

"In case any gaffiated fans think they've escaped, be warned that Pete's out there scouring the country. He'll get you!" - Keith Walker, *Fanzine Fanatique*



"What do you mean we passed Hay-on-Wye fifty miles back? "

Two men on an epic 750-mile book-hunting expedition - *With the usual apologies to 'Giles'*

INSIDE: 'George and John's Excellent Adventure'; 'Jim Cawthorn - My Oldest Friend' by Mike Moorcock; 'The Wandering Ghu - Part 7, My First Convention' by Bruce Burn; **PLUS** the Leeds/Bradford photo-pages.





# RELAPSE

Welcome to another issue of *Relapse*, the fanzine that encourages you to revert to type (or even to pen and ink, Don), brought to you by Peter Weston, 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS (Tel: 0121 354 6059). This one takes the lid off sixties fandom but all the more reason to send your memories and anecdotes of other eras to me at [pr.weston@btinternet.com](mailto:pr.weston@btinternet.com). As in the previous incarnation of *Prolapse*, this remains a 'Paper First' fanzine though on request I'll e-mail the pdf (preferred for overseas readers) and the issue will go onto the *eFanzines* web-site a month after paper copies have been posted. Our mission, Jim, is to zip up and down the time-stream to report on significant moments in the history of British SF fandom.

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"Those wacky, overdressed fans of the fifties. What a crew they were." – John Hall, LoC

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I think I must be slowing down. Was it only last Easter I confided to Mark Plummer that I could get out an issue in six weeks but it took most people longer than that to actually read it? Mind you, this Spring when it finally stopped raining I realised the price I'd paid for that over-confidence. When you're a gardener you know you need to get certain things done at the right time, and because of all that fanac last year I realised I was miles behind. Ever since I've been engaged in a marathon of digging and planting; not very fannish but when the Sun is shining it's so much more fun than crouching behind a computer screen. That, and waiting two weeks for the post to deliver something, is why this issue is so late.

Although March was an inspirational month. On the first Thursday I went to London and visited Rob Hansen, spending a fascinating day at his house which is absolutely saturated with fan-history. Like Greg Pickersgill, Rob maintains a massive archive in a totally inadequate space, in his case comprising all of Vinç Clarke's effects together with material from Ethel Lindsay plus his own collection of fanzines, books, videos and so on. While Greg has gone into the attic, Rob has the benefit of a large, dry cellar which he has painstakingly fitted-out with industrial-strength racking mounted on a self-poured concrete slab (for stability and to get above any possible water leakage), with carefully-labelled storage boxes linked to his master-index. Only in one corner is there an ominous heap of paper which is 'still to be sorted'.

Upstairs Rob showed me his study, even more crammed with box-files and documents, while in his living room I munched cheese-on-toast while boggling over sheet after sheet of Vinç's correspondence, some of it going back to the 1930s. Among the curiosities was a 'Zap-Gun Certificate' issued to Vinç at Kettering in 1955, a little card also from *Cytricon 1* confirming that Ethel Lindsay had been elected an Honorary member of the 'Romiley Fan Veterans and Scottish Dancing Society' (and which incidentally confirmed that both Harry & Marion Turner attended, despite no other mention anywhere), and an official invitation to a Press Conference at the start of the 1957 London Worldcon.

Afterwards we went into the city for the London pub-meeting and Rob took me on a rapid walking tour, pointing out The Flat at 88 Gray's Inn Road, early home of Arthur Clarke and Bill Temple, and re-visiting the *One Tun* and the site of the old *Globe*. Only four days later I was off to *Corflu* in Seattle.

I have to say that I *did* enjoy this break from reality! The con was relatively small (only 90-odd) and since I knew so many of the people it gave me a good feeling of closeness and intimacy. Arriving a few days early also turned out to be a sound move, allowing me to get over the jet-lag and spend a day exploring the city with Rob Jackson and Sandra Bond. We went up the 'Space Needle' and rode the monorail, found an excellent microbrewery-cum-restaurant (whose proprietor knew more about British beers than we did) and went down into 'Underground Seattle', something I've wanted to see ever since I read about it in *Cry*, many years ago. The following day Bill & Mary Burns took us on a 90-mile drive to the pleasant town of Bellingham, "to see where the Orion-spacecraft took-off," I suggested to general puzzlement [*joke for D. Langford*] and visit the 'Museum of Radio & Electricity' (established by one of the Microsoft millionaires), and generally enjoy the scenery.

On Friday we visited the 'Museum of Science Fiction' (created by another Microsoft millionaire) which was much better than I had expected, and then the programme began, not too intensive, allowing a lot of time to be spent in socialising in the con-suite on the Penthouse floor of the hotel. I've wanted to visit the Pacific North-West for a long time and it was certainly wonderful to see the city spread out with its lakes and bridges, and mountains in the background. And I met legendary Seattle fans like Wally Weber, returning from semi-gaflation, who said afterwards that 'the entire weekend was a Thing of Wonder', and Elinor Busby, who was not in the slightest bit bothered to have drawn the short-straw as GoH (I used to correspond with the late 'Buz' Busby and ran his 'Plough' column in *Speculation* for some issues, back in the late sixties). I'm looking forward to *Corflu Cobalt* in Winchester next year, on 19-22 March. See the web-site, [www.Corflu.org](http://www.Corflu.org)

After all that I didn't mind too much having to miss *LXcon* at Bradford, for the first time since 1984 spending the Easter weekend with my family. However I made a small contribution by producing a couple of display boards for James Bacon to illustrate the long history of fan-activity in the Leeds/Bradford area, and I'm reproducing these here.

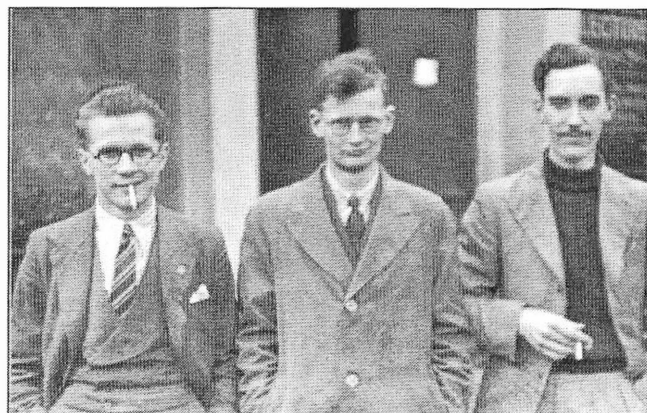
There's certainly no shortage of material for *Relapse*. On hand is Bob Parkinson's draft of Leslie Johnson's memoir of fandom origins, found in the archives of the British Interplanetary Society, and an original piece from Sam Youd (John Christopher) which describes struggling young SF writers like Arthur C. Clarke. Chuck Connor has written 'Of Times Remembered', his account of fandom in the Eighties, which is complemented by a 'forgotten' chapter of Rob Hansen's *THEN*, 1980-82. John Berry (the original) remembers Irish Fandom, Scottish author Don Malcolm is writing (in his usual beautiful copper-plate) his reminiscences of Bob Shaw and other writers, and for the future I'm hoping to run an illustrated TAFF Report from Wally Weber (only 45 years late!) using the excellent photographs he took on his visit to Britain in 1964.

Finally, Charles Platt sent me a long and fascinating chapter from his (aborted) 'autobiographical novel', dealing with a *Globe* meeting in 1970. I'm not sure it's quite right for *Relapse* (tell me if I'm wrong) so have decided instead to let Charles make it available through the internet. Do take a look at: <http://www.box.net/shared/egj5108eyi>

– Peter Weston, 30/5/2009

# In the beginning there was LEEDS FANDOM

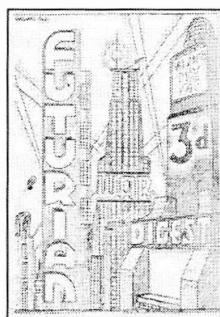
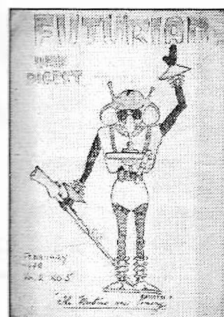
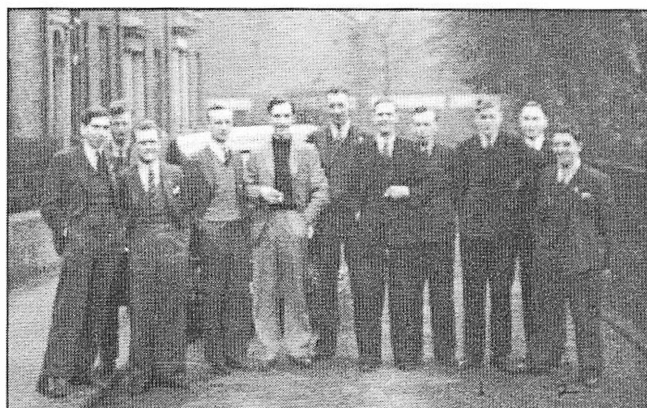
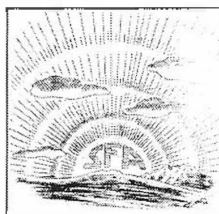
The first overseas chapter of Hugo Gernsback's *Science Fiction League* was formed in Leeds in April 1935. The group grew quickly, and in the Theosophical Hall, Leeds, on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1937 they held the world's first-ever science fiction convention.



Six visitors came from outside the city. The top picture shows (L to R), Walter Gillings from Ilford, Essex, arguably Britain's first SF fan, the 20-year-old Arthur C. Clarke, and John 'Ted' Carnell, who after the war edited the magazine *New Worlds*.

Below, (L to R) is Maurice Hanson (Nuneaton), Arthur Clarke, Walter Gillings, Leslie Johnson (Liverpool), Ted Carnell, Eric Frank Russell (Liverpool), unknown, Alwyn Airy, unknown, D.W. Mayer and Michael Rosenblum.

At the convention they founded a national SF fan-organisation, titled the *Science Fiction Association*, to be run by the Leeds group. It produced a printed magazine and eventually had over two hundred members.



## British fandom survives the War

Both the Leeds group and the SFA were dissolved with the outbreak of war. Michael Rosenblum was a registered conscientious objector and was assigned to farm work near his home in Leeds. In 1938 he had started *The Futurian*, and he was to keep British fandom alive during the war years with *Futurian War Digest*, a news-zine which saw 39 issues until closing in March 1945.

In 1942 Rosenblum established a new national fan-organisation, the *British Fantasy Society*, which ran several conventions before coming to an end in 1946.



## The Fifties revival

In early 1953 Mike Rosenblum made contact with two new fans, Jack Smillie & Jack Darlington, and they founded the Leeds Science Fiction Association (all three of them), meeting in attic rooms at the Adelphi Hotel on Leeds bridge. They were soon joined by George Gibson (who produced *Orbit*, the official fanzine), and Ron Bennett, while Mal Ashworth & Tom White came to Leeds after the Bradford club folded.

The Leeds group faded away around 1959 but Rosenblum remained active in support of the newly-formed BSFA, publishing *Vector*, and holding committee posts right to the end of the sixties.



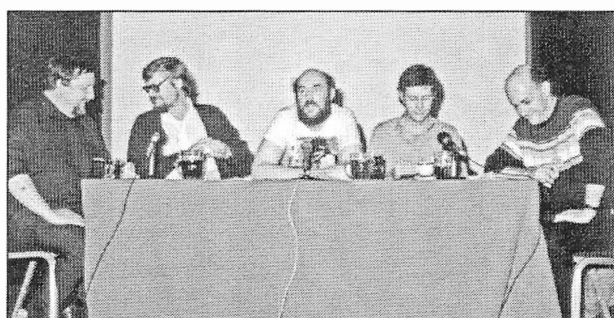
Left; Michael Rosenblum, c. 1960



Right; Ron Bennett, 1957

## False dawns & the University group

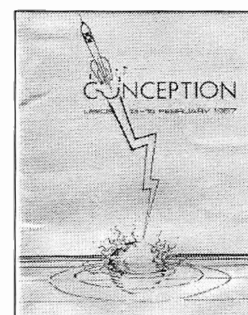
In 1966 Bill Burns started a group at the University which ran for two years. There was a separate, short-lived revival of the Leeds group in 1968, but fandom in the city was reborn with the 1973 group at the University, with Alan Dorey, David Pringle, the Harveys, Graham James & Mike Dickinson. They ran the 1979 Eastercon, *Yorcon I* at the Dragonara Hotel, and repeated it twice more in 1981 and 1985.



Right; Bob Shaw, Greg Benford, Mike Dickinson, Unknown and Tom Shippey at *Yorcon III*

## 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

In 1987 Leeds fandom led by Mal Ashworth ran *Conception* to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first SF convention.



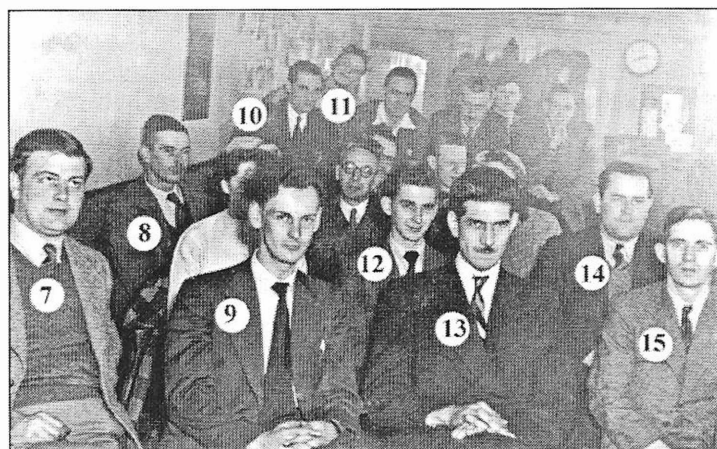


# The rise and fall of BRADFORD FANDOM

Fan-activity began in Bradford in the 1950s with one man – Derek Pickles – who produced the first issue of his *Phantasmagoria* in November, 1950. It was so well received that Derek (with help from his sister Mavis) decided to run NECON, the North-East Convention, which was held in Bradford on 14th October 1951, the first post-war gathering of science fiction fans in the North of England.



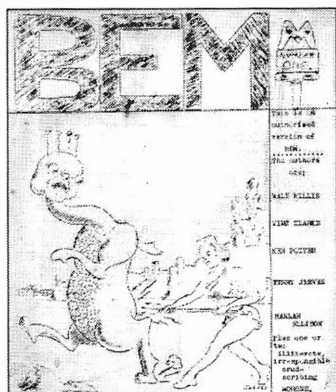
NECON: 1 - Mavis Pickles; 2 - Ken Potter; 3 - Fred Fairless; 4 - Terry Jeeves; 5 - Bert High; 6 - E.R. James.



NECON: 7 - Frank Simpson; 8 - E.R. James; 9 - Eric Bentcliffe; 10 - Arthur Duerr; 11 - Dave Wood; 12 - Peter Sowerby; 13 - Dave Cohen; 14 - Norman Weedall; 15 - Frank Richards

## A late flowering of fannishness....

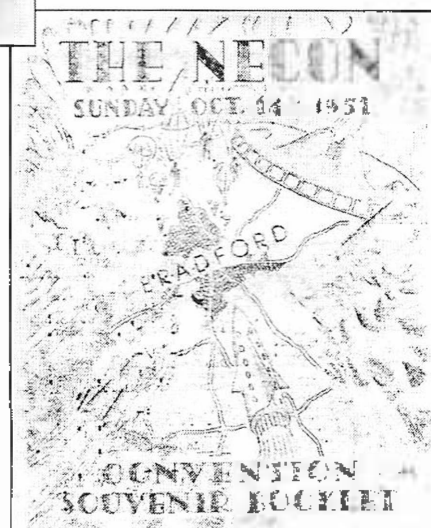
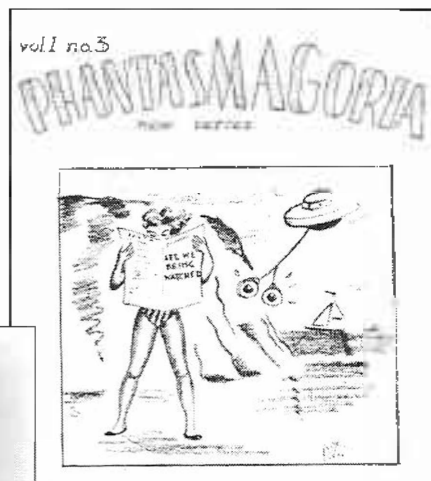
Mal Ashworth & Tom White edited *BEM*, a scruffily-produced but light-hearted fanzine which was very popular. It first appeared in April 1954 and ran for six issues.



## THE NECON 1951

WILL BE HELD IN  
Pat's Cafe  
Dudley Hill Top, Bradford  
Sunday Oct. 14th 1951  
Entrance Free 10.00  
Quizzes of Fiction JOYCE & KEN SLATER

NECON  
was a great  
success and  
attracted  
forty-four  
people, of  
whom fifteen  
came from  
Bradford  
and four  
from Leeds.



## BSFA in the fifties – the Bradford Science Fiction Association

After NECON Derek Pickles formed the Bradford Science Fiction Association. By the time of *Loncon* in May 1952 he reported they had 23 members. Many of them attended the first *Mancon* but the club had closed by the end of 1953, and Derek himself had to leave fandom in 1955 because of ill-health.



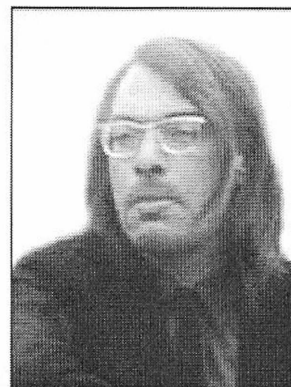
Above: Bradford SFA at *Mancon*, October 1952.  
L-R (back); Douglas Firth, Mal Ashworth, Derek Pickles, Geoff Clay, Tom White, Dick Jones, Donald Towers, (front); Marjorie Broadbent, Betty White, Mrs Clay, Marjorie Pickles, Mavis Pickles, Freda Busfield. Derek and Marjorie were married in December 1951.



n his memoir 'A Boy And his Bike' in issue #11 George Locke recalled his career as a specialist book dealer, which provoked considerable response, including a letter from his former partner, John Eggeling in #12. This has launched George into another journey of discovery as he tries to retrace the trail that he blazed with John through the entire South-West of the country in search of stock for their new business. John comments; "most of what George has written confirms with my own memories, though I'm damned if I can figure out the discrepancies between our recollections; whichever way we went we wouldn't have had enough hours in the day to do all that we did!" [pw]

## George & John's Excellent Adventure

George & John, in  
roughly-contemporary  
pictures. (Photos from  
Mervyn Barrett & Stan  
Nicholls respectively).



**GEORGE:** I was glad to read John Eggeling's remarks about our early careers. John indicated that we were in partnership as Atvatar Book Service for three years rather than the one I suggested. When I kicked my memory out into the street and checked some old catalogues I found that he was pretty much correct. A few days passed, and then...

I suppose I have to blame 'Bonekickers', the new archaeological mystery series launched by the BBC in July 2008. It inspired me to go excavating into the far-flung corners of my loft in quest of a lost file of correspondence between Alan Dodd and Bill Temple. (Yes, miracles of miracles, I found it – and took it along to Kettering). But I found something else. It was a battered cardboard box of some antiquity, under the eaves, covered in dust and stains of an unmentionable kind.

I took it gingerly out into the moon-lit garden, wondering what the hell it was.

I opened it ...

No, I heard no screech of eldritch souls being released from torment, but perhaps there was; I'm getting deaf. In one corner was a small heap of desiccated silverfish, arranged in a pattern which perhaps only ancient Atlanteans, or members of First Fandom, could decipher. In another corner were the skeletons of three mice, in an attitude of loving embrace. I did not care to ask what had devoured their skins... In the middle was a pile of old cheque stubs, cancelled cheques and miscellaneous papers concerning the Atvatar Book Service, including a lot of hard facts. So, for the edification of future historians, here goes:

ABS ran for nearly three years, from early in 1969 to late in 1971, when John and I went our separate ways, he to trade as Phantasmagoria Books and I, in 1972, as Ferret Fantasy. We officially entered ABS on the businesses register on February 12 1969, giving as our address John's home address in north London. However, we had started a bit before that. John mentions our book-hunting trip, during which we stayed at Tony and Simone Walsh's home in Bristol. It seems that in those days I was as obsessive as I am today, for the old box holds comprehensive details of the trip and the books we bought.

We set off on Thursday January 23, 1969. I drove a venerable MG Magnette. We headed first to Eastbourne, where we bought quite a few books from Raymond Smith (who had taken over [and smartened up] the treasure-trove that had been Glover & Daughter; he died only a handful of years ago) and a couple from the old Parmiter's (which has been run for the past twenty years or more by Camilla Francombe and is still active today).

Thence to Lewes (little found there) and on to Brighton which in those days was stiff with bookshops – Sexton's (two shops), Bredon's, Nelson's Library and elsewhere – and finally to Worthing. There's no record of what we did for accommodation that night. I suspect that we slept in the car – after all I was well-accustomed to doing that, having spent much of the 60s chasing gliders all round the country.

**JOHN:** Like George I don't have any firm recollection of our stop-over in Worthing other than a memory of visiting a woman (possibly a widow, would that have been Arthur Sellings' wife??) and having tea and sandwiches served up on a dainty porcelain. I suspect we probably went out for a Chinese meal then spent the night there. Next day was as George said we headed westward, my main memories being the finding of a copy of a nice first of 'The Wizard's Mantle' in Treasure Chest and a copy of Hume Nisbet's 'Valdmer the Viking' in Commins, both in Bournemouth. Then our memories differ.

**GEORGE:** On Friday 24 January, our first port of call was Chichester (nearly a dozen books), Southampton (very few) and then to Boscombe and Bournemouth. Boscombe was quite fruitful, but nothing to compare with Westbourne where we found a shop in Westbourne Arcade which was a real treasure-house of goodies – nearly twenty books in all. In later years I used to visit Bournemouth regularly and usually bought well, but I have to say that the Westbourne shop developed a serious damp problem and the last time I went there, the piles of books in the basement were covered with a snow-white fungus! \*

\* I spend a lot of time in Bournemouth these days so can report that sadly, the Westbourne shop is no more. There are just two second-hand bookshops left in the town, both of which look as if they're likely to close down at any time, with 'Castle Books in Poole. Alan Hunter's son maintains a small shop titled 'Fantasy' on the way to Christchurch, although it seems to be closed most of the time and has very little stock of any interest. [PW]







From there we headed on into Paignton and stopped at a B&B in Church Street, almost opposite The Priory Bookshop, a very small shop run by an elderly gentleman who reminisced about the 1930s book trade with us. There we found a copy of 'The Curse of Intellect' and various other titles. As George said, the 'Neptune Bookshop' around the corner proved quite disappointing, though we did come across a copy of 'The Writing on the Wall'. From there I'm not sure quite where we went but I do remember we ended up in 'Robert Harper and Daughter' in Westward Ho, a small bookshop right on the edge of the beach. The road down to it ended in a slipway and the tide was out with almost half a mile of sand between us and the sea; I can see why Kingsley would have been enamoured with the place!

**GEORGE:** But before setting off for home we had one more bookish visit to make – to a small town on the Welsh borders going under the name of Hay-on-Wye. This, I have to say, was long before Hay-on-Wye got onto the map as the world's first, and still the most flourishing, book town. In those early days, if I remember rightly, there was only Richard Booth. His main shop was in the old cinema but he also had (the more posh) books at the castle and others in over-flow establishments elsewhere, including a barn in the country where he kept periodicals. I can't find notes of what we bought in Hay, save to say that we spent over a tenner – a pretty fair chunk of money in those days, equivalent to several hundred pounds today.

**JOHN:** I do remember George and myself going to Hay-on-Wye but whether that was the same trip I'm not sure. George mentions going to the 'Old Cinema Bookshop' when at that time Booth only had the 'Old Fire Station', which was a smallish building down by the market, the castle, and his warehouse (whenever it was we went there we found a nice run of USA *Planet Stories* and *Startling Stories*, about 50 issues in all). And if George has notes saying that we bought books in the 'Old Cinema Bookshop' then we probably did, but that was the name of the then shop in Ilfracombe.

I'm damned if I can figure out the discrepancies between our recollections, whichever way we went we wouldn't have had enough hours in the day to do all that we did. The only way that could be reconciled would be by us having spent a night in both Bath and Paignton and that doesn't fit the dates George gives. I've been puzzling over that ever since I got back from Brussels and still haven't found a satisfactory answer.



Many fans stayed over at Tony & Simone Walsh's home at 61 Halsbury Road, meeting place of the BaD Group during the late sixties. Photo by Peter Mahev. 1967.

**GEORGE:** Then it was back to Bristol for one last night at Tony and Simone's before setting off for London on Tuesday 28 January. I note that we made further purchases in Bristol and Bath, but made no note of the one thing about the trip that sticks forever in my mind. Some time during the journey back I became aware of a rhythmic knocking sound emerging from somewhere within the bowels of the car. I pulled off the road, and went round the car, trying to spot something amiss. My first thought was the tyres but they all seemed to be okay. So we set off again. The knocking continued unabated. It was worrying – seriously worrying. \*\*

Then, suddenly, a tyre blew out.

Now, that tyre could have blown at any moment. If we'd been hurtling down a hill at 70 mph – I suspect that two promising bookselling careers would have been nipped in the bud. Fortunately, however, the blow-out occurred not only to the marginally less-lethal rear wheel, but we were crawling up a hill at about 15mph. We changed the wheel – the carbuncle had developed on the inside, out of sight, which is why I hadn't spotted it during my search.

The total mileage of the book hunting trip was about 750. We spent nearly forty pounds on books and periodicals. What did we buy? About 50 BRE *Astoundings* between 1940 and 1953 at a tanner a time. A fair slab of bound volumes of such magazines as *Pearson's* and *Cassell's*. Lots and lots of olde SF and fantasy hard-covers of the kind which was being keenly collected in those days, especially lost race fiction, to which both John and I were addicted. Very little in the way of modern books.

The results of that trip, plus the books from our own personal holdings that we transferred to the firm, formed the foundation of the business. Although we had tables at various conventions at the time (I have a note for a pound being coughed up for a table at Worcester in 1971) I suppose the main thrust of the business was by catalogue, and that very much aimed at the American market. I had already published one or two lists of books in American fantasy-collecting fanzines, such as the *Fantasy Collector*. We took out a two-page ad in *FC* early in 1969, mailing stencils to the fanzine (it turned out they didn't fit the publisher's machine, which gave rise to some debate). We also printed one or two fliers. One of those bears the note that a hundred copies were done for distribution at a book fair on June 10, 1969. There was also a single-leaf, undated list of about three dozen books and magazines, priced in US dollars and sent from the north London address.

This presumably preceded our first catalogue proper, also sent from North London and dated Summer 1969, that followed, consciously or unconsciously, the style of G. Ken Chapman's catalogues which were duplicated on foolscap paper. Prices were in US dollars and we offered about 100 (mainly) old books plus a bargain basement of stuff at a dollar a time. There followed more than two pages of periodicals, all well annotated in respect of their SF and fantasy content, plus two or three pages of general chit-chat and, on the last page, a plug for an ambitious publishing project to do with *Pearson's*

\*\* This SO reminds me of a similar incident one Saturday in 1965 when as a novice driver I set off down the old A41 in my trusty Ford Popular to visit Chris Priest or Charles Platt in London. Somewhere near Aylesbury my car developed a mysterious knocking which worried me to death for miles until I finally found a garage (they actually opened on Saturdays and fixed cars in those days) where they quickly spotted that one of my cheap remould tyres had developed a bulge and had become effectively egg-shaped. It took all my cash to buy another cheap remould tyre as a spare (no credit cards in those days) and quite put me off long-distance driving for some time! [PW]



*Weekly*. The plug opened with the words "Pearson's Weekly published more than one million words of science fiction and fantasy between 1890 and 1899", and the book would have been based on my own complete run of the period. Although promised for October 1, the book (in common with many fantasy projects) never materialised. I have a recollection that Billy Pettit did a considerable amount of work with us on that project – I believe he had an electric typewriter – and that at least a partial manuscript was produced, but I'm afraid the project fell by the wayside.

I must accept all the blame for that. More than a year was to pass before Atvatabar produced its second catalogue, dated Autumn 1970, and of a similar style to the first. In the introduction I said: "Many of you will have thought that Atvatabar died after the issue of a single list in 1969. This is not, in fact, the case. The lack of selling activity has been due entirely to a certain dilatoriness on the part of George Locke, who offers as excuse marriage, moving house and monumental idleness." (However, many years later, after I had acquired a virtually complete set of *Pearson's Weekly* magazine, I did produce an annotated checklist of the fiction and thus belatedly fulfilled at least part of that promise.)

Browsing through the correspondence it would seem that Britain had been hit by a massive post office strike around that time, and as a result many people didn't receive the catalogue until January 1971. Ron Bennett, operating as 'Skyrack Book Service' from the Continent at SHAPE, ordered some books on January 29 1971, adding: "Hope you've enjoyed the postal strike."

That second list was issued from our new home in Tooting (John stayed with us for some time), and was pretty similar to the first, although offering more than double the number of books as well as a long section of periodicals. It's tempting to detail some of the offerings and their prices, but to do so would occupy too much space so I'll content myself by mentioning just two versions of 'Frankenstein'. The first was a fine copy in jacket of the Readers Library film edition, which we had priced at a mere \$3.50. That copy would sell today for several hundred pounds, such is the power of iconic film-related material; the jacket shows Boris Karloff in a scene from the film. The other was R. B. Peake's 'Frankenstein', a Dick's Standard Plays edition of about 1860, very good in original wraps. \$20.00 was a pretty high price by our standards but it sold, to Gerry de la Ree. Unfortunately, although I packed it well (with other books he ordered), he didn't receive it. He had clearly discarded the slim pamphlet when he dumped the rest of the packing material. A tragedy: I've never seen a decent copy since!

Fandom, or at least the collecting habits of many fans, formed, if not the core of the business, then at least a solid foundation. The box revealed that we conducted quite a bit of business with Frank Vernon Lay, Ted Ball and Dave Gibson, and Billy Pettit in England, as well as John Roles. Most of the periodicals seemed to go abroad; First Fandom stalwart Sam Moskowitz acted as a kind of vacuum cleaner in that respect (and when I went to the sale of his library in New York in 1999, I saw many old friends). Don Wollheim was also a regular customer. Another active fan who ordered regularly was Norman Metcalf. But the man who ordered by far the most books was Australian businessman Ronald E. Graham, who had provided the financial backing for Phil Harbottle's *Vision of Tomorrow*.

One of the letters from Don Wollheim mentioned in passing that he was planning to sell his magazine collection *en bloc*. I have no memory of where it went. But I do know that two or three years later Ferret Fantasy brokered the sale of Don's fanzine collection to Ron Graham. Ferret asked for and received a ten percent commission from Ron. But when Don wrote asking how much Ferret would charge *him* as commission, I wrote back saying: "No. It wouldn't be right to take a cut from both ends."

How times have changed! Auction houses now take up to 25 per cent commission from both the vendors *and* the buyers! But that is by the by.

John and I parted company late in 1971, John setting up Phantasmagoria Books. We divided the stock, as I recall, fifty-fifty, thus clearing some space in my loft. I had by then made one of the biggest mistakes of my life. When Atvatabar started I had been employed by the *Pharmaceutical Journal* as a sub-editor. However, the job of editor of *Sailplane & Gliding* came up, and I took it. The mistake? The previous incumbent, a lady of an especially forceful personality, remained in the loop and her influence proved to be too much. I wasn't really the editor – all I was there for was to do the donkey work. That, and personality clashes within the office caused me to quit towards the end of 1971. However, being a natural-born altruist I agreed to stay on for a few months to give S&G a chance to appoint another editor.

No, it was really altruism tempered with self-interest. By then I had decided to go full time into the business of selling old books. The S&G office had a nice electric typewriter and I made use of it during those months of limbo to get my new business off the ground; I even produced my first publication with its help: *Ferret Fantasy Christmas Annual for 1972*.

Another important purchase from the Atvatabar days was the acquisition of a large number of supernatural books from the library of supernatural fiction writer Margery Lawrence. Although often not in great shape, the presence of her ownership signature added a certain cachet; although some of the books were Arkham House titles which one would have liked in better nick, others were older titles generally regarded today as unfindable in any condition. (We didn't get them all, by any means. Only three or four years ago a set of her own books, specially bound for her, turned up at an auction in Norfolk!)

One last note: in my article I mentioned buying books from Dell's of Bradford. It seems that the transaction took place on April 14, 1971, and that Atvatabar coughed up £35 for its selection, which included many signed copies of Lord Dunsany's *The Last Revolution*, a few signed copies of *The Strange Journeys of Colonel Polders*, many copies of *The Man Who Ate the Phoenix* (unsigned), and multiple copies of rather older books, such as Vernon Lee's *For Maurice* (fine firsts in d/w) and Ray Cummings *The Shadow Girl*. All those have long flown the coop, but not so another olde book: L. P. Jacks' *All Men Are Ghosts*. Despite being a collection of supernatural stories, despite having been written-up by Bleiler, and despite being a first edition in dust-jacket, it seems to be one of the great unsellables in our genre. We didn't take all the Dell's offerings; if memory serves, Fantasy Centre took the rest.

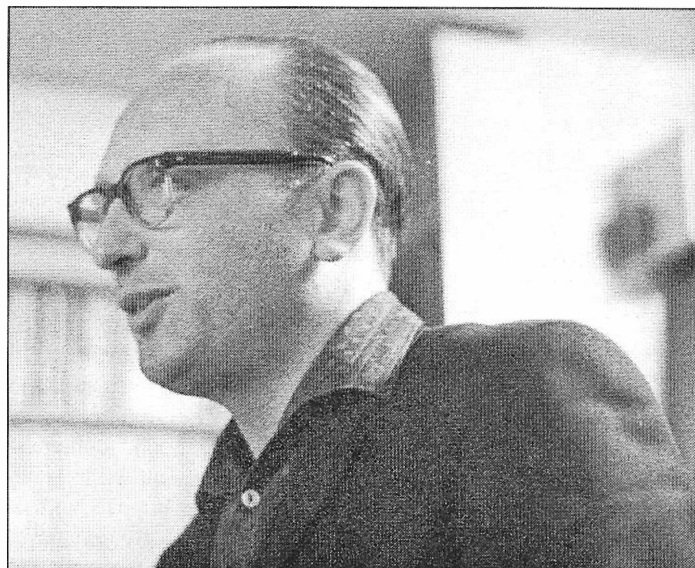
**JOHN:** Our first purchase from Dell came via Derek Stokes who had gone there looking for comics. He had bought a nice mixed collection of early fantasy and SF from them and offered them to me, then totally pissed us off when he sold the best title ('Lieutenant Gulliver Jones') to Dave Gibson for £5.00!!! //

Back in 1964 one of the first fanzines I ever received was Dave Hale & Ken Cheslin's *Les Sprige*, an erratic title which was distinguished by Jim Cawthorn's elegant covers and interiors. I never met Jim and soon afterwards he seemed to drop out of fandom, although in brief recent correspondence I discovered that he had attended the 1974 *Tynecon*. Jim died in December last year, and in February Dick Ellingsworth wrote to say that he had been holding a number of pieces of original Cawthorn artwork for many years, and what did I think he should do with them? I visited Dick at Warminster and together we sent the material off to the 'archive' which Mike Moorcock has been instrumental in establishing. Mike has written this short tribute, which I am illustrating with some of the sketches that Dick so generously donated. (pw)

## "Jim Cawthorn was my oldest surviving friend"

By Mike Moorcock

Jim in 1960.  
Photo from Terry  
Jeeves' album.



It's impossible to measure how important Jim Cawthorn's friendship was to me. Apart from one childhood pal he was my oldest surviving friend. I feel I knew Jim all my life. I must have been around fifteen when we first began corresponding. As I recall, he'd read about my fanzine *Burroughsiana* in *Satellite*, the fanzine produced by Don Allen in Tyneside, Jim's native home, where he was living and working (for Babcock and Wilcox in the days when manufacturing was still how most of the country made its living). He got in touch with *ERBania* at the same time since he was a keen ERB reader. His first fanzine work was for Don and then for me and Pete Ogden.

*Burroughsiana* had already been much improved by Arthur Thomson, who lived near me in Streatham, but Jim's work breathed the essence of Burroughs and I was overjoyed when he offered to illustrate the fanzine. Soon he was doing an enormous amount of work for the whole stable of 'MJM Publications', from my first fanzine *Book Collector's News* to music fanzines *Jazz Fan* and *Rambler*, *Fantasia* as well as *Burroughsiana*, and a whole variety of one-shots like *Flail*, *The Masochist's Weekly*, *Avilion*, *Ergo Ego*, and so on.

Jim was able to move from straight fantasy illustration to music, to cartoons, parody and everything else I asked of him, and not only did he illustrate articles he also wrote them. What's more he saw to much of my literary education, being one of the best-read people I had ever corresponded with (it would be some time before he came to stay at Semley Road and meet my mother, who loved him dearly – as indeed she welcomed all my 'fan' friends).

Jim introduced me to many of the writers I came to love and, indeed, to champion and cause to be republished, including Maurice Richardson, creator of 'Engelbrecht the Surrealist Boxer', T. H. White, Poul Anderson's 'The Broken Sword', Herman Melville, 'Mad' John Martin the painter, various Gothic novelists, surrealist painters – the list is very long. He was rather like an elder brother. And all this within the first weeks of our correspondence.

He illustrated my first fantasy series in *Tarzan Adventures* ('Sojan') and drew Elric before I ever completed the first story, 'The Dreaming City'. On *Sexton Blake* at Amalgamated Press (later Fleetway) he drew chapter illos and began writing scripts and features (he had already written a fantasy serial and graphic serial for *Tarzan Adventures*). Jim and I collaborated on a Sexton Blake novel and the movie 'The Land That Time Forgot', among many other things, including an aborted 'Beowulf strip'. He did the magnificent '100 Best Fantasy Books' which remains an important reference (and has my name on it only because the publisher thought it would sell better – I was responsible for only one of the entries!).

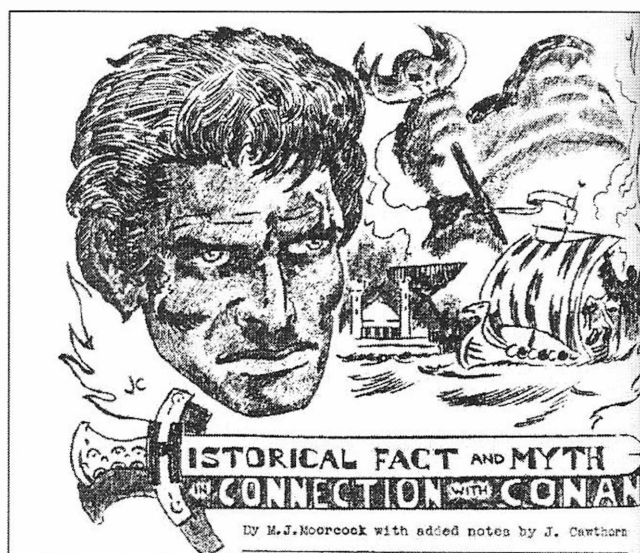
From 1964 Jim became *New Worlds'* resident artist, doing the cover for my first issue – Ballard's 'Equinox', but before this had done covers for *Science Fantasy*.

Unlike Arthur Thomson, the tool-maker, who designed many of his own stencil styluses and shading plates, Jim used only what he could find already made – sandpaper of different grades for shading, broken knitting needles, kitchen tools, razor blades, whatever worked.

He was, and probably remains, the cleverest wax stencil-engraver ever. His stencils could rarely be saved once used because they were so intricate and tended to disintegrate when you took them off the drum. In some ways Jim's work improved on stencil. He had a tendency to over-ink his drawings, introducing heavy blacks and often spoiling his delicate pencils. Dave Britton had a strategy for dealing with this – he'd commission the stencils and then Xerox them, never using the actual wax originals.

My own strategy, especially when he was working for *Sexton Blake* and *New Worlds*, was to nip round to his flat and, before he could start laying on the blacks, whip away the drawings, telling him the deadline had changed and they needed to go to press that night. For such an intelligent and talented illustrator and journalist Jim had poor self-esteem and was subject to serious bouts of depression. He was eventually able to bring these under control, but at one





point, when he was living in Princesdale Road, where Barry Bayley, Tom Disch, John Sladek, Judy Merrill and Jim all lived, almost all given to dark moods on occasion, I used to think of myself as visiting the House of Gloom.

I don't mean to minimise such feelings. Jim's moods seemed to be brought on by unrequited love as much as anything else. For years he was in love with an old girlfriend of mine, classically blonde, blue-eyed and so on – who genuinely cared for him, but not, as they say, in 'that' way. For such an evidently heterosexual bloke he had a bit of a habit of falling for such beauties but had no confidence in himself. His mother used to ask me to find him a good bride. We tried, but nobody suited him except Sophia Loren or Rita Hayworth. For all that his life wasn't wholly celibate, though he certainly tended to set himself impossible romantic goals.

While his value as an illustrator, feature writer and occasional parodist (cf 'Ballard of a Whaler' in *New Worlds*), it was as a friend that I valued him most. When I moved to Colville Terrace, W11, and later Ladbrooke Grove, Jim took a flat nearby. He was a cheerful, good-natured person who'd look after the flat while we were away, do wonderful paintings for the kids and generally function as a favourite uncle (his role in Gateshead, too).

Jim painted the children's bedroom ceiling with an authentic solar system/star chart; he did them T-shirts and even baby-sat while he was at it. He drew all over our big kitchen wall – we had a big pun-wall in true fannish tradition, on the theme of custard (don't ask, there isn't room – but 'Custard's Last Stand' is doubtless still there under various layers of paint and wall-paper, in all its epic glory). For, it must be added, he had a tremendous sense of humour. If he hadn't, for all his talents I doubt he would have eaten with us for all the meals at which we insisted he join us. He was, with Barry Bayley, an inseparable friend, truly one of the family.

We would see each other almost daily when I was married to Hilary and editing *New Worlds*, but even after we divorced I'd see Jim regularly (I'd only moved across to the other side of Ladbrooke Grove) until eventually the new digs in which he was living in Oxford Gardens were sold during the first Thatcherite property boom and he couldn't find anywhere with a reasonable rent. Also he felt he should return to Gateshead and help his married sister to look after their mother. Jim set high store by family and we came to know his own father and uncles through all his stories and met many of them over the years, including his wonderful, vigorous mother and his witty sister Maureen. Now only Maureen survives of his contemporaries.

Jim could be relied upon to produce a book review, feature or set of illustrations pretty much at a moment's notice. I still remember his producing the illustrations for Ballard's 'Storm Bird, Storm Dreamer' which Jim drew on our kitchen table while Charles Platt marked them up for press – one of the finest combinations of Ballard story, Keith Roberts cover and Cawthorn interiors we ever offered our readers.

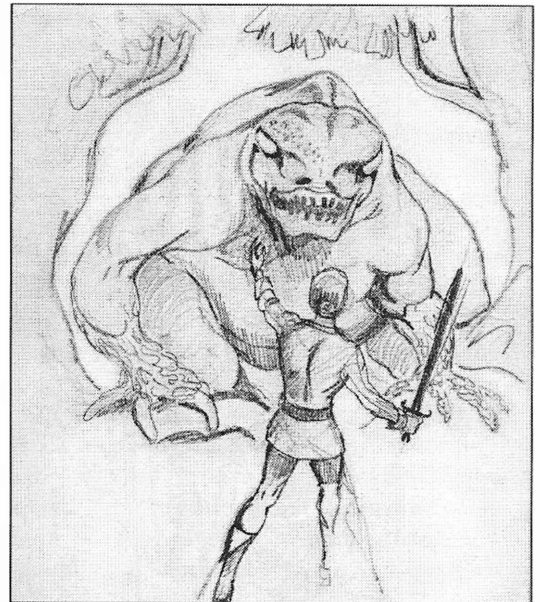
Even from Gateshead Jim kept up a steady stream of correspondence with Dave Britton and me, much of it hilarious and decorated with cartoons, and he visited us in Manchester and London. Sometimes Dave and I would visit him, and it was always a pleasure for us to meet his family and know that they were all as smart and engaged with the world as Jim. I shall probably never stop reaching for the phone or notepad when something occurs to me to tell Jim – most recently the announcement that 'The Land That Time Forgot' was about to be remade and would be 'faithful to the original movie script'. Since Jim and I had written that one, I'm sure he'd have wondered mildly who was being paid for such faithfulness. But Jim, no more than I, wrote the movie for the money. We did it the way we did fanzines, for love, and for fun.

Jim was a good friend, a mentor, a wonder of the world and his influence will stay with me for the rest of my life and, no doubt through the enthusiasms I've passed on, beyond. I owe him so much it's really impossible to list everything. All who knew him were better for it. Those of us who received his birthday and Christmas cards every year didn't feel the occasions were complete until we had one of Jim's amazingly funny cards. Even now, when I come across something I know would give him pleasure, it's my impulse to phone him or write to him and then I realise, as with Barry Bayley that he isn't there and I realise how very much I miss him, how completely a part of my life he was. Not just an immensely talented, modest man, but a trufan in every sense we mean. //



Mike Moorcock & Jim Cawthorn in foreground at the 1960 London convention. Also visible is artist Jack Wilson (left) and Ted Carnell at rear. Photo by Keith Freeman.

Mike wrote, "We're making an archive of Jim's work which ultimately we think will be put in my deposit at the Bodleian or Texas A&M. My biographer, John Davey, is keeping it for the moment and has already had one or two donations from other people. We are also doing a special tribute to Jim in the final volume of the Del Rey ELRIC set, with a lot of his work reprinted there. We are also discussing a special issue of *New Worlds* which will feature a tribute to Jim."

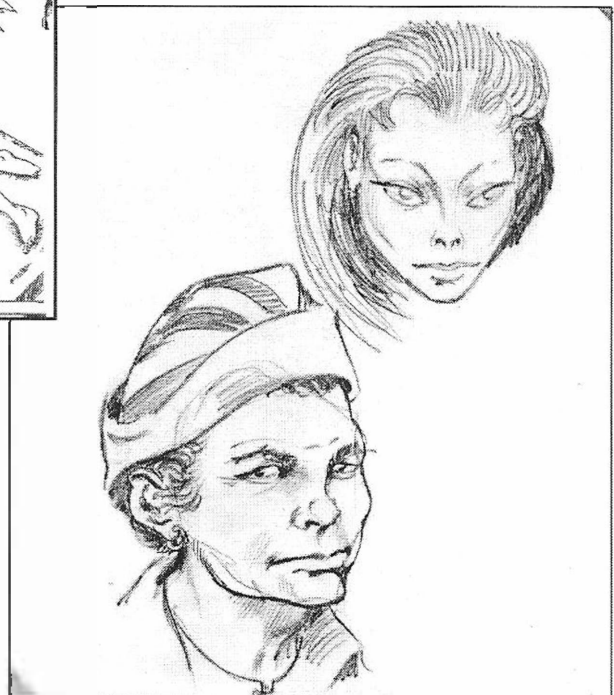


Mike thinks the sketch above might be Elric and Cymoril, from *ELRIC OF MELNIBONE*, while that on the right is generic fantasy – although it reminds me (pw) of a scene from Jack Vance's *DYING EARTH*.



The strip above was a bit of a disappointment – when Dick Ellingsworth first told me it used John Brunner's name I was hoping it would be satirical rather than a straight space adventure. There's just the single page, possibly done as a 'pilot' – the story was never continued, and I don't think the art is among Jim's best work. (pw)

Mike himself comments, "Marion King was a friend of mine. Non-fan. Lost touch with her, though she kept in touch with my mother for a while. She was our next-door neighbour. I'd forgotten the Imric picture, though it certainly identifies the influence on Elric, eh? [from Poul Anderson's *BROKEN SWORD* – used as the back-cover for Dick's fanzine]. The sketch at bottom right is Uuuk -- h-h-hobbits..."







Bruce Burn came to Britain from New Zealand in August, 1960 and quickly became part of the London fan-scene. He kept copious notes and photographs during his time in the UK, which have already featured in the two previous instalments of his adventures and now Bruce describes his participation in *LXIcon*, the 1961 Eastercon. This was only the third con to be held under the wing of the fledgling BSFA (in practical terms run by the Cheltenham group), and it was still quite small – only 77 attending, according to THEN. But to Bruce it was a revelation. He says, “I never did get around to writing a report, but I did make a start on it. What follows is that start, but after a page or so I’m writing from scraps of notes and, using the advantage of such a long passage of time, quoting from others who might give a different perspective on events.”

*Photo from the London Evening Standard*



By Bruce Burn

## Part 7 - My First Convention!

Soon it was March and one day while I was walking across Trafalgar Square to my new job at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall I was tackled by a couple of scruffy reporters. One asked me questions while the other snapped his camera as you can see (above). It was Thursday 16th March, and they were seeking opinions on the news that South Africa was leaving the British Commonwealth after having angered the rest of the Commonwealth nations by instituting the social policy of apartheid.

**South Africa is to leave the Commonwealth.**

**A shocking decision? A wise one? An inevitable one? What was the reaction in the streets of London today?**

**PICTURE  
PROBE**



**With South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, as their focal point, a Picture-probe team today tried to find out. Mr. Bruce Burn, of Clapham, is a New Zealander in Britain on a working holiday.**

**“I think the decision was an obvious development. At home we have emphasised our racial equality. To condone racial distinction would have been very bad for the Commonwealth.”**

But in our little world of fandom we were about to confront what seemed to us a much more important event: *LXIcon*, the BSFA national convention for 1961, to be held in Gloucester. My First Convention!

I'd read about cons in reports from innumerable fanzines but I'd never attended one and I was excited at the prospect. I was involved with the SF:CoL fans in getting ready, and there was a great deal of preparation for this one. We published the annual London ‘*Combazine*’, with most effort coming from Ethel Lindsay. We made our ‘armour’ for a skirmish of some sort which was to be a feature of the fancy dress entertainment. I hired a mini-bus for us to travel in, and on the day before the big trip got used to it by driving to the Bulmers to pick up some of the armour, then on to Atom's to gather posters and other material for the SF:CoL display, and finally back to Ferndale Road to get a good night's sleep.

I stretched out passively on my bed and waited for sleep to come. I had a heavy day ahead, driving a hundred miles along unfamiliar roads and meeting lots of new people, and I had to get up early in the morning. I set my alarm clock for five o'clock then slid back between the sheets. My mind raced: would everyone be ready on time? Was the van powerful enough or had I hired a bad one (it had kept on cutting-out while idling every time I'd stopped at traffic lights during the evening), and was there room enough for everyone and the luggage? Had I allowed enough money for petrol, would Roy meet us on time, was that armour too bulky, why don't I go to sleep....?

But my thoughts raced, time after time going over details of plans for the next day, and though I tried counting sheep and remembering melodies in my head I stayed awake, anticipating the morning and the coming weekend. This was to be my first convention and the thrill of excitement would not let me sleep.

I read a while but it was hopeless so I got out of bed and drank a glass of water at the sink by my window. Grey morning was softly limning the buildings over the road and I knew it was too late to slumber, but I had forgotten the long dawns and dusks of an English Spring. Back to bed I crawled, and watched the greyness outside the window become lighter. Clouds dispersed, the day looked promising and I lost my fears of a wet drive to Gloucester. Once again I started to think through the plans for the day, and remembered the previous night.

Ted Forsyth and Joe Patrizio, who shared the flat below my bed-sitter, had gone with me across southern London to pick up a load of wooden armour from Ken Bulmer – who was keen on having the Science Fiction Club of London stage a tourney of knights in armour at the convention (he offered to bandage our wounds). Ken had happily helped us load the van with all the hardboard armour and wooden swords, and Pam, his wife, had plied us with tea and then away we had driven, heading for home, and bed. .... I woke with a start, fumbling for the alarm. I didn't remember falling asleep and was awake in an instant.

By the time I was dressed and carrying my last piece of luggage downstairs, Joe and Ted were ready and we bundled ourselves into the van exactly on time, at 6.30am. We made good time getting to Pat Kearney's home near Victoria Station, but he was still in bed so we hurried him out and shoved him into the back of the van. Then on to Ella Parker's, where a few fans had stayed the night in order to be picked up in one bunch. Their luggage was quickly loaded, we each had a cup of tea, and then Roy Shepard arrived in his own car and Ella decided to keep him company on the drive (which probably enabled her to smoke on the journey – the folk in the van were mostly non-smokers). So, as we pulled away from the curb outside 151 Canterbury Road we had only seven people aboard the van: Ted, Joe, Pat, myself, Ethel Lindsay, Jimmy Groves, and Don Geldart, who acted as navigator until we were clear of London suburbs and onto the main road west.

I didn't take much notice of what was happening in the van, except to ask occasionally if everyone was comfortable, but I did notice the countryside as we sped along the well-made road. The rolling hills of southern England spread away to either side and hedges or dry-stone walls separated the fields – sights one rarely sees in New Zealand. It was a fairly warm day and traffic was light except for a couple of main junctions where policemen had to control the lines of Easter holiday drivers. We stopped briefly at a country inn and had a snack. Roy and Ella caught us up then, and followed us into Gloucester itself, ending our pleasantly smooth journey in a traffic jam just two hundred yards from the hotel where we were held up for half an hour. We parked the van and Roy's car behind the con hotel, 'The New County Hotel' and invaded the reception desk. There was an amazing feeling of being on holiday and the bright sunshine helped create a scene in which everybody grinned and rolled up their sleeves, and then disappeared, leaving Roy, Ted, and me to cart most of the junk from the van into the hotel. Roy and I immediately headed for our room, on the first floor at the front of the hotel, bent double under the weight of our luggage and most of the odds and ends from the van.

I thought I heard a noise behind the door of our room, so I knocked before using my key and flinging the door open. Inside, someone screamed and there was a distinct sound of a bump. I knocked again, and after a pause a black-haired and very overhung reveller opened the door a crack. She blinked at me through her dark glasses, muttered something about "not being out yet" and closed the door. Roy and I shrugged and carried on bringing up luggage and plonking it down outside the door of the room.

Just as I staggered up the stairs with the last load, Roy came up behind me and said the girl at the reception desk had offered us another room. Hmmm. This episode had an amusing sequel when Joe Patrizio later came to find me. He recalls:

'Ted and I went to find Bruce. Room 18 was where we had tucked him away, so that is where we headed. Arriving, I banged loudly on the door. What looked suspiciously like a half-dressed female stuck head and shoulders round the door. In a heartfelt screech she said, "Am I not to have any peace today?" I stood there with my mouth open; about the only time at the con I was to be speechless. This wasn't the hirsute New Zealander we all knew so well. No! By God it wasn't. I recovered enough to mumble an apology, and hastily dispersed from the scene, dragging Ted, still in state of shock, behind me.' (All quotes from Joe are from his con-report in *Scottish* 24)

Fortunately the new room was quite nearby so Roy and I dumped our stuff and headed for the con-hall. There, all was chaos. Slight Keith Freeman and portly Eric Jones were doing their best as a Laurel and Hardy team to keep people out of the hall and make a little order out of the shambles. Awed by the hurley-burley we stood around feeling useless, pretending to help out where we could, and eventually Don Geldart rescued us with a glass of lager and he and I left for the bar. Most of the SFCoL mob was there, meeting new arrivals, placing cards advertising the *Combozine*, and selling a few copies. Joe Patrizio remembers a bit of fun we had had while setting up:

'This year the club made an all-out drive to sell the *Combozine*, which had been specially produced for the occasion. We had adverts which were parodies of current mundane ads, such as "Top people read the *Combozine*", "Unzip a *Combozine*", and "You're never alone with the SFCoL *Combozine*". Don had printed over a hundred cards with the inscription "Get the SFCoL *Combozine* Now", and these were liberally sprinkled round the hall, into people's pockets, and many other likely and unlikely places. Anyone looking at someone else's display was likely to be confronted with one of the cards.

'Our greatest success was with Norman Shorrock who after removing cards from the Liverpool stand about a dozen times without ever seeing anybody put one there, came and begged to be allowed to buy a copy, whereupon we presented him with a free copy as he was an honorary member! Ted proved just how unbiased we were by writing on Norman's little card "We also recommend *Bastion 1*", a little gesture that left Norman obviously unmoved.'

I stood back and viewed the passing parade: con-chairman Eric Jones, as he stuck a notice by the entrance to the hall; the tall university-don figure of Brian Aldiss, who seemed to be having some trouble at the reception desk where they'd muddled his booking; Jimmy Groves our eager-beaver club secretary, who came to Brian's rescue by sacrificing his own single room for the famous pro; the SFCoL mob explaining fans and fandom to Ken McIntyre, who had arranged the art work in the con hall, and Geoff Doherty, who'd edited a book called 'Aspects of SF' and was to present a talk on the Saturday morning.

I saw Bobbie and Bill Gray arrive at the hotel, looking very reserved and distinguished, the tall form of Terry Jeeves attempting to be inconspicuous, and I actually met The Harrison – Bill Harrison of the Liverpool Group – who bore a striking likeness to the drawings in LiG fanzines and in the convention programme book.



The saga of William Makepeace Harrison (perpetrated by Stan Nuttall and John Owen) was a series of leg-pulls about a James Bond-style figure modelled on the real Bill Harrison, who was by then living most of the time in Barcelona rather than Liverpool.



Programme Book cover was pale blue, badge was red and black, both by Eddie Jones.

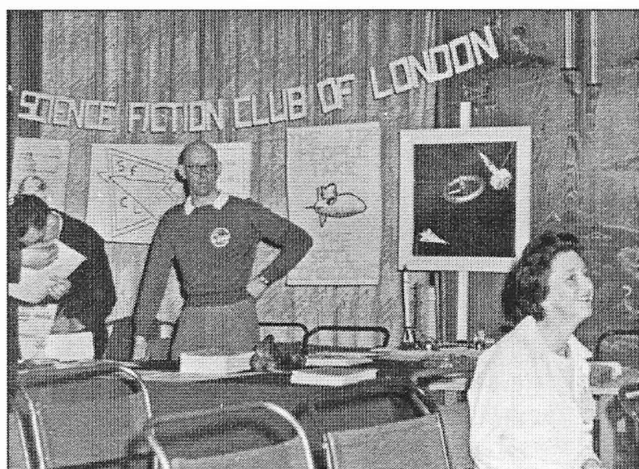


When I registered at the reception counter I was given a copy of the convention book. Ron Bennett described it in his *Skyrack* report:

'The Programme booklet was once again produced by that master of programme booklets, Norman Shorrock, assisted by Bob Parkinson and Eddie Jones. This superb production included articles on SF by Ken Slater, an obituary for Doc Weir by Eric Jones and a sparkling introduction to Kingsley Amis by Brian Aldiss, as well as some wonderful Eddie Jones artwork. Eddie, incidentally, designed the professional-looking badges which contend admirably with the type of badge favoured by the U.S. worldcons.'

The con hall was now open for inspection and was looking pretty good. Posters were displayed for competitions, tables set out for SFCoL, TAFF, the BSFA, Fantast (Medway), the Cheltenham Group and no doubt others and artwork was decorating the walls. This was to be a multi-use space and at various times it would be a display place, a sales place, a meeting hall full of seats, a place cleared for dancing and the fancy dress parade (and the tourney!), a cinema, and a theatre. Joe Patrizio remembers helping set up the SFCoL table:

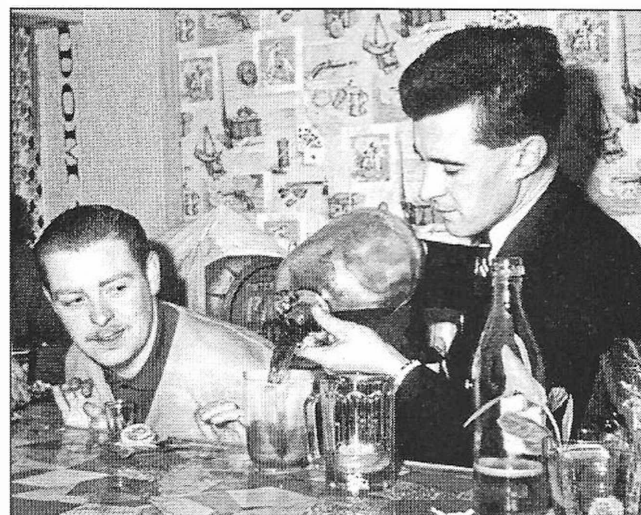
'Don Geldart had done most of the hard work already by making posters, models, and planning a suitable layout. Ted and I helped with actually putting it together, while Bruce was busy at the OMPA table and Jim at the BSFA table. The main items on our table were models of a rocket, with launching rig, personnel, and transport. The smaller ship and space station were suspended in a frame against a black background, which was very effective.



On the SFCoL stand Jim Groves shuffles papers, Ted Forsyth looks pleased with the display, while Ethel Lindsay concentrates on the programme. Photo by Terry Jeeves.

'Whilst Don was busy setting these up, I was stringing together letters, which Don had cut out to form the name of our club. These spanned across about ten feet and when they were up we were all satisfied that anybody who came into the hall would at least know who we were.'

Norman Shorrock toiled by, carrying a large box of Gestetner stencils, flogging four to me but dutifully delivering the rest to Ella. Norman was always a cheerful sight at any function. He was of medium height, rather thin, and had a shock of dark hair and a twinkle in his eye. He seemed to be the lynch-pin of the Liverpool Group and was well known as a home wine-making aficionado, always producing copious quantities of obscure variations of wine, made from pretty well anything which would ferment, like ground coffee beans, ginger, and one I swear was based on old boiled cabbage which produced a hock-like flavour.

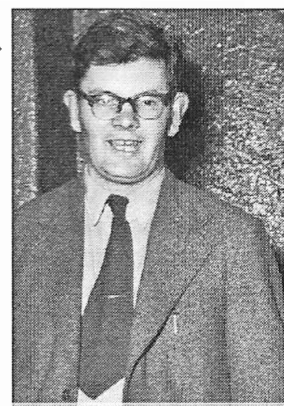


Norman dispensing home-made plonk to Eddie Jones, circa. 1960. Colour photo by Peter Mabey

Most of it had the usual alcohol content to which naturally made and unfortified wine is limited, because yeast cannot produce alcohol from sugar beyond a certain percentage volume but somehow people gained the impression his wine was stronger. There are ways of doing this, by freezing and extracting water for example, but I doubt Norman did that because it tends to weaken the flavour. How he coped with so many types and flavours I never did find out, but he delighted in surprising everyone with some strange concoctions!

I needed the four stencils to get a fanzine into the next OMPA mailing, and had some plan to type the zine at the convention. Feeling guilty about my low involvement in the apa I lent a hand fixing the OMPA display table, then sat around jawing with Ken Cheslin, Ian McCauley, and Jimmy Groves, before heading back to the bar with Don Geldart. Sitting behind a large lager glass I watched Archie Mercer squirm in torment as his ear was bent by the notorious Norman G. Wansborough, only to see Brian Burgess tower his way through the throng to join them.

I knew Brian pretty well by this stage since he was a regular at the London meetings at the Globe pub every Thursday evening. Once you got over the sheer size of the man, he was revealed as a well-dressed and



Brian Burgess at the Globe. Photo; Norman Shorrock's album.

amiable person who seemed happy to be involved in fandom. I never did find out what his personal background was, but he seemed like someone who had a Mum who looked after him and that might have been the reason he was always well kitted out. There seemed a not-quite grown up quality to him which enhanced his always-optimistic view of the world.

Ian McCauley had visited London previously, but I'd never actually met Norman Wansborough before. Ian, of course, was an Irish fan from Belfast and like many of them was a tall, fairly serious-looking man, with a fast receding hairline and always a dark suit. One might suspect he had a definite interest in one of our leading ladies in London fandom, and Jim Linwood more recently suggested Ian had gone so far as proposing to Ella at some stage.



**Ella Parker with Arthur Thomson and Ian MacAulay at a room party. Colour photo from Ethel Lindsay's album.**

Norman Wansborough could not be much more different from Ian: average height, casually dressed, on this occasion in a tweedy jacket, he had a dialect that made it hard to follow: perhaps a bit of Somerset\* in his speech, I thought. He was less agrarian than other people had suggested he would be. [\* Wiltshire actually, Bruce! He was a farm-labourer].

From the remarks of others, I had expected Norman to be like a character from *The Archers* or *Mrs. Dale's Diary* (two popular BBC radio series set in rural England where everyone it seemed spoke in broad Somerset dialects. You know the sound: "Oi kum oop from Zumerzet, whir th' zider abblez greow."



**The much-maligned Norman Wansborough in the late fifties. Photo by Wally Weber.**

Well, yes, Norman did have a regional dialect, and a healthier complexion than most of us city dwellers, but he wore the same sort of clothes as anyone else, and he had a

wider range of interests than I expected, being able to hold a conversation with Archie Mercer for example (which was no mean feat!). As for the regional accent: everyone I had met in the UK had some sort of accent to my colonial ear, apart perhaps from Don Geldart, who generally spoke the RP dialect (like a less-ponsy-sounding BBC-English) I was more familiar with in the fair land of the kiwi.

The Friday programme began at 8pm, or soon thereafter because the crowd in the hall deliberately delayed the start in order to keep with fannish tradition. The welcome was mainly an introduction to some of the personalities who would be present during the weekend and a reminder of some of the house rules for the hotel and programme, and led immediately into a screening of several films. My notes reveal I was shut out of the films for some unknown reason, but according to Ron Bennett's *Skyrack* report I didn't miss much and people I met later said the screening was disappointing. As a result, I was able to spend the time talking with Archie Mercer before finding various parties had begun in peoples' rooms.

Joe Patrizio: 'Things started quietly for me, in the lounge talking with Ron Bennett and Norman Shorrocks. We were joined by Ian McCauley, carrying the inevitable glass of lager. Norman and Ron had a duel with stamp tweezers..... We went to a party in Peter Mabey's room; about ten others were already there. All pretty quiet, as they were listening to Paddy Roberts on tape. Dave Hale was on the bed with about six others, trying to seduce Alan Rispin's girl, Diane, who was dropping hints (like kicking him in the ribs) that she wasn't too keen on the idea. Alan was lying there with a silly grin on his face, and a hat of the type worn by men who want to get ahead, on the back of his head.'



**Alan Rispin with the hat, in unfair duel with Chris Miller (fire-extinguisher vs. water pistol. Photo from Jim Linwood.**

For Ella Parker, the evening also included the Rispin room (from her con-rep in *Orion*):

'We were having the whale of a time when someone knocked for admission – or so we thought. Our first impulse was to shout "drop dead!" It's as well we didn't because on being told to enter, the countenance of an irate tenant was disclosed, demanding that we allow his two-year old child to come sleep that night. ... Being our first night in the hotel it was obvious that if we didn't want the party atmosphere to dissipate entirely we would have to move to another room. I can't remember who it was called out the number of the next room we should grace with our company, but the room turned out to belong to Eddie Jones.

'Eddie was lodged in a single, single room, if you know what I mean. It was already quite crowded when I arrived but still plenty of room for more as we gauge these



things. I am bound to miss someone out as it was difficult to see exactly who was there, but from where I was sitting I could see Tony Walsh and Audrey Eversfield standing as near to the window as they could get without actually going out of it. The crush later became so bad that Audrey passed out, more from the crush of people than from anything she'd had to drink. I do know that at one point in the evening someone counted noses and discovered there were forty fen in the room! Through it all Eddie sat on part of the bed looking so forlorn, all he wanted was the chance to go to bed and sleep.'

I vaguely recall looking in on that party which seemed to sprawl around room 38, and involved everyone cramming onto any vantage point they could use and still hold a glass. Later, I remember partying in Jim Linwood's room, where Alan Rispin had a close encounter with a pair of scissors. Joe Patrizio was already at that party;

'I took an intense dislike to Alan Rispin's hat. I grabbed it, dropped it on the floor, and stood on it. Soon there was a queue of people waiting to stand on Alan's hat, much to his complete disinterest. The idea grew that it would be a good thing to auction it for TAFF. Ron Bennett immediately took this up and called for bids. These were a bit slow in coming and a shilling was the highest anybody was prepared to go for the monstrosity.

'Ron was trying everything in the book to get the bidding up, and turned to me and said, 'I will even accept postal bids'. Reaching for the nearest typewriter I hurriedly typed a note - to say I had no intention of bidding. Ron was a bit peeved at the wasted time. Then came his most brilliant idea....group bids.

'The hat was passed round and everybody contributed to the total, even Alan. We found that TAFF was richer by twelve shillings! Now came the tricky part, who was to get the hat? Diane made some silly suggestion about giving it back to Alan, but was shouted down, when I made the obvious suggestion, that we each have a piece. Scissors appeared from nowhere, and Ron divided it up. I managed to snatch the hat band which hangs proudly on the wall before me as I write. Even Alan got a bit....'



**Dave & Ruth Kyle, Stan Nottall and John Owen at the Liverpool group party. Photo by Norman Shorrock.**

Fairly soon after the hat auction a guest from a room nearby complained of the noise we were making, so we muttered darkly and moved elsewhere, and bumped into Norman Shorrock who waved a bottle of something at us and said there was a party in his room. There was, too, and they were screening movies, including one taken at the London con the previous year. Joe Patrizio was there, too:

'...Quite a few people were there. Most of the Liverpool Group, Dave and Ruth Kyle, and lots more too blurred to be seen properly. Dave and Norman did a great

job of showing the film under conditions far from ideal, the room was small and there was no screen. Everyone enjoyed it and they were disappointed when it finished.

'Then Ina decided that she wasn't as comfortable as she might be, and that she would feel better in slacks. The assembled male faction could see no reason for her not changing into them, and made their feelings clear to Ina.

'Accepting the roars as a challenge, Ina said 'Oh, so you think I can't!', and jumping up on the bed which was holding about ten of us, proceeded to change, by the simple expedient of pulling the slacks up under her skirt. Eddie Jones and Phil Rogers led the howls of protest.... I can't remember much after that, except that Norman kept handing round glasses of coffee, which turned out to be coffee-flavoured wine, with dramatic after-effects....'

But I began to flag with tiredness from the day and far too much martini and other stuff. I found myself half-asleep and pretty drunk, slumped into a chair, then the floor, then a bed, listening to the chatter all around me. Marvellous interlineations (all, alas, forgotten). My last memory is of the coffee-flavoured wine, which suggests I stayed near the LiG mob, but the evening broke up and I finally headed for bed.

I arose a little more slowly than the day before, with a slight headache but a bursting appetite for breakfast. The programme began again at 10.30 with the Cheltenham Circle's magnum opus, a taped play called 'Typo', and my mind is blissfully blank of what it involved.

A similar condition obtains for the next item on the programme, a talk by Geoff Doherty, whom I'd met the day before. It was called 'An Alien in the Academy' or 'Is SF English Literature?', and was angled at teachers, students, and academics in general. Geoff had told me that he had been surprised to find science fiction is a much wider and more varied field of interest than he had previously thought. He wanted to know more about the fannish scene, but related everything to the comparatively narrow confines of SF in the schools of the country.

I gained an impression that by the end of the talk his opinions might lead to a revival of Deglerism: star-begotten writers and their star-dusted devotees, all facing an exciting future with shiny eyes.

Lunch was left to individual desires, but many of us found our way to the Four Seas Chinese Restaurant which was only a hundred yards from the con hotel. We tended to be a fairly rowdy lot, congregating in a group of tables, but the staff welcomed us throughout the weekend. Because the prices for meals in the hotel were rather high for impecunious fans, most of my eating throughout the weekend was of Chinese dishes.



**Dave Barber & Ken Slater take an alternative approach to lunchtime dining! Photo by Terry Jeeves.**



Brian introduces GoH Kingsley Amis; getting him was quite a coup for an Eastercon! Photo; Norman Shorrock.

Back to the New County Hotel and something everyone had told me to look forward to: 'The Don Ford Slide Show'. Don had been winner of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund the previous year, and had made an extensive trip to Britain and Europe. He was a fine photographer and a very popular TAFF winner, and there was eager anticipation for his show. Sadly, the projector used had a low-power lamp so the illumination of the slides was duller than it should have been. The slides were an excellent selection however, and the commentary that Don had taped tied in well with it, including pictures from the previous year's Midwestcon, *Pittcon* (with Eric Bentcliffe in view during his TAFF trip to the USA), and some great views around Don's home town of Cincinnati.

Our guest of honour, Kingsley Amis, took the stage in the middle of the afternoon, and was introduced by Brian Aldiss. Amis held strong views about the nature of SF, claiming too much of it relied on gimmicks and pseudo-science. His view was that SF should not encourage daydreaming by dealing with what he described as the fantasy of time travel, but should be a sort of mind-training discipline, teaching readers to think logically and clearly.

Amis also challenged the fans gathered in the con hall by saying that science fiction was not imaginative enough, dealing in too many archaic themes: humanoid aliens, faster than light travel, psi abilities, and other "old hat" concepts which are not scientifically true.

Ron Bennett in *Skyrack* described part of the exchanges with the audience that followed Amis' speech: 'Asked about time travel and psi phenomena he said "There is no such thing as a thought pattern, I've never seen one, show me one," to which Peter West immediately answered by saying, "I've never seen gravity, show me....."'



Kingsley Amis, Ted Tubb and Harry Harrison at a Saturday-night room party. Photo; Eric Bentcliffe.

My opinion? Kingsley might as well tell people to stop dreaming, but their eyes will still track phantoms while they sleep!

Ella Parker commented: 'We had two Guests of Honour this year. From the world of pro-dom we had Kingsley Amis and from our small world of fandom we had Archie Mercer and it couldn't have been offered to a nicer or more deserving guy. Archie has always been most generous with his time and money in the cause of fandom and after having spent three years as Treasurer of the BSFA it was long past time for us to show some appreciation of what he has done. Good on you, Archie.

'Kingsley Amis was an entirely different kettle of fish. At first sight one was inclined to dislike him because of what looked like the beginnings of a sneer on his face. Remembering what non-fan pros have said and thought of fans in the past, when I saw him I thought he was there in a spirit of condescending tolerance. Once having become acquainted with him I found he isn't like that at all. Long and loud were his complaints that he hadn't known about our conventions before and he was going to come to next year's, by golly. We even subjected him to a room party, an ordeal to which he stood up manfully, so much so that he returned for some more of the same the next night. Yes, a nice fellow, Amis. I liked him as I believe most of the others did.'

A fannish quiz followed the Amis address, and there was a short auction of books, magazines, and artwork after that, but most people were already preoccupied with preparations for the fancy dress that evening – the TransGalactic Tourists' party.

While the quiz and auction took place, there was a short, somewhat desultory, meeting of the Off-Trail Magazine Publishers' Association, or OMPA, attended by Daphne Buckmaster, Archie Mercer, Bobbie Gray, and myself. I had been nominated to take over the editor position later in the year, so I was keen to find what other members thought about the organisation, which in many ways seemed to be fading all too rapidly. What I wanted to propose was a re-write of the organisation's Constitution so that it would encourage participation in the mailings.

OMPA Treasurer Ron Bennett couldn't get to the meeting, so Daphne Buckmaster who was the current Association Editor declared the meeting open. Archie Mercer was given the job of keeping minutes of the meeting, and I still have his notes, of which this textually verbatim version makes enigmatic reading (below). No, I don't know what some of that means, either!

D/ declare meeting open in absence of other Osifers.  
Bobbie says amendments are for the birds. One and all should belt up including the President.  
Bruce proposes new constitution with simple majority voting instead of pit props in present catacombs.  
Daphne: read the cotton-picking Constitution!  
Seconded by Archie.  
Bruce: Rule enforcement like A.I.D. The works – but no fun.  
Bruce: 16x50 copies to satisfy officers (obscenity cover)  
Unsatisfactory Post Mailings – produce disclaimers in Off Trails.  
Ron Bennett is Fandom's Workhorse.



I didn't feel the meeting achieved much, but this was the first time I'd had a chance to float my own ideas of re-writing the constitution. Archie and Daphne clearly were not in favour of such revolution, but it was good to get some sort of support from Bobbie Gray, although to be honest I felt the support was rather lukewarm.

Bobbie was one of the older English fans, very intellectual and rather reserved. I knew Ethel Lindsey thought very highly of her. She was quite small, very thin to the point of being bony, but joined in most aspects of the convention with gusto, especially the Fancy Dress, although she did seem to do everything very seriously and I can't remember her at any of the parties.

Archie Mercer appeared exactly the opposite to Bobbie. Heavyweight and always in the same casual clothes, he was rather difficult to talk to and always inclined to work highly contrived puns into conversation. He looked outgoing, but was an introspective and retiring personality who normally kept very much to himself.

Daphne Buckmaster was also somewhat introspective, but a neat and tidy fresh-looking woman: blue eyes, blonde hair, slim. She was very attractive and appeared to have a very relaxed relationship with husband Ron who was not closely involved in fandom and was left to enjoy himself as best he might at the con while Daphne flirted delightfully with some of the ever-ready lads in a most friendly way.



**Daphne at a room-party with Ron Bennett and Brian Burgess. Photo by Norman Shorrock.**

With the OMPA meeting over I joined the London contingent of fans to sort out, then dress in the tunics and gaiters and silver-painted hardboard armour helmets and visors for our tourney, and it all took quite a lot of time. Again, Joc provides a different viewpoint as a non-participating observer:

'All were donning costumes in Bruce's room. When I entered I was greeted by a great deal of frenzied activity, interspersed with grunts, groans, and the occasional full blooded scream as a pin didn't go where it should. Ken Bulmer and Ted Tubb were in charge of proceedings. Bruce and Jimmie were dressed, while Don was putting the finishing touches to his costume. It had been originally mine, but Don was doing a better job of wearing it than I ever could. Pat Kearney was being bound up in authentic type medieval leggings.

'Ted was trying to put Brian Burgess into a suit of armour. Ken was going round with a hefty wooden sword, cutting and slashing at people and asking them if they could feel anything. This was funny, as he was hitting so hard, had if they hadn't been properly protected, the blow could



**Bruce Burn, Don Geldart and Pat Kearney in their armour, with Bobbie Gray in her 'Amazon' outfit recycled from the 1959 Cheltenham 'pilgrimage'. Colour photo by Joe Patrizio.**

have killed, far less hurt! This was no place for a person of my sensitivity, so I rapidly faded from the scene.'

Which explains how it was I somehow ended up in Room 21 helping get Brian Burgess into his costume as a giant among us, and generally milling around during the tourney itself, which mainly consisted of Ted Tubb, resplendent in silken robe and a sort of turban with a huge ostrich feather sticking out, belting the hell out of anyone who came within reach of his sword, which was of course the longest and heaviest one in the con hall!

Bobbie Gray gave a pretext for the "tournament" by explaining that the two sides were to battle in order to settle a matter of honour. One party had slighted the other at a gathering of the peoples of some star cluster or other, and the insulted party challenged the insulters to back down or prove themselves with cold wood. At which point the slighters (my side) unanimously agreed to back down, but unfortunately the audience, realising there was a good chance that somebody might get hurt, wouldn't let them get out of it.

As the level of blood-lust rose in the hall, those of us who knew the real reason for the coming rumble began to think interesting thoughts about good ol' Ken Bulmer, who was about to realise his boyhood dream of watching the slash and thrust of armoured men of war engaged in pitched battle while he stood safely on the sidelines.



**Slaughter on the dance-floor; the Mighty Tubb lays into Bob Richardson (left) and Jim Groves (front). Wearing the white tunic and cross is Cheltenham fan Bob Hawkins. Photo from Ethel Lindsay's album.**

In the event, it was less a tourney and more a melee or a rout and slaughter. I saw my companions fall at the feet of Tubb: Don Geldart, Bob Richardson, Jimmy Groves. I sorely wished for some protection around my arms when it was my turn, and happily took a dive during my brief combat with the Tall Tubb. Others weren't so fortunate, especially Pat Kearney who really took a bruising, but later that evening came up smiling happily when Tubb and Aldiss recompensed him with the promise of reprint rights from some of their work.

Joe Patrizio describes the general carnage: 'Arthur Thomson called them to order and got them started, a most fearsome sight that struck awe into the bystanders. Tubb, not having a shield, made do with two swords. Had I not known he was quite friendly with his opponents I would have sworn that he had his heart set on killing the lot of them. He would beat about one of them, whilst making frantic back-handed swipes at any other opponent who passed within reach.

'Kingsley Amis, who had managed to get a seat at the front, was cowering against the back of it. Bob Richardson, dressed in a sort of Mongol outfit in orange and black, and Don Geldart, made frenzied efforts to decapitate each other, right in front of Amis, and they didn't seem particularly worried about the possible loss of one of our leading writers.

'Brian Burgess just stood there. With the armour on he looked impossibly tall and most impressive. Bruce Burn kept on coming at him, but made no impression whatsoever, and every now and again Brian would take a tremendous swing before which Bruce respectfully retreated. Pat Kearney, the SFCoL's youngest member, only 17 and looking more like 15, was achieving one of his ambitions, the undivided attention of a professional author.

'Yet he was not very happy about this, nor could you blame him. Mr. Tubb was acting as if Pat had said he was only Britain's second-best author, and poor Pat looked set for the hospital at any minute. He was pretty lucky to get away with skinned knuckles, and quite badly bruised ribs. ... The battle went on for some time, but gradually subsided as people admitted they had had enough, or they ran out of swords, broken ones now littering the floor. Arthur called a halt and declared a draw, but the participants were all too tired to hear him.'

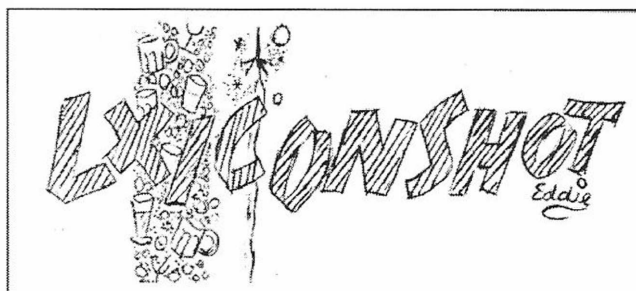
For the record, prizes were awarded for costumes at the Ball or as the programme called it 'The Transgalactic



Fancy Dress; Dave Barber, Ina, Ethel Lindsay and Ken Slater. Colour picture from Norman Shorrock.

Tourists' Party', with the first prize going to Eddie Jones as an Ambassador from Triton, the second prize to Ina Shorrock 'Firebird' costume, a vision in pink and turquoise which Eddie had designed, and further prizes went to Norman Shorrock, Tony Walsh, Eric Jones, Bob Richardson, Bobbie Gray, and Norman Weedall. Sadly, no prize for the battered armies of SFCoL.

All this time my typewriter had been on the OMPA table in the con hall, with a notice beside it inviting anyone passing to contribute to a convention one-shot which might later be distributed in the apa. I can't remember anything of significance coming of the effort, but I do remember typing into it myself, wearing my tourney armour with the visor down. Eddie Jones kindly drew a title for the thing, direct to stencil on the bar of the hotel. Contributions included Archie Mercer, Joe Patrizio, Ron Buckmaster, Terry Jeeves, Brian Burgess, Peter West, Norman Wansborough, Ken Bulmer, Tony Walsh, Dave Kyle, and several 'Anons'. The three-page one-shot went into the next OMPA mailing.



Ironically, one thing that didn't work out was a scheme to introduce some female company to the Saturday night festivities. After all, by far the majority of SF fans are young men, and in most cases they wouldn't have dancing partners despite them being so obviously handsome and eligible. So, the organisers had cleverly invited the young women who lived in the local nurses' home to come to the Ball for free, and had been delighted when the ladies asked for more tickets! Great! It was sure to be a success: you could see the ballroom filled with dancing couples! In the event, the extra tickets were for the ladies' boyfriends, who were not that keen to change their partners and most of the dancing appeared to be people jostling for position around the punch bowl.

So these were among the highlights of my First Convention: drinking, fighting, dancing. Bit like a country wedding or an Irish Fling. With the fancy dress over, the bars all opened and the partying began in earnest. At this remove events become a hub-bub in the memory, but I'm sure it was noisy, colourful, energetic, very intoxicated, crowded and friendly, and lots of people did lots of things they might prefer left to the shroud of pleasurable silent reminiscence. A good time was had by all.

Perhaps the main party was that held by Ethel Lindsay and Ella Parker, who had booked a suite of rooms so they could have just such an event. Ella reported on the party in *Orion*:

'The party was held in high good spirits and was an interesting mixture of the faanish and sercon. Here S-F came in for its share of attention during the jollity. We were keeping pretty well open house between our two rooms and as there wasn't room for everyone in Ethel's place the overflow was passing through into mine. This makes it difficult to know who was at ours and who had gone off looking for another party elsewhere. I do remember seeing Arthur Thomson, who had come down for one day and was acting barman very capably. It was a good party.'



Joe Patrizio was at the same party, but left early:

'Ron Bennett wanted to play cards, and made tracks for his room with Dave Barber and Peter West. I went with them.... to watch. Soon, I had enough of watching and got in on the game. As it turned out I was glad I did as I won a few shillings, and was in on some fannish history - Ron Bennett lost!'

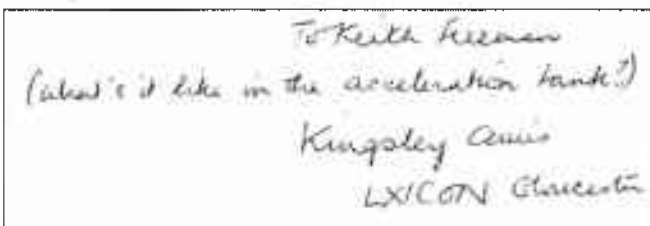
Eric Bentcliffe had joined the convention late, during the closing stages of what was officially called the Masquerade Ball, well after the Tournament and the Grand Parade, and found it something of a surrealistic experience to walk in from the damp and rainy Gloucester Road into the warmth of the New County Hotel peopled by happy folk bedecked in fancy dress:

'One moment you are travelling through dark, wet-shiny streets; at an hour when the streets are dead - the next you are surrounded by Green-faced Ghouls, Spacemen of varying hues, and Fine Feathered Females. One moment you are registering at the desk of a discreetly lit hotel lobby, the next you are in a gay hall hung with esoteric slogans and embellished with alien phrases - and filled with a fine welcoming crowd of people. Someone pushes a glass into your hand....another convention has started!'

Eric toured the various parties being held after the Saturday Ball:

'...And then there was the Mini-Bathcon. It wasn't called that at the time, but it seems to be as suitable a soubriquet as I can think of for it. The mini-bathcon had already started when I arrived on the scene with flash-bulbs flaring; it was a small select affair with a membership of three. Norman Shorrock, Bruce Burn, and Keith Freeman.

'I gather that it all started when Norman (or Bruce, or Keith) got a little tired of the crowded atmosphere of one room-party, and decided to seek solitude in a nearby bathroom. He was shortly joined (in the typical lemming-flow of fan movement at conventions) by the other two. Since there was nowhere else to sit, they sat in the bath. Since all three of the gentlemen concerned have a distinct aversion to 'dry' parties, the taps were turned on. At the time I arrived the bath was about a quarter full and Bruce, Norman and Keith, with contented looks on their faces, were happily watching the tide come in.... 'Convention Guest of Honour, Kingsley Amis, looked in just after I arrived, but declined the cordial invitation to step into the bath and have a chat.' But the scene did inspire him to add a special autograph to Keith Freeman's copy of 'New Maps of Hell'\*



Next day, someone bought my beard. Someone else bought Kingsley Amis. It was the TAFF auction, run by Eric Bentcliffe, and any willing subject could be put on

\* Keith explains: 'to get some privacy (and remember Norman was slightly deaf) we went into a bathroom. No seats, so we sat on the side of the bath - and found it more comfortable to put our feet in the bath. Other people came into the bathroom - including Bruce, who decided if we were in the bath it should have water in it. As I was still in fancy dress I didn't mind (though I did take my shoes off fairly smartly)... don't know about Norman, I think he just took it in his stride as he did so much.'



'Ouch, Yaroo, you rotters!' protests Bruce, as Alan Rispin removes his beard with a blunt pen-knife! Photo from Bruce.

the auction block, along with a wide selection of fannish and SF treasures. My beard was promptly removed for 12/6d and went into the possession of Alan Rispin, hirsute himself and apparently determined to remove any competition. Amis was sold after he'd told everyone how much he had enjoyed the con. Five of us, Don Geldart, Ted Forsyth, Joe Patrizio, Ron Bennett and me, clubbed together to produce £2.10s.0d to buy the famous author, the top price of the auction. We never did figure out what to do with our investment but the money raised all went to a good cause.

This all happened later in the day, which began with the BSFA AGM, a highlight of which was Ron Bennett's tear-jerking acceptance speech for next year's convention. As he reported later in *Skrack*:

'Ron Bennett was asked whether he would be willing to arrange for the con to be held in Harrogate; he announced that already he had the names of a tentative con-committee. The hotel (chosen from those in Harrogate) still had to be approached, and registration fees worked out. Everyone to whom I spoke about Harrogate as a con-site was most enthusiastic.'

Joe Patrizio described Ron's AGM acceptance speech a little differently:

'After having suffered the disappointment two years in succession of being given the con for Harrogate, only to have it snatched away again, it was the general consensus of opinion that the 1962 con should go to Ron Bennett. Everyone seemed agreed on this, the only one who would not give an opinion was Ron himself. Someone nominated Harrogate. People started to get up and say why they thought this was a good idea. Then some bright person came up with the bright idea of asking Ron if he was willing to take the con.

'Ron made the most of this, his moment. He slowly rose to his feet and waited for everyone to be quiet. Then he went into a long dramatisation of how for years he had nurtured the idea of holding a con in his home town, but nobody would listen. How at last it was reluctantly agreed that he could have it but finding his dreams snatched away, and this happening not once but for two years in succession. By now nearly everyone was in tears at poor Ron's plight, and it was then that he brought his speech to a brilliant climax by accepting the 1962 con.'

And then, immediately after lunch, the drama continued with a performance given by SFCoL of the play 'The Kilts of Tralee'. Ever since my arrival in London, I had been struck by the large number of Scottish people who were at the heart of fannish life in the English capital. In my way, I'd suggested this might represent a takeover by the

heathens north of the border, and had written a few pieces exploring this fantasy. The latest was a little play, with songs, and the delight was being able to cast the sketch from amongst the people from London, playing themselves in what was supposed to be a comedy. And I think most of the few bleary-eyed con attendees who attended the performance probably had a chuckle or two.

Joe Patrizio had a small but vital role in the sketch:

'The theme, briefly, was that Bruce and Jimmie Groves were prisoners in a fanzine factory (I seem to have heard this before somewhere) and were under the charge of Ethel who brought them fanzines to collate, and occasionally something to eat.

'This plot was the vehicle for a few song parodies which seemed to go down pretty well. At the end Ella came on and gave me orders to shoot the pair, which I did with great pleasure, they being only Englishmen. Unfortunately, as this was put on soon after lunch, there was only a small audience, which was a pity considering the amount of work put into it by Ethel, Bruce, and Jimmie, who had even rehearsed on the journey to Gloucester.'

As you can see, Ella Parker played a key part in the drama, and she wrote about it in her report:

'Jimmy Groves and Bruce Burn had the stage to themselves for the opening and as they got into their parts it began to sound quite good to me out in the wings. Ethel, who had a song to sing in her part, was standing waiting to make her entrance and I hope I never again meet anyone with such a bad attack of the shakes. Never mind, once on-stage she did us and herself credit. Congratulations, you three.'

Those involved in the sketch were Ian McCauley as the narrator, myself and Jimmy Groves as the two entrapped Englishmen working as slaves collating endless copies of *Orion* and the like, Ethel Lindsay in a stellar performance as a bonnie lassie who with great aplomb handled a song based on the music of 'The Lady is a Tramp', Ella Parker in a cameo performance, Joe Patrizio who zapped us in the end, Don Geldart who provided Joe with a uniform, and Ron Bennett who provided a pack of cards. The songs were presented *a capella*, because we didn't have any music tapes or backing. All good fun.

There was great anticipation for the next item, the Eric Bentcliffe production of a fannish 'This Is Your Life' which had become a feature of British conventions in previous years. There was much discussion of just who was going to be skewered by Eric this year. Again, Ella Parker picks up the commentary:



Surprise! Surprise! Eric Bentcliffe drags Eric Jones onto stage for 'This is Your Life'. Photo by Norman Shorrock.



Norman Shorrock & Margaret Jones drag the 'interrogation machine' onto the stage. Photo from Eric Bentcliffe's album.

'After some deliberate delaying tactics such as approaching those he had no intention of hauling up to the stage Eric Bentcliffe (who MCs the item) did a quick turn round on his heels to sneak up behind Eric Jones, who was sitting there supremely confident that he knew it was to be Terry Jeeves.'

Joe Patrizio comments: 'There was a delightfully free and easy atmosphere throughout the show, and even the few mistakes didn't break the continuity, but on the contrary gave Eric Bentcliffe the chance to get in a few sly jokes.

He later did admit to feeling bad about one part. This was when a magnificent machine was brought on, wheels turning, lights flashing, it was very impressive. Eric Jones had made it himself, under the impression that Terry Jeeves was to be in the very seat that he (Jones) was sitting in! This is Your Fan Life was definitely the best fannish item on the programme.'

Eric Bentcliffe gave credit to a large team of people who had helped him prepare the show:

'Norman Shorrock helped prepare the tapes we used in TIYL, and John Owen lent his tonsils to the cause by impersonating Harrison, and 'Fingers Finnigan'. I'm greatly indebted to the cast who, unlike me, memorised their lines, and did a good job at shortish notice. Terry Jeeves, who took the part of an officer in the RAF Coastal Command Squadron which Eric Jones served in during the war – during the period when Eric was 'building the biggest rotary duplicator in the world, in No.3 Hanger'.

'Bruce Burn, who did an excellent job of portraying a Maharaja Eric had met in India, 'where he discovered Psionics and Hypnotism'. Bob Richardson, as one of the few living survivors of the tapera made by Eric and the Cheltenham Group, 'The Test'. ... Alan Rispin, who played the part of the Keeper of the St. Fantony Archives, and who got rather mixed up (intentionally) with 'Take Your Pick'. Norman Shorrock, who appeared as himself with a wonderful box of electronics specially built for the show by Eric Jones (who thought Terry Jeeves was the subject) – a Psionics machine which he had been using as a projector for 35mm films, which explained the picture quality he'd been getting!'

Incidentally, I discovered that Doc Weir had originally been cast as the Maharaja – talk about walking in dead mens' sandals! Eric never actually told me that I was the stand in for Doc Weir (whom I don't think I ever met – for obvious reasons: he was ill and declining soon after my arrival in Blighty). What happened is that when Eric sent me the script in mid-Feb I found the stage directions read:





Bewigged Alan Rispin as Keeper of the Archives quizzes Eric Jones, as Keith Freeman looks on. Photo; Norman Shorrocks.

'A GONG SOUNDS. ENTER DOC WEIR IN INDIAN GARB. BOWS.', so I figured it out for myself.

This was followed by the TAFF auction where I ended up clean-faced and bought a bit of Kingsley Amis, another quiz, a TAFF promotional talk, and a screening that evening of the movie 'Forbidden Planet'. Quite a few fens had left already, and those who remained didn't really feel like another wild night, so the parties that were held ended at a more reasonable time and most were able to rise fresh the next morning.

There was little post-con depression, and in fact many people noticed the positive mood in which *LXicon* closed. Joe Patrizio said he thought people were 'bubbling over with enthusiasm. The most surprising thing I saw was Ron Bennett having to put people off paying their con dues (for the next year's convention in Harrogate) until the time when things were a bit more organised. There were no sad leave-takings, only cheery goodbyes as the conventioners made their way back to their homes, shouting "See you mate, in Harrogate!"

And, in a car driven by Valerie Jeeves en-route to Harrogate, Ron Bennett was already typing stencils for his con-report, in *Skyrack 31*:

'Probably the two most notable facts to emerge from the gathering were that judging from the large number of new faces present the BSFA recruiting system is extremely successful and that science-fiction conventions are back in fashion. The two points are of course probably related, but it is true to say that the bias of the convention was towards the sercon rather than towards the fannish.

This is not to say that the fannish element was left uncared for – far from it – but this was a programmed convention. Neofans were not left out in the cold but mixed well with the old guard and indeed, a good time was had by all. The trouble with conventions like the *LXicon* is that they are all too short.'

Eric Bentcliffe summed up one of the reasons for the cheerful atmosphere:

'The *LXicon* was fortunate enough in receiving quite favourable press coverage, due in no small part to the fact that all the reporters were actually people who attended the convention, and not just reporters who had dropped in for something 'silly' to write about. There were criticisms of course, but they were valid ones from the viewpoint of the writers, and the general public.

'One quite good criticism made in the *Guardian* report, and stemming from Amis' speech, was that fans had come to accept the trappings of Time Travel and such as an integral part of SF, and that this was a somewhat pernicious influence. This is quite true I think, but if we need to look for a parallel it can be found in most other forms of popular 'literature' as well. Particularly in 'westerns' where such assumptions as the 'fast draw' are readily accepted by author and reader. Personally, I'm quite willing to go on believing the SF authors 'inventions' possible (so long as they seem logical), for the sake of the story. And no one can prove that they are impossible, can they?'

That was pretty well it. So, what did I make of my First Convention? Well, I appreciated all the conviviality and the friendly atmosphere, although there was a distinct English standoffishness about mixing into groups of strangers. This aloofness varied a great deal from group to group and probably from person to person. Generally, I found the Liverpool group very easy to get on with, and I already had friendships among the fans from London and a few other places. I was less familiar with some of the 'old guard' of fandom, and often found I had little in common with them, and selfishly made little attempt to get to know them better.

Similarly, I probably behaved offhand with the pros in the crowd, and I certainly got the feeling occasionally that I was an unwelcome intrusion into the affairs of others. A discernable "He's not one of us" attitude, as if I was trying to force my way into a private club. It didn't really worry me much, but it can spoil the fun... However, I did enjoy the crowd I was familiar with – it was just one long party the whole weekend.

The set pieces of the convention left me pretty cold because I didn't anticipate sitting in an audience listening to someone lecturing on their pet subject or watch others nit-picking the details of debate as many at the con seemed to enjoy. Generally, I enjoyed the weekend, but it certainly wasn't going to rate as the high-point in my existence that year. Which was a pity; because I had previously fed on other people's con-reports and went thinking it would be a wonderful co-mingling of all the good things in fandom.

Would I repeat the experience? Yes, but with some reservations, most of which have to do with the very nature of being trans-located from my home turf. I was, after all, on what became a somewhat extended OE – a sort of rite of passage for Kiwis in those days. Consequently, behind everything I did was the certain knowledge that time was passing 'back home' and things I should have been involved in were happening: families were developing, people were progressing in careers, contacts were being lost. In other words, life was moving on at home, while I dallied afar. It's a background most travellers become aware of, and it's hard to balance the losses back home with the gains *en route*.

With my London friends I enjoyed the journey back to the big city, despite being tired by the excesses of the con. Since I did all the driving on the journey, I suppose I had to come down to earth more quickly than many others. Certainly it inhibited my joining in the story-swapping as we wove our way back into the web of the city roads of England's capital. Perhaps that added to my curiously detached and muted reaction.

I still have a couple of press clippings from the April 9th English Sunday newspaper *The Observer* and the local Gloucester newspaper. They were quite excellent and perceptive reports of My First Convention.

– Bruce Burn, 2009

# The Melting Pot

It's pretty warm in here, but who's complaining....?

So jump in with both feet, even if it does get you into hot water! Irresistible editorial interjections in *italics* and *[brackets]* in the usual way.



*Illo by Jay Kinney. Fan-artists, do please try an interpretation of the theme!*

---

"Yes, Pete, you've got me feeling terribly guilty for not contributing even so much as a LoC to this wonderland venture." – Keith Walker, *Fanzine Fanatique*

---

*[Keith, it's never too late to relapse. That's what I told Ina, who hasn't written to a fanzine for nearly fifty years as far as I know but still has a few good stories to tell.....]*

Ina Shorrock  
Wirral



*Ina at Cytricon V.*  
Photo by John  
Dalman

Hi Peter,

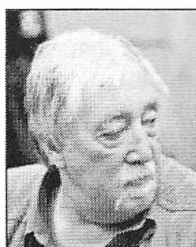
Your extracts from past *Cytricon* reports had me chuckling with fond memories. Bill the porter was wonderful, loved us calling him 'Boris' and treating him as one of the crowd. He had had lots of insults from other groups that had stayed at the George. In particular he mentioned rugby clubs! Each time we went, he said, it was like a holiday for him.

On Page 15 it mentions Shirley Marriott and I doing the hula on a bed. It didn't say that Doc Hammett came out from under that bed with a lighter, trying to get rid of those skirts, which belonged to Dave Newman!! On Page 17 Norman gets the blame for the apple-pie beds – but not true, it was always me and anyone else who ever felt like mischief! Neofans were easy to lead astray. I could get a room-key from Bill and I knew all the ups and downs of the hotel, so I led them all around. I have a feeling that two of them were Barry Hall and Bryan Welham.

Regarding Ella Parker, Bruce Burn mentioned that she got dressed-up for her U.S. trip, but this was because Iris Tubbs took her shopping beforehand. Iris and Ethel had told her she could not possibly go to America the way she was, so Iris took her in hand! //

*[Cue for some fast editorial footwork; during Ella's US trip she visited American fan Betty Kujawa, who Tony Glynn mentioned in his LoC last time. This prompted George Locke to come up with an anecdote and gives me chance to run a picture of Betty with Ella, sporting her smart New Look....]*

George Locke  
george\_locke@hotmail.com



*George at Cytricon V.*  
Photo by John  
Dalman.

Dear Peter,

Another old and very welcome name from the past – Betty Kujawa, a warm and lovely personality (though my old dad didn't think so when he saw some of our correspondence: he took the surname to be Japanese, and having been in the army during the war, well, he went kinda ballistic, despite all my exhortations that she wasn't Japanese). I loved Tony Glynn's Dillinger anecdote.

Kujawa was, of course, Betty's married name; she married John J. Kujawa, better known as Gene, shortly before the war. He had been in line for USA Olympics team selection (it might have been swimming, but I'm not sure), but when his coach told him that his conjugal duties were not on, training-wise, he decided on marital bliss rather than potential sporting fame.

Betty and Gene put me up for a couple of days in South Bend, and were very friendly and hospitable. Gene was a pretty successful businessman, and owned and flew his own light aircraft; if I remember rightly, it was a two-engined Beechcraft – I think they call them Twin Beeches.

One day, he took me up for a joyride. At one point, knowing my own aeronautical experiences, he asked me to take over. "Just continue climbing like this, and keep her on a straight course."

I duly did so, and all went well at first. Then I noticed that the starboard wing had developed a mind of its own – it kept trying to lift upwards. I thought it was due to flying through the edge of an up-current, and duly put it back down so that we'd continue flying straight.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw several strange expressions flow across Gene's face. But I didn't take any notice; I just concentrated on keeping us straight and level. Dammit, that up-current was lasting a long distance – must be a thermal cloud-street, I thought, though there weren't any clouds in sight. Gene's face became more agitated. At last, he cried: "Don't you know what's going on?"



"Just flying through the edge of a thermal," I said. "Oh, and the engines sound a bit rough." He replied: "I killed the port engine several minutes ago," and waited for my reaction.

"Oh," I said. "Do you want us to keep going like this?"

"You're British. I guess it's something about you folk – what d'you call it – stiff upper lip? Most guys I pull that trick on go into a frenzy, and it's all I can do to stop them going into a screaming spin or something."



Ella Parker and  
Betty Kujawa,  
Photo from Rob  
Hansen.

He switched the port engine back on, and I had to admit the roughness had gone, as had the tendency for the starboard wing to lift.

"Gene," I said, "It's not being British at all. Remember, I fly gliders; I'm happiest without ANY engines."

Betty, when I visited, had just finished reading a book – Pauline Reage's *THE STORY OF O*. "Can I borrow it?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No, sorry, George. It's not the sort of book you should read." The same thing had happened a few months earlier, when I asked Ethel Lindsay if I could borrow HER copy. She said, word for word, exactly the same thing. Oh, Peter, the things femme-fans read!

But Betty gave me a book I fell in love with, and still dip into from time to time – a large format humorous paperback called *SEX AND THE SINGLE DOG*.

I haven't been in contact with Mike Moorcock for some months largely because I've been side-tracked by a huge purchase early this year – twenty boxes of down-market women's magazines of the 1900 to 1925 period. Mike would know all about them, for they were all Amalgamated Press file copies.

I've been going through them page by page looking for things on which I could put some extortionate price – the most intriguing one was a dinky little mag called *Mother and Home* which carried an article on Winston Churchill's early days – and in the very same issue has a feature on suffragettes with a brief account of some earnest woman whipping Churchill across the face! But I'd better quit now, before I start rabbiting on into infinity. //

[But George, it's such entertaining 'rabbiting' – that's how your lead-article began this time, and you've reminded me that I have a picture of Ella in one of your gliders, courtesy of Wally Weber. It will appear in his TAFF Report in due course! And now here's Tony Glynn who recalls his brief spell of fame and fortune as a pro-author....]

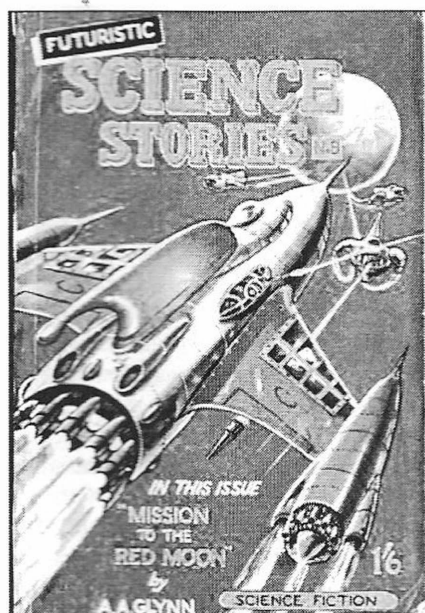
Tony Glynn  
Southport.

Dear Peter,

The name change was very welcome because *Prolapse* always brought me painful twinges due to my once enduring three weeks of agony with a prolapsed disc. I was pretty much immobilised on a bed hardened by large sheets of heavy cardboard – ouch!! *Relapse* is a much less agonising title and apt, too, since it causes us to relapse into the admirable, youthful and energetic fen we once were.

The Kettering memories were enjoyable though my only Kettering experience was in '55. It never quite took-off for me – possibly because I had a heavy cold and felt absolutely lousy most of the time. I do recall breakfasting with Eric and Margaret Jones and meeting John Brunner for the first time. My memory is that he was in the uniform of an RAF pilot officer. He was very much officer-class and not at all the Brunner of whom we would hear so much later. I recall having a long chat with him at a late night gathering – possibly the one pictured and captioned 'Saturday night celebrations', and felt Pilot Officer Brunner was a very decent sort of chap. I recall a remark of his when someone made reference to the pen name, John Loxmith, he used on the early story he sold to John W. Campbell's *Astounding*. 'Ah, love laughs at Locksmiths', quipped he. Funny how things heard at conventions can stick in the mind.

Tony's 1952  
debut in a John  
Spencer  
magazine



That jaunt to Kettering was memorable because it was there that I met MY FAN. I arrived at the hotel on the Saturday and, at first, found my way into a hall. It was lunchtime or something and the place was empty save for a youthful chap, little more than a schoolboy. He asked my name and when I told him, his eyes lit up. He wanted to know if I was the AA Glynn who wrote science fiction. This was in consequence of my appearances in the John Spencer publications which, it need hardly be said in this company, were widely considered to be untouchable crud. Ted Tubb and Syd Bounds disguised their appearances in the Spencer arena under other names but, in a misguided bid for fame, I used my own name, as did Laurence Sandfield, whose photo can be found in last issue's con round-up.

Well, blow me down if it didn't turn out that this young lad liked my stuff and he accompanied me thither and yon for quite a time during my first hours at the con with what I like to think was adulation. It almost cured my cold.

My fan's name was John Ashcroft and he came from Ormskirk, Lancashire, only a mere hop down the road from my present domicile. And, here's the rub, about a year and a half later, this youth was selling stories to the pro-editors who had been rejecting my stuff – I think he first showed up in *Authentic*, then *New Worlds*, though he seems to be lost to the reference books. John Ashcroft, my fan, where are you now?



'Little more than a schoolboy' - John Ashcroft (left), with Peter Rigby. Photo by Eric Bentcliffe, about 1955.

On the spur of the moment I left off writing this to look up our local phone directory, which also covers Ormskirk, and made the startling discovery that the locality seems to be wholly populated by Ashcrofts. There are umpteens, a goodly number having the initial J or J with another initial. Is there another lost fifties fan and sometime writer somewhere among them?

Bruce Burn was highly readable and highly informative. He came along just after I had more or less gaffiated but so many of those he encountered were of my time and known to me personally or by reputation. His very detailed piece was evocative of the period and he certainly mingled widely with the fen of the time.

So, you've located Daphne Buckmaster whom I remember as a lovely lady. (Hello, Daphne!). She will not recall me, of course, but she was at the first room party I ever attended. It was at the *Supermancon* of 1954 and I recall sitting on a bed in Manchester's old Grosvenor Hotel with, among others, Ron and Daphne Buckmaster; Ken and Pam Bulmer and Doc Hammet, from Malta. There was a whole lot of smoking going on as was normal at that period. I don't recall much discussion of science fiction but there was much debating of modern American writers with someone - I can't recall who - holding that Hemingway was a phoney.

And that was a worthy and pleasant tribute to Ina Shorrock. I remember encountering Ina and Norman a number of times and what an amiable couple they were - perfect representatives of the bright and friendly spirit of Liverpool.

As an old James Joyce scholar, I feel I must point out to David Redd that neither Sam Merwin nor Vince Clarke coined the style 'pomes'. In 1927, the great sage of Dublin published a volume of verse entitled 'Pomes Penyeach'. The likelihood is that Merwin or Clarke nicked it from that source. One finished the meaty and nostalgic pages of *Relapse* wishing for more. I wait in eager anticipation. As for my not having an e-address, good grief, would you have me disrupting my tranquil routine here among the sand and seaweed by having truck with trivial, new-fangled passing fancies like horseless carriages, moving pictures, computers and science fiction? //

[Alas, I haven't heard from Daphne yet though I live in hope. But Tony, I hadn't realised you were a filthy pro, so I googled your name and came up with several 1952/53 stories - 'Mission to the Red Moon' and 'Planetoid of Peril', as well as a couple of Badger Westerns, 'Man from Dakota' and 'The Lonesome Gun'. Your novel-length 'Plan for Conquest' (Badger #90) was reprinted by Vega Books and (in hardback) by Arcadia House in the USA. So why stop when you were selling? But thanks for telling us about an otherwise-forgotten fan of the 50s. Harry Bell remembers another one....]

Hi Peter,

In these quiet days when everybody is at *Corflu Zed* (hope you're having a good time!), I found myself idly musing through *Relapse* 13. I was brought up short by Ian Peters's mention in the Melting Pot, that he'd been introduced to fandom by Alan Burns, of Newcastle-on-Tyne.

I found fandom through meeting John Barfoot in 1964, and for a short while, he and I made some connections with local fans. Tom Porter was the most influential, in that although he disappeared off to live in London almost as soon as we'd met him, he handed over a box of old fanzines which proved instrumental, for me at least, in conveying what fandom was really about.

I don't know how the meeting with Alan Burns came about. I suspect that John was given his address by one of the PaDS crowd - Beryl Henley or Mary Reed, perhaps. (He tells me, not without some embarrassment, that he recalls admiring some of Alan's stories he'd seen in fanzines, including one about a robot with emotions...).

However it happened, one night we were invited along to Alan's house, the impressively named Goldspink House, at the top of Goldspink Lane in Sandyford, Newcastle. It was a big gloomy place with rather fusty old furniture and, it seems to me now, not a lot of light. Alan lived there with his mother who was enormously fat and hearty and regaled us - for a little while - with tales of walking in the Alps in the 30s. I think she was a semi-invalid, but nevertheless seemed a much more fully functioning human being than the elephantine - and curiously childlike - Alan Burns, and we both remember being very impressed by her.

We were given tea and biscuits and then, for some reason which escaped both John and me even at the time, Alan decided to play for us a tape about farting. John thinks it was an American recording of 'The Farting Contest', but I'm pretty certain it was a reading (maybe by Richard Dyer Bennett) of Mark Twain's '1601' in which Queen Elizabeth I and her courtiers discuss the perpetrator of a fart:

'In ye heate of ye talke, it befel that one did breake wynde, yielding an exceeding mightie and distressful stinke, whereat all did laffe full sore ...'

Being about 17 at the time I think we were both a little shocked (not at the subject matter, but that this should be what he chose to entertain us with) and pruriently amused.

It was a night never to be repeated. I don't think either of us even thought about going back and soon after the younger lure of female fandom in the form of Sandra Beckett Tagg and Maire Steele was to take precedence in our thoughts. //

[Good story, Harry. Alan Burns was one of the 'old' North-East fans involved with *Gestalt*, who seems to have dropped-out of mainstream fandom about 1960, perhaps after taking damage in the wake of the collapse of the London Circle; he didn't seem to be greatly loved at the time.]

Harry Bell  
grimwab@yahoo.  
com



Above; Harry,  
Photo by Bill Burns

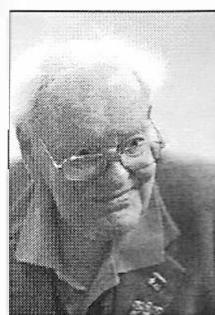
Below; Alan Burns  
(no relation)  
In 1959.  
Photo from Norman  
Shorrock.



Steve Jeffery  
srjeffery@aol.com

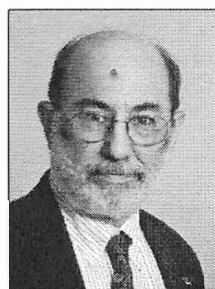


Steve in 2006 –  
his picture



Peter Mabey at  
Cytricon V. Photo  
by John Dalman.

Fred Lerner  
Fred.Lerner@Da  
rtmouth.EDU



Fred in 2007 –  
his picture

Hi Peter,

That cover cartoon on the last issue is indeed alarmingly vertiginous to those, like me, with a nervousness about being more than six inches above terra firma. Not sure why a Weetabix factory would need such a tower, unless it was an attempt to disperse the smell of whatever it is they mash up (presumably wheat) high enough that it gets carried away from residential areas. Never works. Reading used to stink of the output from both the Courage brewery and – slightly less offensive – the local Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory. What it did remind me of, though, was the old shot tower at Anzoin in Howdon, near North Shields in Tyneside, where I worked as a consultant for a while in the late 90s. It was a local landmark. You could see it from miles away, so became a useful reference point when giving people directions. They needed to do some work on it while I was there, which involved a couple of fearless souls winching themselves up on flimsy-looking seats to construct a platform round the top. Gave me the willies just looking at it every morning when I passed.

An unexpected delight of this issue was the piece on 'backroom boy' Peter Mabey. Peter is someone Vicki and I have seen around at almost every convention since we started in the late 80s, to the point that if I don't see him at some point in the weekend I suspect we've come to the wrong place (or on the wrong weekend – but that's a completely different story, and you'll need to ask Ben Jeapes about that one). Despite which, apart from an occasional 'Hi', I don't think we've really spoken, and I knew little or nothing about him except as one of the venerable old-time fans. (As opposed to the disreputable old-time fans, of which there seem to be many more, and quite a few in training.)

Anyway, I was fascinated to read of Peter's career as a breaker of large structures. I used to share a house in Ealing – just round the corner from Greg Pickersgill, as it happens, although I didn't know it at the time, and wouldn't find out until some years later – with a couple of engineers who worked at British Aerospace research division, who broke Harriers for living. At least that's how I mostly remember it, from when they both rolled in blind drunk one night, gleefully yelling "We broke it!". What they used to do was put parts of aircraft – fuselage or wing sections – in this big computer-controlled and monitored rig and bounce it around like a paint shaker (albeit a bit more technical) until something happened. Which could take weeks, sometimes months. Hence the celebration when something finally fell off. Another of their tricks was testing windshields with a compressed air cannon and a frozen chicken. I was rather envious of such fun and games, even though I was setting fire to things for a living at the time. (This was in the wake of the Manchester Woolworth's fire, and the rush to introduce fire retardant furniture.)

I originally misread the date Peter got himself involved in computing as 1964. Early, but perhaps not remarkably so – though a completely different world to those who think of computers as something you carry around in a bag. Then I read it again. 1946. Now that is early. It may even pre-date IBM chairman's Thomas J. Watson's much quoted and spectacularly inaccurate prediction that the global market for computers would be between five and six. That's in single digits, not millions, or billions as it probably is now.

*[Steve, the Weetabix factory doesn't really have a chimney as big as that – it was my joke, although it's on a 75-acre site at Burton Latimer, two miles south of Kettering, and must be a pretty big operation. I read in a con-report (now lost) that the smell was overwhelming in the town, even at that distance. And now you know something about Peter Mabey you can ask him about his fascinating career!]*

Dear Peter,

Rob Hansen's piece on 'The Globe Mystery' sent me in search of the little brown pocket notebook that I carried on my trip to Britain in 1971. I find that on the page for Thursday, 4 November, I wrote the following:

"Met some old faces (John Brunner, Dave Kyle) and new ones (Mike Moorcock, George Hay) at the *Globe*, where the London SF Circle met. Crowded, smoky and noisy, but fun." To be sure that I would find the place, I had written down these directions, which I got from Dave Kyle: from the Chancery Lane underground station, 'walk left past Gamage's Department Store on Holborn, up one long block, pub on corner'. After the gathering I went with Dave Kyle to Weybridge, where I stayed for a couple of days at 'Two Rivers', the Kyles' house on the Thames. After feeding ducks and swans, seeing the Guy Fawkes Day bonfires and fireworks, and visiting a jumble sale ("a view of the English at their rudest"), I returned to London to spend several days in "a shabby but cheap rabbit-warren" named by cosmic coincidence the Hotel George. (I never did learn precisely which George it was named after.)

Speaking of Georges: on November 11 I visited the office of the Kipling Society and then "met George Hay at the Radio London studios at Harewood House in Hanover Square. He interviewed me on his programme 'Star Gazers'. We then went to his office and talked for a couple of hours about SFRA and the SF Foundation." The Science Fiction Research Association, of which I was one of the founders and early officers, was just getting off the ground. I had heard that George Hay was organising something similar in England, so I took the opportunity to find out what his group was doing and to explore opportunities for cooperation between SFRA and SFF. I don't recall that anything came of this conversation. And then at the end of my three weeks in Britain I attended the very first *Novacon*. But I already told you about that... Thanks again for sending *Relapse* to me – and for giving me the opportunity to put some faces and details to some dimly-remembered names.

*[Thanks Fred; shame it was another thirty years before we met, but lucky you, getting to stay with Dave Kyle at Weybridge. He was an honorary Liverpool fan – wonder why we don't ever hear from him?]*

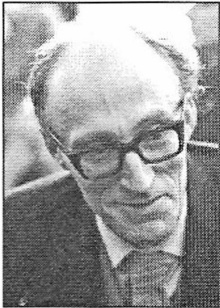


Andy Sawyer Peter,

A.P.Sawyer@  
liverpool.ac.uk

What a splendid wave of nostalgia, and I never went to Kettering in the first place! (Nor the second; sorry, sorry, sorry). But everyone at *Cytricon V* seemed to have had a splendid time, you rotters, and the reminiscences of the earlier cons were great. As I think I've already noted, I liked the piece on Ina – truly a fannish superwoman!

Fascinating piece by Rob Hansen about the location of the *Globe* – yet another instance of how we are all convinced we know something and when we look at it closer it turns out we don't. If it's not possible to agree on the exact position of a pub from the 1950s, how on Earth can we agree on the site of Troy, or where exactly the battle of Hastings took place? Great bit of detective work! Sadly, I've nothing to add to the discussion in the lettercol and elsewhere about the London Circle, being far too young to have been involved.



George Hay in  
1967. Photo by  
Mervyn Barrett.

George Locke's letter name-checks George Hay among the "names which never seem to pop up" and indeed George H (the SFF's Noble Founder, of course) is I guess another chap who deserves memorialising. I never knew him well, until I took over this job when I would receive slightly bizarre phone calls suggesting that I write to certain people who seemed to be just dying to give the Science Fiction Foundation money – after one or two of these it would be all too clear that George had buttonholed individuals who only had the vaguest idea what he was talking about, but despite the occasional frustrations in realising that George never quite ever realised that there was a significant gap between a Really Good Idea and its successful outcome, I liked him. I'm tempted to say we need more like him, but then the idea of a room full of George Hays is a bit overwhelming. Perhaps one at a time.

Nice anecdote from Brian Aldiss about William Golding, who I hope will be brought back to attention when Jon Carey's biography is published. Carey gave a lecture here about Golding and how *LORD OF THE FLIES* was written and published, and we had a great chat about Golding's reading of science fiction afterwards.

Incidentally, do you know what librarians \*do\* to people who change the names of their periodicals mid-run? May you never find out. I will intercede for you among the Librarians of Space and Time, but a word of advice. Make sure your library books are returned on time.

*[Ah, Andy, how well I remember those long, complicated, and hopelessly impractical telephone calls from George, in 1968-69 when he was limbering-up for his bid for world domination. He'd been hanging around London fandom for a long time, mercifully remaining unnoticed outside the capital until he started to push his various projects in the late 1960s, culminating in the SF Foundation.]*

Joe Patrizio

joepatrizio  
@blueyonder.  
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Hi Peter,

At last, response to the latest production from Sutton Coldfield. I feel that perhaps you should have called this one *Prelapse*, as a transitional step, but then again, perhaps not. Anyway, let me say that I thought it was a great issue – I just don't know how you keep on doing it, but keep on, anyway.

As I've said before – once a fan, always a fan, and I think that your list of those you've resurrected shows this. Particularly Ted Forsyth, who wrote to me after I'd mentioned *Prolapse* to him to say that he wasn't in the least interested; you have paranormal powers of persuasion, Mr. Weston. You mention Don Geldart, is he still around? At Bruce's flat-warming party (where I first met Anne) he introduced me to whisky sours and, consequently, my first hangover. Yes, I was 25 and hadn't had a hangover before, and you can tell how bad it was when I say that I didn't have another one for another 25 years (well, just look what happened). I don't know if Don was in M15, he claimed to be a weapons instructor (small arms). I liked the guy a lot.

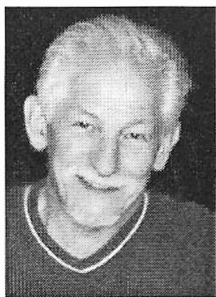
It was a really good idea to run a complete *Cytricon* history. Before *Cytricon V* we had also seen the on-line reviews of the George, and they came pretty close to putting us off, but we decided that we could always move into the local Salvation Army hostel if things were as bad as people said. As it turned out, it wasn't too bad at all. Not much to say about the con-reports, except the 1958 comment about Brian Burgess. He dropped in on me (in Edinburgh) on the way to the con, which was a bit of an experience for my family. However, Brian didn't say that he had got lost, he told me that it was easier to get a lift from London to Edinburgh and then back to Kettering, than it was to get one direct to Kettering. I have no reason to believe that he was having me on, I really think that he meant it.

Interesting stuff about the *Globe*. It's a place that I always had trouble finding when we used to drive there from St Albans. On one occasion we found ourselves (in the car) 3 or 4 stories up the Barbican, which was being built at the time; I still don't know how we got there (or back to ground level for that matter). Yes, each visit to the *Globe* was a little adventure.

Bruce's epic is coming along nicely; really, really enjoyable. (A couple of very minor points – we lived in Ferndale, not Fernhill, Road, and Ethel came from Carnoustie rather than Inverness. I mention these, not because they are particularly important, but for posterity.) Some (? A lot of) evocative pictures, too. But that one of me with Liz, Ella and Ethel; what do you mean, 'whatever did they see in him!' It's palpably obvious, but modesty forbids my going further on this. Anyway, I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the next instalment of....

The Melting Pot gets better and better, but I won't start rambling on about all the memories that bubble up (not yet, anyway). However, I must say that it was good to see Ian Peters is still around and looking so good.

*[Thanks Joe. Don Geldart is alive and well in Telford – I've spoken to him – but as yet even my Svengali-like powers of persuasion have failed to get him to write something. I'll keep on trying...]*



Joe at *Cytricon V*. Photo by  
John Dalman.

Rog Peyton  
rpg@rogpeyton.  
fsnet.co.uk

Asimov with  
Dave Rowe.  
Photo from  
Howard  
Rosenblum



Hi Pete,

Many thanks for yet another excellent issue and my apologies for not replying earlier. As you know I am not known for my letters of comment. I've done precisely one in 40 years!!! Now I'm officially retiring from bookselling – *LXcon* was my last Eastercon selling books – I'll hopefully have more time to read and reply to fanzines.

Rob Hansen's fascinating article on the history of London meetings had me wondering if my memory was going. The Asimov meeting was certainly \*not\* at the *Globe* despite the photograph shown. I'd been in the habit of going to the monthly meetings at the *Globe* every month from about mid-1973 and continued right up until we departed the *One Tun* for the *Wellington*. I remember being outside the *One Tun* on the pavement as the place was crowded inside, when Asimov and Arthur C Clarke walked up the road together. I don't think it was even the first meeting we had at the *One Tun*.

Fearing my memory was slipping I talked to Stan Eling who was there, as we'd travelled down to London together. Stan couldn't remember the name of the pub (it was his one and only visit to the London meetings) but described the *One Tun* perfectly. Entrance on the left, stairs ahead leading up to the toilets, an L-shaped bar running along the right-hand side and with tables along the front windows. Stan clearly remembers sitting on the first of these tables, next to the entrance with Asimov sitting at the same table. As I remember it, Clarke didn't stay long and a number of fans took Asimov around the corner to see the *Globe*, which explains the photo.

It should also be noted that the Asimov meeting was on a Wednesday, not the traditional Thursday – Wednesday June 12th 1974 to be exact. The reason for this being that Asimov was talking to the Birmingham SF Group and MENSAs on Thursday the 13th. There will be confusion historically in the fanzines of the time because even as long as two years (and possibly longer) after we'd moved to the *One Tun*, many fans still referred to it as 'the *Globe*'. Habits died hard.

[At last you've done something for *Relapse*, Rog! Now what about another story from the *Globe* – although you might not be able to beat this one from Tony Thorne, class of '53. Tony recently sent me a fabulous package of his old Medway Club fanzines, and recalled the tale below ...]

Tony  
Thorne  
Tonythorne  
@aol.com



Tony in 2009,  
from his web-site

Dear Peter,

Thanks for *Relapse*, as you say, that's a much better title. I found its contents fascinating, including all the recent stuff, just mostly scanning through so far, but slowing down to take it in whenever I came to a name I recall. That happened quite often, and not only when I saw my own piece in there. I expect to delve into it all more slowly later. I really must congratulate you for doing such a remarkable job with it all. It must be a massive, time consuming effort. And now my story.....

I had been seeing some friends off on the first stage of a long journey overseas and had been delayed, so eventually got to the *Globe* at about 10.45. Suitably refreshed, I sought out Ron and Daphne Buckmaster to see if the usual lift and pew for the night at Camberley was still in order – but they had arranged to take Pam and Ken Bulmer back with them, so would I mind making my way by train? Well, naturally I understood the position but, trouble was, the last train had gone! To save any embarrassment I quietly sneaked away and decided to get myself put up at a hotel somewhere, or failing that a park-bench... I trailed off along High Holborn with my little case, heading in the general direction of Charing Cross.

Incident No.1 occurred just as I was about to cross over Southampton Row... A couple of seedy-looking drunks came tottering along the path towards me. "There he is," hiccupped the taller one. "There's old Harry. Where've you been, eh Harry?"

The small one gazed vaguely at his companion, me at them both! Then the tall one gave me a knowing leer. "Did you see Rosie home then?" he burred.

I made a few remarks to the effect that I wasn't Harry, I'd never heard of Rosie, it was late and anyway I was looking for a hotel for the night. That was a mistake. "Ah," cried the short one. "she wouldn't let you stop with her, then?" He nudged his pal and they collapsed into wheezy laughter.

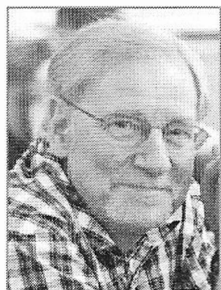
That was it, I decided to leave, and I shot across the road and headed towards the Strand. But my sense of direction must have been impaired because after about twenty minutes I found myself wearily wondering where the Strand had got to. My watch said a minute after twelve and a sign said 'Shaftesbury Avenue'. How did that happen? Anyway, about twenty yards further along, Rosie herself stepped out of the shadows. I think it was Rosie anyway because she certainly fitted my mental picture.

"Hello honey," she said, (a little desperately, perhaps). "Looking for a good time?"

The Universe reeled. I thought, 'What would Wansborough do in a situation like this?' Then a voice spoke in my ear. 'Thorne,' it said sternly, 'This is life in the raw. Squalor, sin, the awful path to hell... it went on for quite a time. Instinct said 'Flee!' The Thorne sense of moral justice welled up in a flood of righteous indignation. The Thorne curiosity made me give her a closer look: morbid interest, and I admit it. I wanted to see if she was as hideous as those tales you hear tell. She was.

[And here we must leave this story because I'm out of space. Some cliff-hanger, eh? But perhaps I'd better make it clear that Tony escaped this nemesis, although he went on to have further adventures in a very dodgy hotel. Ah, those good old days, eh Ted? We'll continue his tale in the next issue.]

Jim Linwood  
JLinwood@aol  
.com



Jim at *Cytricon V*.  
Photo by John  
Dalman.



Jim's picture of  
Courage House  
in Spring, 2008

Valerie Purnell at  
Bullcon with  
Archie Mercer  
looking wistfully  
on (he was  
believed to have  
carried a torch for  
her).  
Photo by Bruce  
Burn



Hi Peter,

I was hooked on *Relapse* for hours after it came yesterday. Afterwards I became rather depressed because many of the people mentioned are dead or incapacitated, and because the close fannish circle of friends that existed in the 60s no longer exists.

But I was intrigued by Bruce Burn's suggestion that Don Geldart worked for MI6. I asked Pat Kearney if he knew anything about Don being a 'spook'. He said Don had mentioned something of the sort and, more importantly, Pat had visited Don when he was hospitalised at an army base in Uckfield, Sussex. Uckfield was a British Army Intelligence Corps base – and it makes more sense for the conscripted Don to be posted there rather than the shadowy corridors of Thames House.

When Ken and Irene Potter were living in the caravan park in 1961, the Jehovah Witness's got to Irene soon after she gave birth to a daughter. I thought that this had caused them to split up but, corresponding with Bruce and Dave Wood, I discovered that they had both gone back up north and tried to make a go of it – even publishing *Brennschluss* again. Ken was back in London in the late 60s so I assume they had finally split by then. We found Ken's current address in Kendal via 192.com. Dave phoned him but Ken didn't know who he was (jazz was playing in the background – good sign) and Ken didn't answer my letter. It seems he's suffering from dementia, living in sheltered accommodation.

Bruce's photographs are fantastic particularly the one of Temple, Tubb and Ethel because in the top right, hanging on Ella's wall, is the 'Dave Kyle Veterinarian' sign that Alan Rispin and I 'liberated' for Ella at the 1960 minicon at Whitsun in Kettering. [The picture was on Page 27 last time but I had to crop it so much that only a corner of the sign was visible. It's too small to show here.]

As for Ethel's 'Courage House', all I can remember is going there on the bus from West Hampstead, and Ted Forsyth banging his gavel to draw the SFCoL meeting to a close. Later, when we lived at Kew Bridge we went there a couple of times for another SFCoL gathering and, on another occasion, just to see Ethel – by the end of the 60s the club only seemed to have about five members.

When the Royal Eye Hospital moved to Kingston the nurse's home, Courage House, was sold off as a single residential property. I took a photo of the place last year – very posh it now looks in a desirable part of Surbiton.

And here are ten Things I Learned at *Cytricon V*:-

- \* The spiked gates that Rispin and I scaled after being locked out of the George in 1960 are gone. The old coach-yard entrance is now blocked by old fridges and rubbish skips but the hinges are still there showing that the gates were at least 8 feet high.

- \* I'm not the only one who thought 'Hal Ellison' was a Harlan Ellison pseudonym.

- \* Alan Rispin and John Harvey both worked at the Irlam Steel Works next to the Manchester Ship Canal – but not at the same time.

- \* Ina still has nice legs.

- \* Steve Green thinks that all copies of Pasolini's film *SALO* should be destroyed.

- \* George Locke told me that the name of the beef extract 'Bovril' is derived from Bulwer-Lytton's 1870 novel *THE COMING RACE* in which a subterranean Master Race derived their powers from a substance called 'Vril'. The 'Bo' part comes from 'Bovine'.

- \* I now know why red wine must not be drunk with fish. "Red wine with fish – well that should have told me something" as Sandra's namesake once quipped.

- \* Asking price for a 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand copy of Earl Kemp's *WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION* is £950.

- \* There is a Welsh whisky distilled in the Brecon Beacons. Historically there was a distillery in Pembrokeshire run by the family who founded the whisky industry in Kentucky.

- \* Gavin Shorrocks was born on 22 November 1963 – the day JFK died.

I mentioned meeting Joe Patrizio again at Kettering again to Pat Kearney. He recalled the time Bill Temple lived near his parents' house in Folkestone and they were all invited over one evening to meet Forry Ackerman. Pat's mother was impressed that 4e was wearing Bela Lugosi's signet ring.

Finally, we've heard from Valerie Purnell whom I mentioned in my piece on Archie in *Prolapse* #10. She originally contacted me through the *New Worlds*/BSFA Youngfan ads in 1961 and became a close friend of Marion's. She attended the Harrogate 62 and Peterborough 63 cons – of the latter she recalls a certain wild element letting off fire extinguishers down a skylight and trying to see how many people fit in the toilet cubicle with someone ending up with their foot stuck down the bowl. There was also Mike Moorcock and Lang Jones playing noughts and crosses on her fishnet tights and taking her up on the roof for a pagan marriage.

Due to family responsibilities she dropped out of fandom and still lives in Gosport. She has written a series of novels (unpublished) which sound a bit like Cordwainer Smith's stuff. I tried to tempt her back into fandom but she thinks she is too out of touch to return. She also has no internet access. Who's next on the list of missing fen?

[Thanks Jim. My biggest disappointment has been my failure to track-down Dave Newman, who vanished in 1958. I wrote to every 'David J. Newman' on the South Coast without any reply. Pity!]



Mike  
Deckinger  
mike2004@aol  
.com



Mike in 2008.  
His picture.

Dear Peter:

I was moved by your melancholy account of revisiting the George Hotel, after a half century, and discovering that the ravages of time had rudely intervened, obscuring much of the gloss and charm of the original event. This conforms to my theory, that in many circumstances the hotel itself becomes a character at the convention. Orate or hokey, it has a special charm in shaping the con's structure and direction. Reflect back on the con, and you'll be reflecting back on the nature of the accommodations.

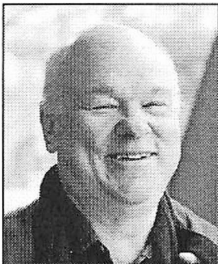
The letter from Vincent Clarke on p.29 is quite troubling, when you infer all the pain he was feeling at that time. I had a few letters from him then and he always spoke with such delight of Nicola Belle (named for stateside fan Belle Dietz). When Sandy Sanderson and Joy Clarke relocated to the United States, Belle set them up with accommodations. Sanderson was in some type of military service in the U.K. He 'bought himself out of it' (that's how it was described) for a not-inconsiderable sum when they moved to the U.S. Wish I still had those letters outlining the process.

I don't know if I have any copies of my early fanzines with the Prosser illustrations (there was also a cover he did for me, can't forget that). Over the course of several decades, and several moves, my collection of vintage zines has dwindled. I was never very much enamoured by my own publications, as I lacked any sense of artistic display and relied on inexpertly handled lettering-guides and styli to create the formatting. Had I know that they would be offered on eBay for grandiose sums and provoke an unparalleled excess of bidding frenzy one day, I certainly would have been more careful in archiving them. I'll see what I've got and if I can find anything will send you a print.

I neglected to point out that not only was the film I mentioned last time, *THE KILLER SHREWS*, a monumental achievement in pathos and sinister undercurrents; it was undoubtedly the very finest 'dachshunds-in-furs' movie ever conceived and struck to celluloid. And I will grant Arthur Cruttenden that 'Popular Astronomy' perhaps overstates the issue. But what do you make of the signs proclaiming 'Live Nude Girls' in the sleaze sections of most major cities? What could the alternative be?

*[You're absolutely right, Mike. What would the 1976 Mancon have been without Owens Park? Or the 1991 Speculation without the bristling presence of the 'Hospitality Inn,' quickly re-titled 'Hostility Inn'? And speaking of Live Nude Girls, here's an instructive story...]*

John Baxter  
genet@noos.fr



John Baxter,  
his photo.  
Below; Paula  
Page, 1961.

Hello Peter,

Thanks for the link to *Prolapse*, the past issues of which I browsed with interest and amusement. I'll be happy to download future numbers on pdf. One has enough paper around the place now, to the extent that I've had to lease a double garage to hold my book collection.

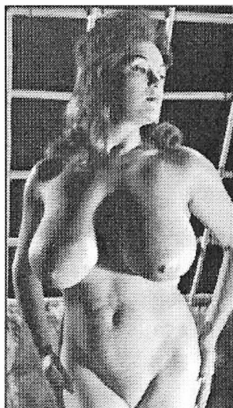
Some of the names evoked in your pages do ring bells. Writing LoCs from Australia tended to win one a friendly if somewhat puzzled spot in some British 'zines, if only as proof of their near-interplanetary circulation, Australia being considered at that time – and rightly – to be somewhere among the outer planets. The Australian letters in Alan Dodd's *Camber* were almost certainly mine, since he and I corresponded at length, very often about his hobby of, as you note, attending photo weekends and cruises with 'live models'. He was frank about admitting that his camera seldom, if ever, contained film, which seemed to be the norm for these events.

It took me aback somewhat to find that, around the same time, but on the other side of the Atlantic, no less a figure than Buck Henry, of 'Graduate/Catch-22/What's Up Doc' fame, was attending similar events at which the lady on display was the legendary Bettie Page. Alan had less luck with his models, to judge from the tiny booklets and clippings he slipped to me past the ever-vigilant Australian Customs inspectors. Most were the product of George Harrison Marks, with models rather too pasty for my taste – par for the course for Marks, who once confessed "Sex bores the arse off me", which is more than it did for his rather too hippy girls, the archetype of which was the steatopygous Sabrina.

Marks also sold 8mm films of the same ladies, which, if one lacked a projector, could be viewed by winding them through a viewer, which one held up to the light while turning a crank on the side. Alan mailed me one of these devices – which, since it contained no film, came safely through the mail. He then posted me a film, a few inches at a time, in a series of letters. These I glued together with sellotape; my first experience of movie-making technique, I suppose. The results were disappointing, however. Since it required both hands for use, the viewer made masturbation impossible. For all I know, the whole thing may have been merchandised as a subtle attack on onanism by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

*[Oh I don't know, John, back in the 1950s I had a soft spot (do I really mean that?) for those Harrison Marks magazines like Kamera. But Sabrina kept her clothes on apart from one nude shot when she was sixteen; I suspect you might be thinking of the much-loved Paula Page who had similar dimensions. A thought, however; will Relapse now be banned in Australia?]*

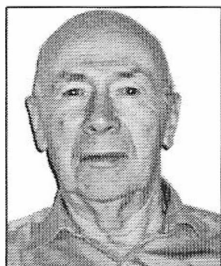
Fred Smith  
f.smith50@ntl  
world.com



Hi Peter,

A small point regarding your editorial: in your list of long-gafiated fans you include myself as one 'prodded' back into fandom by (implied) *Prolapse*. Actually, of course, it was *Intersection* (1995) that reawakened my interest and, apart from LoCs, I've contributed a few articles to *Banana Wings* and *Mimosa* since, as well as my book on *Unknown*, 'Once There Was A Magazine' (2002).

Your letterbacks' reminiscences about their early searches for SF in the late Forties/early Fifties causes me to wonder how many of the old timers were reading the pulps in the Thirties. I'm also curious as to whether they encountered certain little shops which sold nothing but American pulps.



Fred Smith in  
2007. His  
picture.

was brought up in the Thirties in Clydebank, a small town immediately to the west of Glasgow, where we had one of those shops. The store owner sold the mags at 6d each with 3d refund if you returned them to buy another mag. The result of this was that anything I bought other than SF or fantasy (*The Shadow*, *Flying Aces*, *G8*, etc.) was traded in. Unfortunately we didn't have a handy Woolworths and so I was unaware that you could buy the pulps there for 3d each, which would have expanded my collection quite a bit! The only other local sources were several small newsagents who also stocked small quantities of 'Yank Mags', which I scoured trying to find missing issues (also at 6d or, if older, 3d). Regularity of supply was erratic, of course, and I couldn't find the issues of *Astounding* that carried the first part of 'Galactic Patrol' or, for that matter, the last part. It was only when the story was issued in book form, years later, that I got the whole story!

*[Wacky old fans, as John Hall would say, scrambling around after old magazines that modern kids aren't interested in. I've been trying to get rid of a long run of Astoundings (duplicates, I hasten to add), and recently offered the lot – 286 issues for £25 – in the pages of the Brum Group Newsletter. Not a single taker. And Rog Peyton said that Andy Richards just walked away and left a huge pile of hundreds of unsold magazines after LXcon this year. Still, some of us still care, right John?]*

John Eggeeling  
todmordenbooks  
@ndirect.co.uk



Dear Peter,

In the letters section I noticed Fred Smith's response to my mention of Milcross Book Service, very brief but sufficient to prompt me to search for more information on them. What little I discovered is here attached in the form of a photograph of an invoice from Milcross dated 24 Nov 1953.

Evidently Milcross Book Service derived its name from those of its two proprietors, H. M. Crossen and A. L. Milnes, and was based at 68 Victoria Street, Liverpool 1. All I can add is that it was established in 1936, possibly under the name "S-F Service" as hinted at under the invoice's banner heading. Hopefully a further mention might jog another reader's memory as I'd be very interested in learning a bit more about this business (and Crossen and Milnes) and who exactly founded it.

*[George Locke said, "The Milcross outfit rings a bell. I have a few old lists from the Liverpool SF Book Service (or something) of the late 1930s; catalogued them I think in my last CHEAP CENTURY RETURN. They might well be the same outfit." I think so – Ina told me that in 1950 it was being run by Frank Milnes, presumably the son of one of the founders, and the Liverpool group started meeting after closing time at the back of the shop. Those wacky old fans, with their books and their clubs!]*

Ian Milsted  
ianmilsted@  
hotmail.com



Ian – his photo

Peter, thanks for the copy of *Relapse*.

I may not be your youngest reader at 42 but may possibly be one of the later arrivals into the SF fandom world (of which I'm still a little semi-detached). In my case my first contact was down a slightly crooked staircase in a pub in Norwich in November 2000. I'd been living in the city for a couple of years following a career change into teaching, during which I'd had little spare time (or money). With a couple of years' experience under my belt I could plan and mark considerably quicker and could get out more. One of things I decided to do was investigate the science fiction group I'd seen advertised on the wall of the local genre specialist bookshop in which I browsed occasionally.

Having located the right pub on the right evening I descended the afore-mentioned staircase to the cellar room of the 'Ribs of Beef'. There were two people there. I recognised one of the staff from the bookshop where I'd seen the poster. He was Andrew Stitt who sort-of ran the group. The only other person was Andrew Stephenson, who I didn't know at the time but will be familiar to many *Relapse* readers. A topic was mentioned for the evening and Andrew Stephenson alluded to the *Canterbury Tales* as a guide for how likely we were to arrive at any point. We were later joined by Paul Curtis, Rob Tomson and (I think) Pete Tyers. If Pete was there it would have been one of his very occasional appearances. I had a good time and stayed part of the group until I moved to Bristol in 2006.

Jill Bridges  
k.armstrong  
bridges@  
googlemail.com



Jill at Sci-con  
1970. Photo by  
Merv Barrett.

Hi Peter,

I was quite taken with the biography of Archibald Henry Mercer but there seems to be a bit missing. At one time somewhere in the early 70s he was the Treasurer of The Tolkien Society. I am not sure of the exact dates but somewhere about this house is the book that Keith and Crut used to sort out the complete muddle that the original treasurer, I think his name was Phil Ansley Watson, made of the books and receipts. Both Keith and R4 were unemployed at the time and it took them a good six weeks to sort out the mess.

The funds were at that time kept in a Post Office Savings account and if my memory serves me correctly amounted to about 30 quid, and by hard work on Keith and Crut's account, they worked out that another 30 quid was missing. Phil Ansley Watson then made a promise that has gone down in family history. 'As an Officer and a Gentleman I will repay this debt.' I don't know whether or not he did but we still use the expression in our house to this day, and whether Archie ever managed to get the funds I don't know but knowing Archie I bet he did. To cut a long story short Archie was a founder member of the Tolkien Society, and as treasurer, an important and trusted post, not to be forgotten. He was by the way very lucky to live so far away; it meant that he did not get involved in the seemingly interminable game of playing constitutions. That constituted sitting at TSoc. Meetings, bickering over every amendment. Unfortunately these bitching sessions managed to boil over into Herts. Fan evenings as well because a number of fans attended both.

P.S. from Keith – Don't forget Archie was the editor and Author-in-chief of *Middle Earthworm*; the TS main publication.

Geoff Nelder  
geoffnelder@  
yahoo.com

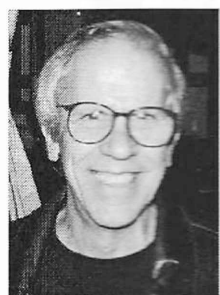


[Last issue I reported on the amazing coincidence that someone at the Northampton Newcon – Geoff Nelder – should recognise Eric Jones from my BSFA display boards. Geoff has a story to tell....]

Hello Peter,

One summer's day when I was a young teen Eric came hammering on our door. I was the only one in. Eric rushed me out into Barbridge Road and pointing into the sky, asked what I saw. It was a gleaming white rectangle that could have been a saucer or – because I was a healthy sceptic in most things – sunlight reflecting off an aeroplane's wing. He agreed, adding other optical phenomenon as possible causes. We watched it travel over my house looking no different. The aeroplane explanation looked iffy as the other wing and fuselage stayed invisible. We had to go through the house to the back garden to watch it progress, but Eric raced off back home for his camera. Alone I watched the 'saucer' continue in a straight line until it was hidden by the flats behind. Eric's photo, like the others taken and reproduced in the Gloucestershire *Echo*, were inconclusive but everyone talked about it for weeks. The nearby Staverton Airport reported that no aircraft were in the air at that time, but who knows what experimental aircraft might have been up there with the radar 'switched off'?

Robert  
Lichtman  
robertlichtman  
@yahoo.com



Robert in 2008.  
His photo

Hi Peter,

It was interesting and kind of poignant to read in your column in *Relapse* # 13 (and let me interject that I like your re-titling) the comment from Geoff Nelder about his dad who would "create black pen and ink illustrations to be meticulously pin-pricked onto Gestetner skins for the Cheltenham fanzine, *Sidereal*. I thought all dads did that!" To which you added, "A misapprehension shared by Buck Coulson's young son after producing *Yandro* every month." To the best of my knowledge, none of my four sons ever got the idea that my fanac was something all dads did. How about your daughters?

I quite enjoyed your lead-off piece, 'Kettering, Oh Kettering!' – especially the parts where you compare the old hotel and the town as it was years ago to how it is now. All the reminiscences by others following were interesting (to various degrees) but the best part was the photos. I was intrigued to see the present-day Peter Mabey, as he was someone I recall meeting on my 1989 TAFF trip who looked to me rather old even then and he doesn't appear to have gotten older. I've only known Ina Shorrock as a name, never having had contact with her in any way (that I can recall). When I came to the quote from Jim Linwood – "I was in love with Ina... we all were" – next to that photo of her from Norman's album, I thought she looked rather ordinary, like one of my schoolteachers in costume. But then I came to the photo on page 12 of her comforting NGW and my opinion of her good looks abruptly changed. What, as we Americans used to say, a fox!

In the letter column, I wondered if the "inclusive fandom biography" Mike Deckinger remembers from the early '60s was Lloyd Broyles's 'Who's Who in Science Fiction Fandom', a 40-page booklet that came out in 1961 with nice stiff blue cardstock covers. Ah, I just pulled out my copy and checked Alan Dodd's listing – and indeed he does refer to his occupation as "assassin." He also adds after his various fannish and sfnal credentials, "I collect knives." In my own entry I write that my "purpose in collecting fanzines is mostly archivist, aside from liking to read the things." How things don't change!

Hi Pete!

Thanks for the new issue, which, as usual, was good reading. However, I was amused by George Locke's letter. When he says that he 'wouldn't have been that het up about [the *Weird Tales* collection]' I bought way back then, I think he must have been suffering from the same 'False Memory Syndrome' that you said I had contracted in my memories of the OUSFG. I wouldn't usually contradict George because he is so much more knowledgeable than me, but I have only seen one vaguely similar collection of *WT* since then in the UK, so they weren't as easy to come by as George was implying.

But, the other bit that amused me in George's letter was the comment about the treasure trove of *Hutchinson Mystery/Adventure* that he saw but could not buy because he thought Billy Pettit had bought them. Indeed he is correct in that, and what Billy bought was a complete run (21 issues) of *Hutchinson Adventure & Mystery Story* magazine (1927-1929); almost a complete run (54 issues) of *Hutchinson's Mystery Story* magazine (1923-1927); and a scattered 12 or so other issues of the other two magazines. So, overall, probably about 87 issues in all.

I think this run is probably the largest in private hands – the Bodleian has almost complete runs of the *Hutchinson* mags but the British Library lost their's in the war. When I have asked dealers if they know of large runs of *Hutchinsons* they invariably refer to Billy's collection. Like George, I have seen very few copies of these mags come up, probably only about ten in the last fifteen years maybe. What, however, has never been revealed before is what happened to the magazines after Billy bought them. What happened is that he sold them to Don Grant, who has been a good friend of mine for 20 years and I go and see him every year when we holiday in Florida. Unfortunately Don, who is a lovely person, has been very ill for a number of years. Anyway, he felt it right that the *Hutchinsons* should go back to England where they came from, and they now sit on my shelves in pride of place with my *Weird Tales*.

On another subject, I went to the Fantasy Centre drinks party on 1st May. There were lots of familiar faces but, as I am bad on names, I can't put names to them all. Obviously Erik and Ted were there together with Dave Gibson, and familiar people such as Andy England, Andy Richards, Roger Robinson, etc. It's a great pity that FC is closing down as it provided a focal point for gatherings over pints of coffee, particularly on Saturdays. I will miss their operation a lot but I'm not surprised that they decided to call it a day as the economics of shops has just been demolished by the internet. But there is nothing like seeing books before you buy them.

Alistair Durie  
al.durie@tiscali.  
co.uk



Alistair in  
2008. Photo  
by PW



Mark  
Plummer  
mark.fishlifter  
@googlemail.



Mark at Orbital,  
2008. Photo by  
Rob Hansen



Chris Miller,  
right, with Keith  
Freeman at  
LXIcon, 1961.  
Comparison with  
the picture on  
Page 15 suggests  
that Chris also  
lost his beard to  
TAFF funds!  
Photo from Eric  
Benciclife.

[Thanks Alistair. You admitted last time to that attack of False Memory Syndrome, but not before young Mark Plummer had done this excellent piece of research. The facts aren't in dispute but what struck me was the sheer amount of information Mark was able to find. The internet isn't all bad, then.]

Peter,

In issue 12 I noticed Alistair Durie wondering about Marcus Wigan and his involvement with the Oxford Group in 1962. Obviously I have no first hand information on this, but I turned up some details on Wigan when I was researching the people on the first BSFA membership list and from that I see that OUSFG's own 'Creation Myth' doesn't entirely accord with Alistair's recollections. ('A' numbers were for associate members – under 18s). I couldn't find much about M R Wigan, but there was this in Vol. 3 Chapter 1 of THEN:

'At some point in 1962, an SF group was founded at one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious universities. As Brian Aldiss recalls: "The Oxford University Science Fiction Group was founded by Chris Miller, Mark Wigan, and John Pewsay in 1962. Chris Miller was really the prime mover. As was the case with undergraduate societies in those days, the club needed two outside guarantors. I was one of the guarantors, with C. S. Lewis. For the sake of respectability, the club was actually named the O. U. Speculative Fiction Group. We met in various colleges and pubs, but my house in Marston Street was the centre of activity because I was there all year.'"

Was 'Mark Wigan' the BSFA's 'M R Wigan'? I also found a page on the OUSFG wiki: <http://urchin.earth.li/cgi-bin/twic/wiki/view.pl?page=MarcusWigan>

This says: 'Dr. Marcus "Marc" Ramsay Wigan (Hertford College 1960-63; 1965-67) is one of The First Ones – a revered founding member of OUSFG, with Chris Miller of Christchurch. It was his idea to use the term 'Speculative', to avoid putting-off either fantasy or science-fiction fans (Brian Aldiss found the term a little "weedy", but he's just being bitchy because of the whole cat thing).'

This was enough to make me conclude that he *was* the M R Wigan on the BSFA's list: he has the right middle initial and being at university from 1960-63 fitted with him being under 18 in 1958.

Wigan has his own website at <http://go.to/mwigan> which lists a bunch of impressive academic roles but also says, down in the 'Previous Associations':

'OUSFG; Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group: 1961. Co-founder with Chris Miller –still going!'

Hmm, so Wigan's recollection as to the date of OUSFG's foundation doesn't entirely accord with that of Aldiss – and OUSFG's own wiki is silent about the date of its foundation, but there is this page (<http://urchin.earth.li/cgi-bin/twic/wiki/view.pl?page=OriginOfOUSFG>) which gives the initial committee as: 'Marc Wigan (Hertford); Chris Miller (Ch Ch), Pete Winchurch (Ch Ch) and Tony Miles (BNC)' and continues, 'The name was the result of a long debate between us all, ending up with "Speculative" as a means of not disempowering either fanatsy or scifi addicts [both sic] – and attracting a few interesting modern writers (it worked)'.

The main thing is that Marc Wigan seems pretty sure that he and his committee came up with the 'Speculative' name. There is, I note, an email link on his web page: perhaps Al Durie could take it up with him direct?

And... more info! I was just double-checking for 'Marcus Wigan' in *Skyrack* and I found a passing mention of him in #35 (<http://www.gostak.co.uk/skyrack/skyrack35.htm>), but also this from #45 (September 1962):

'SFG now permitted to call itself Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group. New term officials will be Chris Miller (President), Howard Leigh (Secretary), Marcus Wigan (Treasurer) and Howard Nichols (Librarian). Brian Aldiss is the group's only Honorary Member to date.'

There's also a reference to Chris Miller as OUSFG president in February 1963 in *Skyrack* #49. So, I have to say that from here Alistair's memory does look a little suspect...

[Very impressive, Mark, a nice piece of research on one of the earliest University SF clubs. Which leads us on to another 'Creation Myth' – how could we fail to mention the dear old BSFA? Don's letter relates to issue #11. He was a bit slow in sending it and I've been even slower in publishing it.]

D. West  
Skipton.  
Yorks.

Dear Peter,

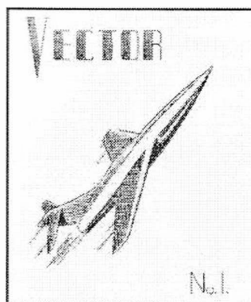
The material on the BSFA is interesting in a nit-picking sort of way but doesn't really do much to answer the larger questions. Like, what *is/was* the damn thing for? And, good intentions aside, was it ever really of much use or of much importance for anything or anybody at all?

The usual answer to the first question is that the BSFA exists/existed to recruit new blood to fandom, to promote, expand, improve and generally glorify the whole SF genre, and to provide a comprehensive clearing-house for information covering all aspects of SF. Well, never mind the 50th anniversary of the founding of the BSFA, this is the 50th anniversary (at least) of the ritual complaint about the lack of 'new blood'.

"There is a lot of concern in British fandom at the moment about the absence of new blood" (Sandy Sanderson, *Ploy* 11, 1958, as quoted in *Prolapse* #11). But somehow or other the fans have continued to appear. Was the BSFA responsible? Or did most of the people who went on to be active



*The Sage of  
Skipton, 2006.  
Photo by Ian  
Sorensen.*



*In 1958 Vector  
was the only  
magazine about  
SF; by 1968  
there was lots of  
competition.*

*'The Universe has  
possibilities  
beyond the limits  
of previous  
knowledge...'  
Illo by Harry Bell  
from Mava &  
WITH STARS IN  
MY EYES'*



fans join the BSFA (as I did) only after they had made contact with fandom by some other route? My own impression (until contradicted by some hard statistics) is that most of those who joined the BSFA direct never did anything but receive their mailings. The BSFA itself never heard a word from them, let alone anyone else. So I remain sceptical on any 'recruiting office' claims.

The idea of the BSFA as standard-bearer and crusader for the SF Ideal is, as you say yourself, simply absurd. The brutal fact is that at least 95% of SF readers are not, never have been and never will be BSFA members. (The real figure is probably over 99%, but I'm being cautious and assuming a reader pool of only 20,000.) This is a very small segment of the market, so who is going to care? Publishers are pragmatists: they print whatever they think will sell, and never mind the critics – particularly critics with only a few hundred readers.

Greg Pickersgill asks, "Why don't all British fans, brought together by an enthusiasm for science fiction, belong to the BSFA as a matter of principle?" Well, exactly *what* principle does he mean? Join the BSFA, don't join the BSFA – what's the difference? The SF book trade will go on even if the BSFA has no members at all. Joining the BSFA is a straight commercial transaction: advance payment for services to be rendered. It might be argued that this is (or should be) a co-operative enterprise and that members should be prepared to contribute and take an active part – but nobody ever said anything about that when the subscriptions were being sold. The promise was that if you sent your money you would receive in return lots of interesting and useful information.

Well, that was the best case scenario. But, to be fair, some of the stuff sent out by the BSFA probably was interesting and useful, the problem being that the quality (and sometimes the quantity) was rather variable. The BSFA lost whatever chance it ever had to establish itself in a leading role by its poor performance in the 1960s. After 1970 there was just too much competition: an increasing number of titles which were consistently more interesting, better written and generally better value. For instance: *Foundation* appeared from 1972, Charles Brown's *Locus* from 1968, Richard Geis's *The Alien Critic & Science Fiction Review* from 1968, Andrew Porter's *Algol* and *SF Chronicle* from 1965. By the mid-70s those were all effectively pro- or semi-pro, so why pay out for BSFA publications which were often mediocre even by the more forgiving standards of fanzines? (And the fanzines were at least free.) After the 1979 Clute/Nicholls *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* there seemed even less reason to bother with the BSFA: SF-Past was now as well covered as SF-present.

Altogether, Greg's assertion that "the BSFA has had a fundamental influence on the way UK fandom developed over the last fifty years" seems rather hard to accept, particularly since it is contradicted by his own remarks about the lack of support given to the BSFA by fandom in general. A national SF organisation is probably one of those ideas which is inevitable and inescapable. Like the Eastercon (and the Worldcon, for that matter), if it didn't already exist some damn fool would be sure to invent it anyhow. But this inevitability does not necessarily mean that the thing itself is in any way valuable, important or significant. Far from being a driving force it could be just a by-product or spin-off, a symptom rather than a cause.

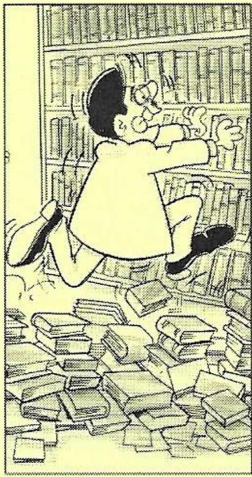
My own view is that the BSFA's one and only real accomplishment has been to provide the money for ten or twenty (or whatever the total may be) editors to produce their very own sercon fanzines for a year or two. Nice for the editors, and nice for those with a particular taste for sercon fanzines, but not otherwise any big deal. Meanwhile the rest of fandom has gone its own sweet way with little or no regard for BSFA activities. There's always been a certain amount of sercon material, but the majority of non-BSFA fanzines have always fallen into the category Greg characterises as "full of knockabout laffs and endless anecdotes about, well, sod-all really". This may be very deplorable, but it does suggest that the BSFA influence was less than overwhelming.

The BSFA's sad fate is to be forever stuck in a no-win situation: if it does a sketchy job the members are likely to feel short-changed, but if it does a thorough job the members may well feel they are being fed rather more worthy-but-dull stodge than they want, need, or can comfortably digest. (One can't blame the editors too much. As you said yourself somewhere, people who can write good reviews or criticism are hard to find.) My own experience covers both reactions. When I was a member for the first time in the 1960s the publications were poor and I decided my money was better spent elsewhere. Second time round, in the late 70s, there was some improvement but my appetite for plot-summary reviews and endless listings was wearing off.

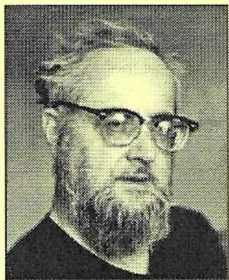
Well, it happens: sooner or later the desire to read (or read about) every single SF book ever published dwindles away. The trouble is that eventually the 'new' titles no longer seem new at all – just more of the same. So although I don't regret having read so much SF I long ago ceased to regard it as an essential part of my literary diet. It's not that I don't like the stuff – just that I've had my fill. It belongs in the past rather than the present. This change probably affects many more SF readers than the hardcore enthusiasts care to acknowledge. Like it or not, in most cases enthusiasm for the continued consumption of SF has a limited life expectancy.

Why so? Well, sidestepping the eternal argument about the divisibility of form and content, it must surely be unarguable that SF has always been noted more for its ideas than for its literary style. Non-SF is mainly concerned with the fine detail of things we know about (at least in theory) already, but SF is concerned with amazing stuff we never even dreamed of before. It's Big Concept! The Universe (and everything in it) has possibilities beyond the limits of previous knowledge, experience and expectation. Trouble is, once you've run through the basic repertoire, the shock-value (and that good old Sense of Wonder) starts to weaken. If anything is possible then nothing is very surprising, and novelties become routine. Even concepts which are technically original will cease to have an





'what used to be a  
passionate love  
affair...'   
Illo by Jim Barker  
from WITH  
STARS IN MY  
EYES, p.16



'Buck' Coulson;  
Photo by Andrew  
Porter; all rights  
reserved

Fay Symes  
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uk



Fay in 2007.  
Her photo.

impact on the hardened SF reader: they may be 'new' in one sense, but in another sense they are merely the same sort of thing – just one more wild idea.

That's a rather crude summary, but so it goes: what used to be a passionate love affair becomes a more rational mild affection. I still read SF occasionally, but this tends to be old favourites rather than the latest thing, and I certainly have no desire for exhaustive information. My interest is casual rather than consuming, a point of view I'm sure many others come to share.

Circumstances have changed since 1958. Like many other aspects of popular culture SF is still not entirely respectable, but it is taken for granted. The old feeling that SF enthusiasts were practically a persecuted minority who needed to huddle together for mutual support no longer applies with the same force. Being an SF reader is commonplace, not special, and the existence of other channels of information means that there is no compelling need to seek out the BSFA. The coming of the Internet, in particular, seems likely to render the BSFA ever more redundant except as an exercise in nostalgia.

Speaking of which... back in the olden days when I used to read all the SF I could find, most of my supplies came from the local library (which luckily had a (non-fan) SF enthusiast on the staff) or various second-hand shops and market-stalls in Leeds and Bradford. I did buy a few things from Ken Slater, and a couple of magazine collections through *Exchange & Mart*, but living 200 miles from London I knew nothing of the dealers mentioned by George Locke and Stan Nichols until much later. I think I was in *Forbidden Planet* and *Dark They Were* once apiece about 1980. Twenty years too late, really, since by that time all those lurid covers just provoked a feeling of faint nausea. Too much.

On a happier note, I was interested to read Greg's account of Alan Dodd. Like others, I had some correspondence with him in the 60s and enjoyed his *Camber*. As Greg says, the artwork was better than average, in particular some of Jim Cawthorn's direct-on-stencil works. (Having tried this myself I can appreciate the degree of technical expertise involved.)

As a correspondent Dodd was conscientious rather than lively and didn't reveal much of himself. The one personal note I recall came when (apropos of nothing) he mentioned some publication on sado-masochism and asked if I was interested. I found this somewhat depressing, as seeming to confirm the rather disreputable dirty-raincoat image of SF readers. (Not my line, but SM does seem to have been a common interest of the period. Another minor mystery.) Anyway, the correspondence tailed off and I heard little or nothing of Dodd until the 1979 Worldcon, when I happened to meet Robert Coulson, for whose *Yandro* Dodd was U.S. agent. Coulson complained that he'd proposed a visit, but that Dodd was 'being 'very evasive''. What, if anything transpired I don't know, but presumably there might be more information in any trip report Coulson may have written.

So, an interesting article, as was Jim Linwood's earlier piece on Archie Mercer. But whatever I thought forty years ago (when I worried more about the SF 'image') I would not now say that Dodd and Mercer, though certainly eccentric, were in any real respect 'typical' fannish characters. I think too much is often made of fans supposedly being special or 'different'. The fact is that there are many more peculiar people outside fandom than in. The real difference is that the non-fans live and die in total obscurity whereas with the fans we get documentation on all their little quirks and oddities. Brings a new terror to death, doesn't it? No sooner do you pop off than Rob Hansen, Jim Linwood, Greg Pickersgill or some other indefatigable researcher is around digging all the dirt. Just goes to show: even death will not release you.

[The previous instalment of Fay's 'Eccentric Conventioneer' appeared in issue #7 since which time she has been suffering from eye troubles. Now Fay and husband David continue their investigations.]

After the Eagle day in 1980, we went to Coventry for our first introduction to media conventions: the UFP *Star Trek* con. It was nothing like *Novacons*. Half the fans lived in *Star Trek* uniforms or Klingon costume, with a large proportion of blue and green girls. The hotel staff threatened to strike because of blue makeup all over the bathrooms, and we were firmly told that unless people cleaned up properly the De Vere would hold no more conventions, ever.

We watched a bad Shatner film with him panicked by swarms of little spiders (not even giant, man-eating ones), and were boggled by the auction where bidders paid a fortune for blurry photos of Shatner and Nimoy talking to people or standing on stages. We came away believing that media fans were quite mad, and glad to head for *Novacon 10* at the dear Royal Angus.

Back in the realms of sanity we were entertained by GOH Brian Aldiss, Phil Strick's film clips and serious science from Jack Cohen and Tom Shippey. This was the first *Novacon* to close registration at 500 and it was crowded, to say the least, but having to sit on someone's lap because there weren't enough chairs only made it feel more cosy, especially when we were all loudly heckling 'Santa Claus Conquers the Martians'.

In 1981 we tried media again and were rewarded by the one-day *Blake 7 Teal-Vandon* con in London. It was Paul Darrow's birthday and he was full of happy anecdotes, ably assisted by Jan Chappell, Jackeline Pierce (still with her Servalan haircut) Peter Tuddenham – the voice of Orac – Vere Lorrimer the producer and Mat Irvine, the effects man responsible for all those great explosions. Though only a few hours long it remains one of my favourites.

1981's *Novacon* seemed low key, though GOH the lovable Bob Shaw was as entertaining as usual, and 1982 saw us back at the Brighton Metropole for the Easter *Channelcon*. My favourite highlight was the turkey readings from wonderful oldies like 'John Carstairs Space Detective' and the unsurpassable 'Runts of 61 Cygni C', where the use of a tape measure in space cannot possibly be described in a family magazine.



## WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

**Bill Burns**, who wrote, "What did the Sandersons do for work after moving to the USA? I asked Moshe Feder, who had the last known contact with Joy, and he thought that Sandy might have worked for IBM here. You surmised that Sandy was in government service in the UK, so I don't see how that would tie in. There were quotas for immigration to the USA until 1965, but at the time they moved here these favoured British citizens (among others). I'm not sure that it was possible even then to move here on speculation of finding work, though, so did Sandy have a job already arranged? Had he planned to emigrate before his affair with Joy and her break-up with Vince happened?" [From a picture of Sandy in uniform, Bill, I can read the insignia 'Royal Army Pay Corps'. I think Vince originally intended to emigrate with Joy but got cold feet. Also see Mike Deckinger this time.] **Keith Freeman** recalled, "One additional point to Don Allen's con-rep on *Cytricon I*. When the story of him claiming to be 'Ron Bennett, room 101' was published, one response (and I honestly can't remember from who) was 'He claimed to be Ron Bennett? - I'd rather have been dragged down to the police station!' At least that's the story I was told (several years later) by Ron." [Sorry to cut your long letter so mercilessly, Keith.]

**Chris Garcia** marvelled, "I was very briefly introduced to Peter Mabey at the 2008 Eastercon, and it's a good thing I had yet to read your article on him because I'd have pestered him no end. I mean, he worked on PEGASUS! That's an honest-to-Ghods awesome English computer! And that comes from a computer historian who is often accused of not giving English computing enough credit." **John Hall** was equally amazed at "those wacky, overdressed fans of the fifties. What a crew they were. While I continue to read Bruce Burns saga, I wonder about the details occasionally. Ethel Lindsay worked at the Royal Eye Hospital? Where was that?" [See Jim Linwood's letter this time, Chris.] **Terry Jeeves** reflected that the Kettering feature "makes me want to go back there and relive the old days." While **Jay Kinney** considered letting the genie out of the bottle; "This second-hand nostalgia for a fandom I never knew is an odd sensation, though not an unpleasant one. The photos certainly help recapture the feel, as do the scans of old mimeo-ed artwork. The closest I can come to the *Prolapse* universe would be if I were to uncork my old correspondence with Mary Reed, circa '66 or '67."

**Dave Langford** wrote, "Hazel struggled to identify all the boring old farts in the *Cytricon* group photo. 'Good grief, he's got old ... he's put on an awful lot of weight ... who's this ghastly drunken reprobate?' 'That's me, dear!'" Yet another Old Phart (that's **Mike Meara's** user-name) confirmed, "I contacted CAMRA's London Pubs Group regarding the *Globe* - or rather, I tried to: first an incorrect email address followed by no reply from another email address. Disappointing, but CAMRA runs on a shoestring, as I'm sure you know: the front looks good, but there's not much round the back holding it up. (Why does that sound familiar?)" And **Mike Moorcock** confessed: "All the con stuff in this issue was before I got into fandom but reminded me that I wasn't very interested in fandom as such. The beanie and zap gun stuff put me off and, like many before or since, I felt it to be an exclusive club with a language of its own I'd never understand. I wasn't reading SF then, either. I'd tried and hadn't liked it. I suppose it was Bradbury got me reading SF as such. The only *Astounding* stories I read were the Sprague de Camp 'Zei' stories. Great illustrations, of course. Another good man gone in Cartier. It's true Sprague was boring in person. I knew him pretty well, of course, and loved his fiction which was so fast and funny. In person he could bore the pants off you, I know. I took to avoiding him in later years. Feel a bit guilty about that."

**Lloyd Penney** said ominously "Some years ago, when Ottawa fandom still held SF conventions, a small relaxacon was held there called *Convalescence*. Several years afterwards another similar convention was held, and it was called *Relapse*. We didn't go, and I don't recall any other SF cons in Ottawa after that one." **Greg Pickersgill** enthused, "Wow, that really is a fascinating letter-column! It's a hell of a thing when one finds one could write a LoC on the letters alone." [But he didn't, of course.] And **Charles Platt** gave an update: "I have retreated back to my little house in Northern Arizona, where I recently supervised completion of a workshop-office, thus affirming my intention to remain here indefinitely. My contact with science fiction remains tenuous at best; I spend most of my social time with the locals playing shuffleboard at a bar on Main Street. In their way they are just as motley, ragtag, socially dysfunctional, reclusive, and hairy as the fan community of my youth, this being an obscure area of the United States to which people gravitate when they don't want to deal too much with other people, or have secrets in their pasts which they would like to bury. One of my friends is a gold prospector; another sells hand-made soap which contains milk from the cow in her back yard. But no one seems to collect science fiction, or any other types of books." [Thanks, Charles, for the fascinating long pdf on your activities out there.]

**David Redd** noted, "Nobody mentioned Sandra Bond's 'quasi-quote cards' which she handed out at *Cytricon V*, but I liked seeing yet another tradition being commemorated." And in similar vein **Ron Salomon** asked, "What did I miss by never having eaten one of Brian Burgess's pies? Too late to find out now, unless some fan somewhere managed to freeze one. That would make a great fannish auction fundraiser - or would it? [You missed indigestion, Ron.] Meanwhile, **Kevin Williams** said "I was reminded of you when I was going through a load of old fanzines. Dave Cockfield was visiting and helping me with the 'winnowing' process. Anyway, among the dust and rusty staples I came across my small hoard of *Speculations*. Much to Sue's distress, the task ground to a halt as both Dave and I got distracted - myself particularly by that great long article by J. J. Pierce on old Cordwangler. Thanks for *Pro/Relapse*; I am super-impressed with this great labour of love. It had the effect (to Sue's dismay) of me adding a new selection criteria to my 'sort', ensuring that all references and con-reps of *Silicon* were retained in the event that I ever get round to pulling together a history." **Other comments** came in from Hazel Ashworth, Steve Green, Pat Kearney, Earl Kemp, Stan Nicholls, Simone Restall & Wally Weber. Thanks, all!

So, will you be getting one of the rare paper copies of the next issue? (Only 100 printed, none to spare)

- ☐ Yes indeed, Oh Mighty One, I humbly crave some small sign of your indulgence.
- ☒ Of course, you've helped a lot with this and/or other issues.
- ☐ Probably, since you're mentioned this time. But I'm hoping you'll have something to say in response.
- ☐ Doubtful, unless you let me know you're interested. Old fan-photographs are always a good trade.
- ☐ Not a chance unless you Do Something. But there is an easy alternative - see below.

Distracted? Lacking inspiration? Just tell me and I'll e-mail the pdf version (with colour) as published, my preferred option for overseas readers. And this issue will go onto the *eFanzines* web-site after four weeks. Remember that 'it's never too late to relapse', and that the fanzine is nothing at all without *your* memories of fannish times past! - Peter Weston, 20/5/2009