm critical about that, too. She should have won at least ten years earlier! (Seventies fans just had no idea of what Ina had done for fandom over a 25 year-period). And I think the reason the DWA nearly folded is due to the circumstances of 1982. Archie Mercer always made it his business to ensure it actually was given every year and the facts about Doc Weir had been quite well known because he had put them into every convention programme book. Peter Mabey carried on as Administrator, but it must have come as a very unwelcome surprise when Eve Harvey sent him a long formal letter in 1982, going on about 'public acceptability' for the award, and wanting to know all sorts of things about the way it was managed before Channelcon would allow it to be presented. Archie might have given as good as he got, but I should think Peter was pretty baffled, with the result that Eve sent another 2-pager declining to take it on board. A bit over-zealous, in my opinion, particularly since they wanted changes made which weren't up to the 1982 committee to make. As Peter has explained here, he decided to get out from under and sent the whole mess back to the BSFA, with the predictable results you can guess. The only mystery to me is how the thing was ever put back onto an even keel. Perhaps Steve Green will tell us? Thanks also for the revelation that the cup was indeed solid silver (in which case that 'peeling' must have been largely imaginary).

Andy Sawyer
A.P.Sawyer@btinternet.com
Hi Peter,

'Looking like a dodgy Scouse
car dealer' – Check Connor



"Reading D. West's letter – his 'Assume nothing' is I suppose what I meant during our brief conversation at *Contemplation* – there's an awful lot that we think we know about the history of both SF and fandom and of course we don't, because we've simply assumed. The figures he quotes are interesting and I wish I had access to Ron Bennett's *Directories* (sadly there are none in the SF Foundation library) because they suggest a number of questions:

"Nearly 50 people 'dropped out' of UK fandom between 1956 and 1958: can we say who? Why? What did these people think they were getting: were they members of local groups who got bored/dropped out/moved/became interested in other things, or what? Did any of them actually return over the next few years? Can we discern such a thing as an average 'stay' in fandom? (And probably, who's interested anyway in the hobbies of fifty unknown people a lifetime ago?

"Well, I am, and you are, but maybe we're a minority. But I'd really like to know the answers to some of these questions – even to know if they are answerable). Another question that might be interesting to ask: I was part of the cohort that – so we're told – almost wrecked the BSFA by writing to join after hearing about it in *Science Fiction Monthly*. As Rob Hansen reports in *THEN*:-

"Where the plug in *Science Fiction Monthly* had boosted *Tynecon*, its effect on the BSFA proved disastrous. A huge number of enquiries resulted, more than the membership secretary could handle. There were now an enormous number of people out there interested in SF (and, potentially, fandom) and *SFM* had provided them with a point of entry to the SF and fan community they might otherwise never have found. After years of struggling, the BSFA had now received a massive and unexpected show of interest that, if it could be harnessed, might revitalise the Association. It was not to be, however. As Graham Poole reports: "At the convention the news was released that at least 1200 people had up to then enquired after recent adverts for the BSFA appeared in *SFM*."

"I finally weaseled my way in by writing and asking what was going on, and receiving photocopies of a mailing and eventually when the Association dragged itself together I found myself part of it and thus enter history. So: who were the others? Some of those 1200 must have stayed the course, even to the point of being around when the BSFA Rose Again. It's my memory that quite a lot of the people who like me were active in the post-*SFM* BSFA were newcomers of that generation, but as D. says: 'Assume nothing'. I occasionally have a creepy feeling that I was the one who got ensnared, the one who people snigger about ('You know that guy Sawyer? He *stayed* in fandom . . . the other 1199 of us managed to escape.')

David Bratman

dbratman@earthlink.net

Dear Peter,

Old history major

Photo from David



"I'm an old college history major, and whenever these days I'm recruited to write what should probably be an article of literary criticism it turns into a history piece instead, and I'd like to throw whatever weight I have towards the view that Rob Hansen's *THEN* is history, and useful, well-researched history too. If Rob is light on the interpretive side, that's because fact-gathering needs to be done first, and if he leans towards one particular interpretation of the facts, that's what his sources are telling him. In other words, I'd say to Kari that all the alternative interpretations and secondary interpretations of 1066 aren't going to do any good unless someone writes the received, basic skeleton history about the surface deeds of Edward and Harold and William first. And that's what Rob is doing. I know there are serious critiques to be made of Harry Warner's fan histories; I've heard people mutter them into their beer. Well, let's hear them out loud. Harry's work is the thesis, but it's been around for a while. Now let's have the counter-thesis.

"Something else that Rob said, and this right on page 8 of your issue, jumped out at me as begging for some historical analysis. The young Hansen, attending his first convention, sees a lot of people who know each other but whom he doesn't know. He writes, 'I envied them their obvious sense of community without in any way feeling deliberately excluded from it. This would not be true of a later generation.'

"Well, that interested me, because I brought up the same point in my article 'Corflu at the Table' in *Vegas Fandom Weekly* 94 recently. And I asked: since newer fans now have this strange impatience with the fact that older fans already have a community and a life, and consequently spread the claim that fanzine fandom is elitist and unwelcoming, why? Where did they get the gall to demand that we shape our pre-existing culture to them? Why didn't my generation – the supposedly egoist and self-centered 'baby boomers' (ghu, I hate that name) – act that way when we entered fandom in the 1960s and 70s? I await the historian who can really answer that question.

"But maybe it's not just the post-1980 generation. I jumped to Tom Shippey's letter, because I'm a Tolkienist and we Tolkienists consider Prof. Shippey, as he's respectfully known, as the ornament of our profession, but here I find a serconist's grudge against 'trufans' (as if they were a distinct group, which is kind of news to me). It does sound rather as if some in-group somewhere once snubbed him, which is too bad. But there *are* no distinct groups: I'm both sercon and a member of that fandom-for-its-own-sake that doesn't much discuss SF, and I hate to see my friends fight. I agree with Tom that SF readers, not partygoers, ought to be our recruiting ground, but only in some pathetic third-generation photocopy of fandom (such as found at some large, mediocre American conventions, alas) is that likely to be a problem. I define fans as SF readers who keep on talking even when SF is no longer the topic, and Tom shouldn't worry about us when we're not discussing SF. Scratch even dedicated trufans and you'll usually find someone with a long devotion to SF and the credentials to prove it. I mean, *The Enchanted Duplicator* was co-authored by a man who called a sercon article the best thing he'd ever written and the man who wrote the story 'Light of Other Days'. I don't think either of them had anything to apologise for, writing elitist allegorical stories about the Perfect Fanzine."

Yes, David, I spotted that line of Rob's and found it a bit hard to believe; there has rarely been a less-tolerant time in British fandom than the early-to-mid seventies, and if Rob really felt like that then he must have been some sort of latter-day saint! As for Tom, well, let's just say he's been hurt by some of the more extreme cases he's encountered in fandom.

Jerry Kaufman

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Peter,

"You can say there's not much of interest to American readers (in *Prolapse* #5), but I've got to disagree. Suzle and I are among the rare Americans who recognized the cartoonist of last issue's cover, and this one, too: Giles. I well remember that when we were in London on one of our 1980s visits, we found a used bookshop in Charing Cross that had a whole bunch of the collections of Giles work in stock. I remember because I had to lug the things around – Suzle got ten or fifteen of them! Suzle's the big Giles fan here.

"In the letters, John Hall comments on the photos in a most unflattering way. Wonder what he'll make of the new batch, including his own? I look, unfortunately, like Billy Bob Thornton in 'Slingblade'. Greg Benford looks like Edward Mulhaire (or whatever his name was) who starred as the Ghost in the TV version of 'The Ghost and Mrs. Muir'. Let's not get started on anyone else.

"I found all the material about 'The Wizard of Ozimov' quite absorbing. I noticed that in Arthur's memories of the play, he remembers James Blish as the Wizard saying, "Oh no, I'm a very good fan, just a very bad author!" In the script, he's supposed to say, "Oh no my dear, I'm a very good fan, I'm just a very bad wizard." Did Mr. Blish change the script from 'Wizard' to 'author', or is Arthur remembering the response incorrectly? I think 'author' would have raised a much bigger laugh, so maybe Arthur is right and Blish was inspired on the moment. I'm sure that Terry Carr (and perhaps others), writing under the Carl Brandon name, did a version of the 'Oz' story called, 'The BNF of Iz'. It wasn't included in either *The Incomplete Terry Carr* or *The Portable Carl Brandon*, so I can't give you particulars.

"The feature put me in mind of our production of 'The Enchanted Duplicator' as performed by Razz Bazz Rep in 1982. Bob Shaw was the Guest of Honour at *Norwescon* in Seattle that year, so we Seattle fans decided to perform a version of TED in his honour. I've got the program book for the play right here, with all the details. A local fan (no longer active), Shelley Dutton was the driving force, it says, and came up with the idea of doing a play. I was the one who suggested turning TED into that play. Gary Farber and I "wrote" the first draft. (I put "wrote" into quotes because largely we decided what narration to cut, what to turn into dialogue and what to leave for our narrators, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, to intone.

"Shelley did the final draft of the play, assisted, it says here, 'by her trusty collaborator, Pressure of Events'. She also directed, produced and wrote bits for the program book. Suzle played the Spirit of Fandom, Gary was Jophan, I played several characters (Disillusion and Profan), and numerous other Seattle fans took other parts. In addition to narrating, Patrick and Teresa published the program book, which includes credits, author and actor bios, a glossary of terms, and an essay by Gary on 'The Meaning of it All'.

"I've realized that this all deserves a remembrance as much as 'The Wizard of Ozimov', so I think I'm going to do more research and get other participants to write their memories down – for a future issue of *Littlebrook*. Therefore I'm only going to mention in passing the rehearsals, the challenges of gathering props (F.M. and Elinor Busby lent us their Hugo for Profan to fondle), the disastrous dress rehearsal, and the triumphal performance (well, people did laugh in the right places). It was only years later that I ran across a Bob Shaw letter in a fanzine, in which he wrote about being forced to watch this ghastly offering. Humph!

"The reminiscences will have to include the mysterious tapes of the performance that the AV people at *Norwescon* produced. I remember it was a two-camera set-up, one taping the actors, the other taping the narrators. We heard about these tapes for years, and eventually one of them was delivered to someone in our group. Unfortunately, it was the one of the narrators, so all we saw was Patrick and Teresa as they read from their scripts, changing places as they took over from one another. We could somewhat hear the actors off-camera, and every once in a while Gary could be made out as he crossed the stage. I have no idea who has this tape now."

Jerry, if your group did THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR does that mean (surely not!) that there's a bogus Shield of Umor lying around somewhere? Is nothing sacred? I thought we all agreed that the One True Shield resides in a shed at the bottom of Greg's garden?

Jim Cawthorn
Gateshead
Dear Pete,

Boy in a box! Photo by
Lars-Olov Strandberg

"No, I don't think we ever met. But I was at the 1974 *Tynecon*, although I was living in London then. I hadn't known, or had forgotten, that it had been so well-received. But I'm afraid I don't remember most of the events mentioned in *Prolapse*.

"Two things I do recall are, first, Eddie Jones' explosive reaction when I told him that our local TV station had featured the Con Art Show on their midday news (I'd thought he would be pleased...) and, second, my sister's 11-year-old son appearing in a robot

costume she'd knocked together at short notice from cardboard boxes, glue, staples, and red fabric. The textured surface of the robot's head, my sister says, was created by sticking net-curtains to it, and painting over them. There was no children's section in the costume event, so SF artist Karel Thole created one on the spot, and presented him with a prize.

"Mike's letter reminded me of my first sight of Sandra's grandmother's flat, a revelation to a simple working-class lad, (as indeed were those of Sandra and Tikwis). The sitting-room looked equal in area to the entire flat in which I grew up.

"By all means use my artwork (in the *Cheltenham* feature). Stencil-cutting now feels as remote as lettering on vellum by candle-light."

Mike Kilvert,
Stourbridge

Way back in 1984 I reported on the 1959 *Brumcon*, and concluded that despite the best hopes of the newly-formed BSFA, it had probably succeeded in bringing only *three* newcomers into fandom: the Stourbridge party, led by Ken Cheslin, with tea-drinking champion Peter Davies and Mike Kilvert, which inspired the creation of SADO, The Stourbridge & District Circle. Rog Peyron read this with amazement, 'Mike Kilvert at a convention!' he marvelled, because apparently though a long-term *Andromeda* customer Mike had never attended a *Novacon* or anything else in living memory. Then I noticed Archie Mercer had listed him as also having attended the 1960 London con, and curious, I began to ring various members of the Kilvert family in Stourbridge until I tracked-down Mike and sent him an issue. As a result we've started an interesting correspondence with some genuinely new insights:

Dear Peter,

"Your dates for the beginning of SADO were wrong; the group was formed during the winter of 1957/58. Ken, Peter and I had been friends since 1947, and we travelled to the 1958 Eastercon with the Cheltenham group who 'launched' us as SADO, and were told that three-person SF groups had always failed!! Ken's route to fandom was the same as yours, with fanzines from Ken Slater. He had been corresponding with fans and groups and had just contacted Cheltenham, who suggested we should go along to Kettering.



"What Ken was enthusiastic about after *Brumcon* was to get *Les Spinge* written; the name had been decided when the group was formed, but nothing had been done. In 1959 we advertised in the local paper for new members, and had one reply, from someone called Tony Hill. He became a fan-artist later, and had some illos published. I think I've found a negative of a picture taken to celebrate *Les Spinge* being returned from printing (my local shop could not handle 2¼" size); I apologise for the gurning Tony, he would *not* behave! I never met Dave Hale and Darroll Pardoe, they must have joined after I went into the Army (February 1960). As you know, Ken died in 2000, but Peter Davies is still alive and well, though he left SF after falling-out with Ken in the early 60s.

"As to Kettering, I'm also enclosing a negative (the only one I have from this con). This gang always went around together; the one nearest the camera, with a wisp of beard, was quite a character. I took this seconds after another one, which I called 'The Dancing Men'. They're almost mirror-images of one another. I had just taken the first shot when Ella & co. left the hotel, saw what had happened, and did a copy-dance (I caught her from her best angle, didn't I!) But I've had another search and can't find the negative of the first picture; I sent the print to one of the three furthest from the camera, so it may still exist somewhere.

"I did take another picture, of a teenage girl in fancy dress as a witch. On her cloak was written 'Drinka Pinta Blooda Day'. She won the best costume prize. She was always in the company of another teenage girl, they would have been about seventeen, but unfortunately I sent the negative and print to her. Looking at the photos of Sandra Hall in *Prolapse*, she looks as if she might be one of the girls. [I suggested the other one was probably her sister, Tikwis].

"Now, who chaired the con? I never knew his name. This suggests there was *no* printed programme. He was about 5'5" tall, stocky build, aged about 45, hair going thin on top, he was a gentleman. [I sent Mike a picture of Dave Newman]. Yes, that *is* him, but I didn't recognise him at first because he didn't wear glasses at the con, they must have been for long-distance use.

"It was unbearably hot in the hotel, and on the Sunday afternoon, I think, about sixteen of us went sightseeing, with Brian Burgess as our guide. Yes, that other girl was Tikwis, although as Mike Moorcock reminded me, I knew her as Tikki. She partnered me on the sightseeing trip, she was very pleasant company; wasn't I the lucky one!

"As to Archie Mercer's comments, the answer is no, I was not at the 1960 con, it would have been impossible. I went into the Army on 16th February and did 8 weeks basic training. On Monday 12th April I had a 24-hour pass and orders to be at Larkhill Camp by 2.00pm the next day. The con was on the following Saturday, and in the morning I was loading coal, and in the afternoon a load of coke. I would *much* rather have been at the con! The food at camp was inedible, I lost two stone. All I wanted was plenty of home-cooking and my own bed, even for one night. My next leave was after six months' service. The army must have changed me, for I abandoned all my childhood and teenage friends, I didn't see Ken again (other than a brief glimpse at my wedding in June 1962) for thirteen years."

Great pictures, Mike, pity the others have gone, probably forever. But I think you're a little unkind to Dave Newman, from photographs and by inference, I shouldn't think he would have been much over 30 at Kettering, (and maybe a bit taller than your estimate). But when you're only eighteen, everyone looks so much older – witness the fabled extreme age of 'Doc' Weir – only 55 when he died. As for the Hall sisters, I asked Mike Moorcock "what kind of name is 'Tikwis'?", to which he replied, "It's a Balinese-Dutch name. Her mother was Australian. I think their father was American. In the catering/hotel business. They had interests in the East Indies – lots of Balinese souvenirs and such. I think her mother was romantic about all that. Sandra's mother died and the grandmother ('Honey') then took over their care. She was from Virginia and had a sharp tongue, but I rather liked her."

D. West

16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, BD23 6NX

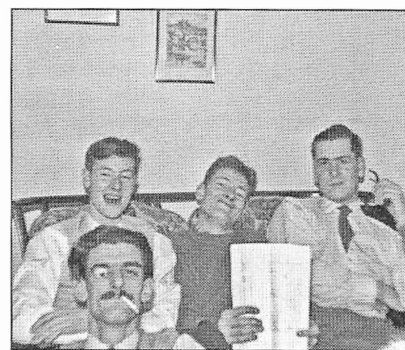
Dear Peter,

"Thanks for *Prolapses* 3 and 6. Sorting my old fanzines I came across 1 and 2, so I now have a full set. Getting things in order proceeds, but slowly, since I keep being distracted by the interesting-looking stuff. But how very, very bad some of those early fanzines were... So much for Golden Ages.

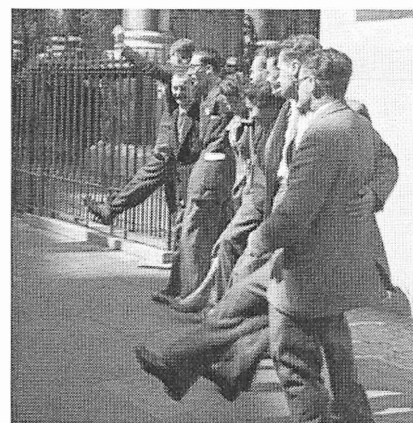
"Back in the present, it was an entertaining memoir by Mike Moorcock, though of the people he mentions the only one I knew well (at least before I started con-going in the 70s) was Graham Hall. But Pete Taylor did turn up at one of the Brighton conventions (1984?). He seemed worn but lively, and I remember being impressed by his expressed determination to stay the night even if he had to doss under the pier. (I was sleeping on someone's floor myself, so couldn't offer much help.)

"I actually signed up (with my wife) for the *Seacon 75* event, but there was some last minute difficulty (about childcare, probably) so my first Eastercon turned out to be 1976. *Mancon* has always been given a very low rating, but its deficiencies didn't really bother me. Meeting hordes of SF fans was enough of a challenge, and at that time I had no experience of expensive hotels, so the somewhat seedy surroundings suited me just fine. More like what I was used to. Anyway, if I missed the De Vere in 1975 I caught the repeat in 1977, when virtually the same cast seems to have appeared.

"I was not impressed by your counter-attack on behalf of Rob Hansen's THEN. Dismissing my article as "6½ A4-pages of criticism and vituperation; some good points and a great deal of wind" is rhetoric, not argument. Likewise, your little anecdote of the boss who jealously criticised his subordinate's work is nothing but a diversionary tactic. After all, only the first two parts of THEN had been published when my article was written, so what else were my criticisms but "useful suggestions for improvement"? (Though I admit that some of them might have been more tactfully expressed.) And sure, THEN is the only attempt at a British fan history we've got — but that's all the more reason for it to be given a rigorous examination. Non-

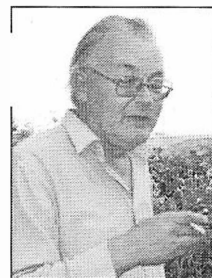


The first *Les Spinge*; on settee are Peter Davies, Mike Kilvert, & Ken Cheslin, with Tony Hill in front.



Knees-Up at Kettering (left to right): Brian Burgess, Eric Bentcliffe, Ron Bennett, Ella Parker, John Roles, Ethel Lindsay, Norman Shorrocks, Phil Rogers, Ken Slater.

Getting things in order..
Photo by Ian Sorensen



history is covered by any number of different works giving different viewpoints, so there's less danger of any one version being accepted as absolutely incontrovertible, but a solo volume is all too likely to be taken as Holy Writ.

"Still, as Kari says, we're really talking about two different kinds of 'History'. There's 'Traditional' or 'Narrative' history which is "the recitation of facts or of events accepted as basically factual" and there's the more exhaustive version which attempts to establish not just what happened but how and why it happened. The Hansen THEN is obviously in the first category. As you now acknowledge, it's primarily a chronology.

"And what's wrong with that? (you say). After all, a chronology may not explain the whys and wherefores of events in so many words, but it does provide an outline from which the basic explanation may be inferred. Well, up to a point. Unfortunately, chronology-as-history only works when the events listed are decisive and have a clear cause and effect relationship."

*Here, Don, probably to your intense irritation, I'm cutting the other two pages of your argument – partly through lack of space, but also because I just don't want to make a big thing of this. All I'm trying to do in *Prolapse* is report on past fannish events, as accurately and entertainingly as I can manage, from multiple viewpoints where I can get them. Call it history or chronology, I don't much care. Point out errors and omissions and I'll take note – and I'm sure Rob feels the same about THEN. But let's concentrate on the substance and not get too bogged-down in theory; for instance, I'd love you to do a piece on early 80s Leeds-area fandom. How about it?*

Malcolm Edwards
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Dear Peter,

"I wanted to put in a good word for Rob Hansen and THEN, a project which I think deserves more credit than Don West and others seem willing to give it. I, on the other hand, admire almost uncritically the work Rob put in to researching and writing it. It's true that it is a bit plodding and laboured in parts, but it isn't intended to be read for its wit and insight: it's an attempt to set down as clearly and factually as Rob could all the key events, and (as far as I remember) in all the bits of which I have personal knowledge I didn't notice any major inaccuracies. There are stretches which can't have been much more interesting to research and write than they are fun to read, but Rob does in his dogged way get it all down on paper. If anyone else ever wanted to write about any of this stuff, THEN would be the essential first port of call.

"And of course, in the kind of document of record which Rob aimed to produce, there would certainly have been no place for such an absurdity as me appearing in a convention fancy dress parade, even as part of a joke. I've always had a complete horror of any kind of fancy dress – God knows why – and only ever attended them when there really was nothing else to do. Had I had my way there wouldn't even have been one at *Seacon* '75, but unfortunately I've never managed actually to be the ruthless dictator which some people seem to think I am, so it went ahead as usual.

"My main thought, looking back at the convention, is just how young and inexperienced we all were. (Obviously I'm much, much younger than people like Charnock, Holdstock and Kettle, but still...) But when we won the bid, at *Tynecon*, it was the fifth convention I had ever been to (four Eastercons and one Novacon) and I was 24. Some of the others had three or four years' more of convention-going under their belts, but I doubt if any of us – except maybe Peter Roberts – had been to as many as ten conventions. And there was no great body of 'con-running' experience to draw on, so we just went ahead – as I'm sure you did in 1971 – based on the views we had about what we liked and didn't like about the conventions we'd been at. I'm sure it meant a certain amount of re-inventing the wheel, but it also meant we weren't too hung up about what a convention 'ought' to feature, aside from the twin ideas that it was about SF and that it should be fun.

"(I think we took much the same approach, writ larger, to *Seacon* '79, which as you will remember was a worldcon basically organized by 10 people – many more people helped, obviously – and enormously much the better for it in my view.)

"I can remember Andrew Stephenson resigning from the committee when we insisted on inviting Mike Moorcock to be Guest of Honour (Mike having basically been missing from any fan events apart from the occasional visit to the Globe for the previous five years.) Andrew predicted – accurately as it turned out – that Mike wouldn't see it through, even if he accepted. I don't remember Greg ever actually becoming part of the organizing committee, and I suspect he went through one of those Greg 'I-know-you-don't-really-want-me-so-I-won't-turn-up-and-then-you-won't-have-to-throw-me-out' moments. But I could be wrong about that.

"Looking back, I was staggeringly ill-equipped, for example, to negotiate with the hotel – the only hotels I'd ever even stayed in were the ones which had hosted those other conventions – and I can still remember the awful pit-of-the-stomach feeling on arriving and discovering that, without any consultation, the hotel had decided for the weekend to replace their coffee shop menu with a 'special' convention deal which consisted of something like shepherd's pie with or without chips. I seem to remember calling on reinforcements in the form of some elderly fan (you) to explain to the manager that this was not acceptable.

"Otherwise, I'm afraid my most vivid memory is of going into town for fish and chips on Saturday lunchtime with Roy Kettle and Don West. We sat at a table with the remnants of the previous occupants' lunch. Don ate his way through their leftover chips and fish skin, and then got up and left. Roy and I pretended he was some tramp we didn't know who had just wandered in. Or was that 1977?"

Pat Charnock
patcham@beyond.co.uk
Dear Peter,

"Everyone I know, apart from Kettle, has been too polite to mention the hot pants. I hope it will stay that way. And since we mentioned Kettle, I was really pleased to see part of Peter Nicholls "Circles of Hell" con-rep in *Prolapse* 6. I was inordinately proud to be able to publish it in *Wrinkled Shrew* – I thought it was great. And he has captured so perfectly how Leroy would cut to the chase and give no quarter. And I really enjoyed Mike Moorcock's rambling reminiscences.

"I've been away from fandom for a long time, Peter. Oh, some of my best friends were acquired in fandom, but I haven't been active, Lo! these many years. And even back in those days, I didn't really give great loc. And these days, I've got the dictum of Lichtman hanging over me – the 'don't even bother to send a loc if you're not going to manage three pages of quarto sent by snail-mail'. So will you settle for a WAHF instead of a loc?"

Randy Byers
fringeaan@yahoo.com
Dear Peter,

"Was it just me, or did I feel a burst of electricity coming from this issue even before I pulled my copy out of its envelope? ('Crack!'. 'Arrgh, shit!') Maybe it wasn't until I saw the cover, with its conflicting cohorts, or maybe it wasn't until I read the lead editorial, in which you addressed theories of fan-history and its discontents in your cheerfully and pointedly argumentative way. Or maybe it was the first glimpse of the lettercol, which seemed like time-travelling indeed in the way that pros participate in it so fannishly. (Tip of the hat to Tom Shippey for a most fannish poke at trufen. Ouch, thank you, sir.)

"Whatever the case, *Prolapse* has become, as I said on one e-list or another, a Zeitgeist zine, even if the Zeit is thirty or forty or fifty years ago. I have nothing more relevant or engaged to contribute, but I just had to jump up and down and be enthused at you for a bit, Peter. I read every word of this issue, that's how excited I got about it! I thought all the *Seacon* coverage was terrific (perhaps shaded by my attendance of *Seacon '03*), thought the Moorcock piece showed its seams but was chockfull of entertaining anecdotes nonetheless, laughed at Greg Pickersgill's sorry story, and was utterly, shamefully in awe of the lettercol. Well, okay, one bit of substance: I think D. West is right that hard numerical fan-historical data is of great interest (although also something to be cautious about, because no data is ever complete, as Kari says), and it's interesting to wonder whether detailed fanzine indexes such as Robert Lichtman's or Greg Pickersgill's (of those I know about) could be mined for statistics on fanzine production and distribution. Old mailing lists also seem like a potential goldmine of information, if those have been saved in any form. Great food for thought and sense of community throughout the issue, Peter. I even enjoyed your "Why Are You Receiving This Issue?" list. Five months into the year, and so far you've got my vote in the FAAn Awards, for whatever that's worth.

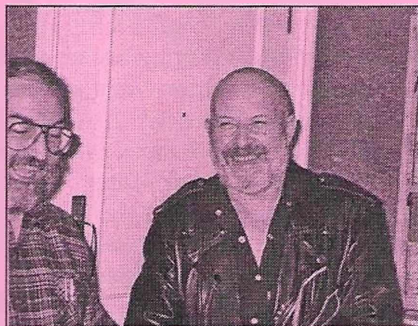
"It's not flattery! I really do think you've tapped into something powerful here, and this issue felt like a dormant sector of British fandom had suddenly roused itself and decided to put on a show or something. You've clearly struck a nerve, and it is awesome and inspiring to behold the response. It's also heartening to see a fanzine playing a role like this. Makes me feel that fanzines may still have a purpose after all."

Fay Symes
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Here's Fay again, who I met for the first time at *Novacon* last year, but who has been coming to conventions with husband David for an awfully long time – and keeping notes along the way. This is her third instalment.

Dear Peter,

"My fifth convention was a big one. 'Britain is Fine in 79' won the Worldcon bid, and wonder of wonders, it was on the South Coast, so we could drive to Brighton instead of having to spend hours on a train to the alien wilderness north of Watford. The Metropole Hotel was a great venue and the programme was fantastic. We saw a rare copy of the original BBC television serial of *Quatermass and the Pit* – not the only copy, we hoped, as projector trouble burnt a few holes in it – and met Frank Hampson, my hero, who created 'Dan Dare'. We also became friends with the infamous Lionel Fanthorpe (at that time, an atheist, with no hint of what he would become) and later became publicity agents for his even more infamous novel *THE BLACK LION*. (Signed copies for sale, anyone?) Being young and poor we opted for a local guest house called 'Le Flemings'. It had a leaky bathroom on a half-landing encased in rickety hardboard, guests coming and going all night, and we did rather a lot of scratching. It had bed bugs. Afterwards, we heard on the news it had been prosecuted for running a brothel. After that we vowed to steer clear of adventures and always stay in the main con hotel.



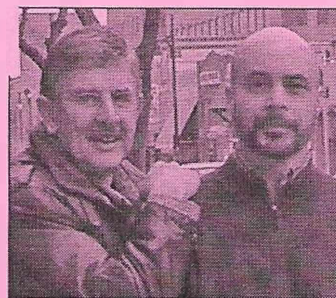
Andy England & Lionel Fanthorpe in 1991. Photo by Roger Robinson.

"1980 brought us to London for a special one-day *Eagle* Comic convention, in a seedy YMCA, with an uninvited mouse running about under the tables. Charles Chilton – another life-long hero for creating 'Journey Into Space' – was there, along with Frank Hampson, some of the original artists and a number of avid (rabid?) *Eagle* fans with a mountain of musty comics, rusty tin spaceships and the wonderful scent of old paper. Frank autographed my Horlicks *Spaceman's Handbook* – available in the 50's from Radio Luxembourg for a collection of Horlicks labels and a postal order – of which I appear to have the only remaining copy in existence. The editors of Hawk's *DAN DARE DOSSIER* borrowed it so they could include a photo in their book. After that I started getting phone calls from what sounded like men in dirty raincoats, asking if they could 'come along and look at my book', so I told them I'd sold it. I never would, of course, but don't tell anyone else! Next time – our first introduction to the madness of media conventions."



I hadn't known Lionel Fanthorpe had turned up at the 1979 worldcon – but then, I was only Chairman. Roger Robinson supplied chapter & verse: "Lionel was indeed at Seacon 79 – and gave an illustrated talk in a small-but-very-packed room – on the care and feeding of badgers. As far as I know his first brush with fandom was with the Norwich group about a year or so before that. I was then living in Norwich and the group met weekly in a pub – at that time it was 'The Artichoke'. Every other week we had a discussion and one week the subject was 'The Wordsmiths' and we thought of Silverberg, Asimov etc. But two young student teachers said 'there's this guy up at our school who has written more than those two combined'. And next week they bought Lionel to the meeting, and the rest, as they say, is history."

Oh, good, more flattery!
Picture by Rob Jackson (I think) at *Corflu Quire*.



The Eccentric
Conventioner
Photo from Fay



WE ALSO HEARD FROM (LOTS OF OTHER PEOPLE):

James Bacon sent a long letter about those who duck in and out of fandom – definitely one for next time. Then our Antipodean correspondent **Bruce Burn** wrote, “While digging into my old file of mementos from my big OE to England and Europe I found a piece of Ella’s old flocked wallpaper which I was allowed to take when she moved out of the Pen in February 1963! Quite a find really, and only because I stuffed it in with old letters and things to help me write up my Big Trip – unfortunately I abandoned the project soon after, mainly because of a spat with Mike Moorcock over what he perceived as my attack on Ella. Hey, we really knew how to have fun in those days!” **Teresa Crompton** (not a fan) sent some new information on Doc Weir – also for next time – and **Keith Freeman** did the same in a long, highly quotable letter for which sadly, I have no room here. **Steve Green** threw more light on the Doc Weir File: “I suspect the correspondence lent to you by Rob Hansen (*Prolapse* #6) is the same bundle which passed into my hands whilst I served on a BSFA committee set up by then-chair Alan Dorey to decide whether the award should quietly be buried. I later passed this to Chuck Connor, who was researching 1960s fandom. I imagine Chuck subsequently handed it over to Vinç Clarke when Rob started work on *THEN*.” **David Garnett** recalled *Tynecon* ’74: “My main memory is playing that cutting-edge state-of-the art computer game (Pong) with Samuel Delany. In those distant, carefree days, I’d head off at Easter without booking a hotel room. One night, I slept on the floor in Chip (to his friends) Delany’s room. Years later, I started reading his autobiography, *THE MOTION OF LIGHT IN WATER*, and I thought, ‘Flipping heck!’” **Rob Hansen** returned to his *Seacon* ’75 report: “Now that Malcolm has confirmed that ‘A Boy and His Bog’ was a false memory, as I suspected it must be, I wonder where it came from? This, of course, shows the unreliability of memory, something I encountered time and again when interviewing old-timers for *THEN*.”

At Easter this year I met **Penny Hill**, who wrote: “I find the accounts of the BSFA origins fascinating – especially the conflicting aspirations. The difference between the two ‘founding statements’ is astonishing and it’s a dialogue that I believe continues today. Chris and I found fandom through one of those slips, which led to Chris going to a London meeting in 1995 or 96. There he was adopted by Maureen Speller who introduced him to other BSFA people. We realised that although we’ve been to eight out of the past twelve Eastercons, we spent most of them talking to a dozen or so people mostly on the BSFA committee at the time.” Bravely, **Dave Langford** tackled Joseph Nicholas’ terminology: “You’ve got me wondering whether I ever had a fannish cohort, and if so, when it fell from dominance. The base definition in the dictionary is ‘a tenth part of a Roman legion’, which I’m sure I would have noticed about the house – and although Hazel has always had a soft spot for the Ermine Street Guard, she’s never actually smuggled them into 94 London Road. But perhaps, in his erudite way, Joseph means the taxonomic division between a botanical class and an order, as frequently encountered in his back garden.” Oh, hang on, right at the end of the dictionary entry as the ‘popular’ or vulgar usage, there’s ‘a companion or follower’. Who was yours? And when did he or she (in which case I’m afraid our lad must mean Eileen) fall from dominance?” Laughing hollowly, we go over to **Fred Lerner**, who commented, “Upon reading George Locke’s letter I was prompted to rootle through my liquor cabinet, where I’ve got an unopened bottle of Verguzz. I received it from Mario Bosnyak when he and Molly Auler visited me in Clinton, New York, during the spring of 1970. He must have had another bottle with him, for I remember drinking a little bit of the stuff and remarking on its strong resemblance to hair tonic (which is why I never opened the bottle he gave me!)”

Moving hastily on we come to **Ian Maule**, who said; “Hmm, perhaps I didn’t spend *all* my time playing brag and poker with Jerry Elmore in the bar at *Seacon* ’75 as I thought. The group photo of the attendees at the fanzine seminar on page 7 of the latest (and best so far) issue certainly seems to indicate that I did indeed move at least once from my comfy card-playing seat during the weekend.” Talking about conventions, **Stan Nicholls** enthused; “The European cons we’ve been to in recent years have really impressed us in terms of organisation and attendance figures. I was a GoH at *Elf Fantasy Fair* in Holland last May and it attracted 33,000 people! And again, last December, we were at the *Archeon Winter Fair* in Holland and that got 8,000. They seem to be much more of a family affair over there, too; unlike our slightly graying attendees. I wonder why we can’t bring in greater numbers? I’ve often thought that the Tolkien Weekend here in Brun could grow into something similar given proper organisation and some vision.” Shuddering slightly at the idea of a REALLY GIANT SF CONVENTION we turn to **Joseph Nicholas**, who complains; “If you’re going to put me on the cover, in either image or word, could you please get my name right? I am Joseph, not Joe!” But J., it’s just a part of that fannish round of yours.

A real Joe (**Patrizio**) wondered, “Was Peter Mabey actually presented with the Doc Weir Award at the ’63 Con? I remember a little ceremony held at Ella’s to present him with it, but I can’t remember a cup and it seems earlier than 1963.” **Lloyd Penny**, writing on #5, said: “Your story of the Birmingham Astronomy Group rings true for many, I’ll bet. Before getting into fandom my hobby was shortwave DXing, and I joined the Ontario DX Association, where I was promptly attacked as the newbie, my credentials, shortwave radio and personality were all described as inadequate, and I was made to feel generally unwelcome. Needless to say, I did not renew. I hope for better from SF fandom, but I suppose any group comfortable with itself is a little leery of anyone new.” **Billy Petit** says “Suzle Tomkins explained how she became North America’s biggest Giles fan – but I thought I could claim that title!” **Keith Walker** remembers “the trials and tribulations of producing a fanzine on the flat bed duplicator that the issues of *Psywar* were printed on.” And **Ian Williams** blows the gaff on the BSFA; “I remember at *OMPACon* when the Gannets won the bid for the 1974 and the BSFA tried to snow-job us into thinking we couldn’t do it without them. Rob Jackson may remember the details but I think that’s the gist of it.” Finally, a late note from **Ben Yalow**: “Issue #3 was particularly good, if painful. It gave me a feeling of what a bunch of the people I got to know much later were like in earlier days. It was a special fanzine, and I’m glad you did it. It really is wonderful reading.”

WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS ISSUE? Because:-

- ☐ Your heirs will surely rule the Sevagram – but a LoC would confirm your everlasting wonderfulness.
- ☒ You have helped me with *Prolapse*, thereby becoming a Second-stage Lensman (or should that be ‘Lensperson’?).
- ☒ You are one of the Star-begotten and are mentioned somewhere inside.
- ☐ You read that crazy Buck Rogers stuff so I hope you might like this, too! Do let me know.
- ☐ Beware, the Deroes will get you unless you do something Real Soon Now.

So what am I looking for? Response, more than anything. The *Prolapse* Project will only succeed if **you** share your thoughts & opinions about times past. You don’t need to LoC every issue but please do at least let me know whether you’re interested.