

A voyage of discovery  
into British fan-history

# RELAPSE

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"Good grief, what IS the matter with you! If I had stuff like that on hand \*I'D\* publish a fanzine and believe me nothing could be further from my mind most of the time." – admonition from Greg Pickersgill.



*'Autumn, Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness...'*

And time to put all the stuff back into the shed and get on with the fanzine.....

*With the usual apologies to 'Giles'*

**INSIDE:** 'Reminiscences of a Science Fiction Writer' by Don Malcolm; 'In Pursuit of Immortality?' by Peter Weston; 'Thoughts on *SF Horizons*' by Tom Shippey; 'Retrospection' by John Berry; **AND MORE ...**





# RELAPSE

Here we go again with another issue of *Relapse*, the fanzine that nags you to death. Alan, until you share those memories of fandom past, brought to you by Peter Weston, 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS (Tel 0121 354 6059). It's a mixed-bag this time rather than a 'theme' issue, and I'm wide-open for your comments at [pr.weston@btinternet.com](mailto:pr.weston@btinternet.com). We're one of that endangered species a 'Paper First' fanzine, but on request I'll e-mail the pdf (my preferred option for overseas readers) and it will go onto the *eFanzines* web-site a month after printed copies have been posted. Our five-year mission is to boldly go into the time-stream to explore the history of British SF fandom. Special Researcher: Ian Millsted.

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"It is an admirable and uplifting piece of work which clearly helps keep a lot of dodgy characters off the streets" – Andrew Stephenson, LoC

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It's sobering to find that as early as 1970 I was using gardening as an excuse for the lateness of my fanzine, but I've always been fond of getting dirt under my fingernails on those precious occasions when we see the Sun. Now, though, the garden equipment has been put away (see cover) and I promise to do better... until the Spring, at least.

Why *do* we produce fanzines anyway? I've been giving this one a bit of thought after some full and frank discussions on the secret e-list about fannish Awards and whether they've outlived their usefulness. Without venturing a clear opinion one way or another I did admit to having being very pleased when *Prolapse* won a couple of Novas, and it was certainly an exciting experience to sit in the audience in the Armadillo back in 2005, waiting to hear who'd won the Hugo for 'Best Related Book'. But trying to win awards has never been an important motive for pubbing my ish despite Eric Bentcliffe once putting words in my mouth to accuse me of exactly that, back in some forgotten fanzine of the seventies. At the time this really annoyed me because all I'd actually said was that I always tried do my best with whatever I was publishing, and I think that's fair enough. Like most people, I do it for personal satisfaction and in part for the occasional thrill of receiving some exceptional letter or article. And then, of course, there's the ego-boo which is the icing on the cake, whether it comes in reviews, messages, or perhaps just kind words exchanged at a convention.

But there is, I think, a deeper motive that drives us to publish, and I think it's the desire to make our mark on an uncaring world. This may sound a bit grandiloquent but I suspect it's the same urge that led primitive man long ago to erect stone markers and cut giant figures into chalk hillsides (or that leads primitive man today to scrawl graffiti on walls and buildings), a need to proclaim that we're *alive* and we want other people to take a bit of notice.

Of course, if a desire for immortality is the driving force then producing fanzines is a bit of a dead loss: by their very nature they're ephemeral, likely to blow away unless someone takes the trouble to look after them. That's why collections like Greg's old 'Memory Hole' are important (and Robert Lichtman's filing cabinets for that matter), allowing us to read and enjoy fifty-year-old copies of *Hyphen*, for instance. If Walt Willis knew about that, I'm sure he would be delighted. As I was at *Corflu* this year when I made the pleasant discovery that my own earlier efforts had not been entirely in vain.

In Seattle I met Rob Latham, an Associate Professor at the University of California at Riverside, who made a presentation on 'The Eaton Collection' (see: <http://eaton-collection.ucr.edu/>). UCR seems to be putting more resources behind its collection – books, magazines, everything – than the North-East London Polytechnic ever did with theirs, and a jolly good thing too. And this being *Corflu*, Rob emphasised their interest in fanzines, telling us that they had already acquired the famous collections of Rick Sneary, Bruce Pelz and Terry Carr, which had brought their total holdings to almost 90,000 items. He appealed for further donations of material and I have absolutely no doubt that some members of the audience were mentally packing boxes even as he spoke. I wonder if they'll pay freight from Haverfordwest, Catherine?

Well, we already know Greg's attitude is that once the stuff goes to a University collection it might as well be on Mars for all the good it is to fandom. But in talking to Rob Latham afterwards I felt that he wasn't just going through the motions but was more of an Andy Sawyer-type professional with a real interest in SF and fanzines. I was also pleased to find that he was already quite familiar with both *Speculation* and WITH STARS IN MY EYES and had quoted from them in a paper he'd written on the British 'New Wave'. I'd seen Rob's write-up of his first, 2003 exploration of the UCR fanzine collection in Earl Kemp's *ef* #37 (April 2008) but I'd somehow missed his 'New Wave' piece. That had one had resulted from later explorations in the archive and was published both in the BSFA's *Vector* and in Bruce Gillespie's *Steam Engine Time* #8 (December 2008). I *should* have spotted it – that's the trouble with spending every waking moment on gardening *Relapse* – but once home I took a look at the article and found that for me it was a trip down Memory Lane.

All right, so the title is a bit unwieldy; 'New Worlds and the New Wave in Fandom: Fan Culture and the Reshaping of Science Fiction in the Sixties', but as his starting-point Rob quotes Harlan Ellison, who in 1970 wrote in the *SFWA Forum* that the 'new wave' was "all a manufactured controversy, staged by fans to hype their own participation in the genre". This was a downright, blatant *lie*, as Ellison knew quite well on the day he wrote it, and while Rob can't actually say as much without being sued, he documents the case to this effect by quoting extensively from *Speculation* among other sources such as George Locke in *Habakkuk*. (George, how come I never found you back in the sixties?).

I have to say it was nice to see someone mentioning the old fanzine again. Producing it was hard work – you could call it a labour of love, though my parents used other expressions. I used to sit in my ice-cold bedroom (no central heating in those days), hammering out letters and stencils on an office typewriter balanced on my knees, while duplicating was sheer drudgery. So yes, I was pleased Rob Latham had used quotes from material which I'd been thrilled to publish: the text of Mike Moorcock's pivotal Bristol speech in 1967, the panel discussion transcribed from the *Galactic Fair* in 1969, all those reviews and letters from Mike, Brian Aldiss, James Blish, and other people. Rob tells me that he is expanding his paper to full book-length, hopefully to be finished some time next year, and I'll be looking forward to it.

### But James Blish kneed me in the groin!

So let's get this straight – if one is hoping for any sort of immortality, then it's necessary for one's fanzine to be remembered. In which case James Blish let me down very badly.

In December 1970 he published his second book of SF criticism, *MORE ISSUES AT HAND* (Advent), and in the introduction Blish acknowledged that most of the essays had appeared in various fan magazines. He mentioned several of them, but as I read in dismay, not *Speculation*. With mounting disappointment I found we weren't listed in the index or anywhere else, even though the book contained at least one long review (of *BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD*) which he'd done at my request earlier in the year, and the complete text of his paper from the first *Speculation* Conference in June, 1970. Plus one or two other bits and pieces taken from his various LoCs.

The dedication at the front of the book was particularly hurtful; 'to John Bangsund, Richard Bergeron, Richard E. Geis and Leland Sapiro, keepers of the flame,' even though I don't think the book reprinted anything from their fanzines.

By this time Jim Blish had been in England for nearly two years, we'd corresponded at length and I'd talked with him at *Sci-con* and over the two days of the conference. I admired him enormously and had imagined we were on good terms, but obviously not. Had I offended him in some way? I wrote a sorrowful letter asking what had happened and Blish replied by return with fulsome apologies for the 'oversight', promising to give full credit to my fanzine with the second edition (but of course, there never was a second edition). I had to accept the polite fiction, of course, but James Blish was not the sort of person to make a mistake like that. Afterwards he was always friendly and approachable and I never quite dared to ask what had gone wrong, but *something* must have upset him, a misunderstanding perhaps, which had annoyed him while he was putting the book together. What could it possibly have been? I don't suppose we shall ever know.

### So Alan Dodd *did* have film in his camera!

Back in *Prolapse* #12 Greg Pickersgill contributed a biography in our 'Forgotten Fans' series about Alan Dodd, the 'Hermit of Hoddesdon'. Greg wrote, "despite his poverty he occasionally took trips abroad; this turned out to be by the goodwill of friends of his who worked in the (probably) soft-core sex industry, doing photo-shoots for the British mass-market sex magazines. (Which made me wonder just what was in some of those myriad other boxes in his house, and wish for a rather greater disposable income than I had at the time). Anyway, he'd occasionally flit-off to Portugal or wherever, probably on the staff as 'temporary film-loader' or something."

We might never have known any more, but by lucky chance we can now add an epilogue to Greg's story. A few months ago he was contacted by someone who only wants to be identified as 'Andy' – not for any dark reason, he says, "but it's just that I don't want it to be the thing that someone Googling my name would end up finding." He's not anyone I know, but Andy is an SF reader and I suspect has been to more than one convention. Anyway, this is what he wrote to Greg:

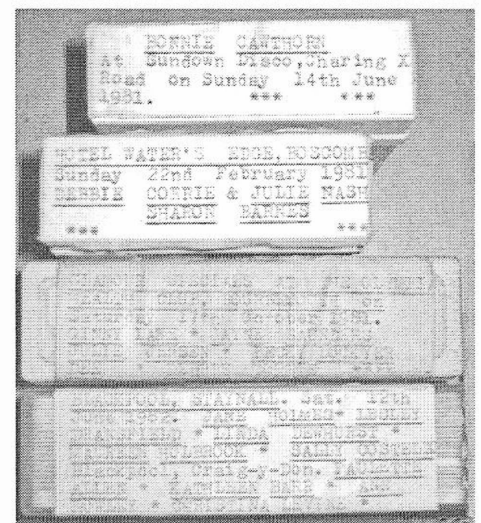
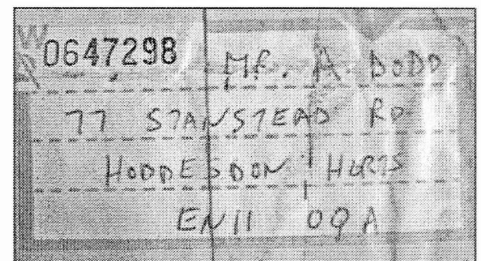
"Some time after 2000 – I honestly can't remember when but 2001-2 might be right – I purchased a large collection of glamour pictures (approx 5000 35mm slides) all apparently taken by an amateur photographer. I bought them at a stall in Kingsland Road Saturday Market, at Dalston, (near Carlisle) from a trader who specialised in house clearances. I arrived to find a stall piled high with a mass of photos of glamour models – some ordinary colour prints, but mostly boxes of slides. I think I was a bit appalled at all this stuff being sold-off at £1 a box so I made a successful offer for the lot – which pissed-off a few other customers, but at least I was keeping it all together. Perhaps I bought a fifth of what there had been – the rest were just sold off individually before I arrived.

"I didn't quite know what I had bought but I thought it was interesting, at least. There were a large number of slide boxes and each was carefully labelled with the date, place and the models concerned. I made a quick survey through them to reassure myself that there was going to be nothing funny/illegal (times change as it were). Nothing was, but I did find a few address labels which gave me the photographer – Mr A. Dodd of 77 Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon.

"The photos were obviously not those of a professional photographer – they appeared to belong to an enthusiastic amateur who somehow had access to some well-known (glamour) models (e.g. Linzi Drew). I don't actually know too much about the world of glamour modelling but some names did seem familiar. My impression was that every weekend he would go off to a location with a few photographer friends and spend a day photographing two or three models (by a pool, in a hotel, etc, and across the country – Bournemouth, East Finchley, Blackpool, and so on).

"All these slides were mostly from 1980-85 with a few from earlier – 1971, and some prints from later (circa 1990). This may well reflect what I was able to buy and nothing more. The majority are 35mm slides though there are a few in medium-format, mostly Kodachrome.

"The pictures are uniformly dreadful, in a dreadful-as-interesting way (girl in bathtub in a field, girl in barn, girl in fur on car bonnet, etc). The models are of a *Whitehouse* or *Razzle* standard, and the odd one might have come from *Mayfair*.



Older fans will recognise Alan's typing on the boxes. Below, *Relapse's* Page 3 Girl – labelled only as a camera-club picture.



"Some are obviously at camera-club meeting photos, and some appear to have been taken by a professional (foreign location, better model, better photography). Some were just copies of other photographers' work – but it seemed odd to have slide-copies of someone else's pictures.

"I meant to 'do something' with them (a book of dreadful glamour pics?? An art project?? There are obviously no model releases here....) but never did and they have been in my loft for many years now. But recently I remembered them, did a search for 'Alan Dodd', and found your article in *Prolapse* #12. This meant I was able to recognise Dodd in some of the photos taken from perhaps some time between 1985-90. A few prints show him in Portugal – a plump, happy 50-ish man with friends – it would be interesting to find out who they were, and what exactly was Dodd's involvement.

"What was interesting to me was that there was only one box of slides for each set (as if he had one roll of film for the weekend and that was it), and how they were carefully labelled, with typewritten notes. So this all ties together with what was written in *Prolapse*. But I have been thinking; this is all very interesting stuff, but it doesn't add to the person described in the article in necessarily a useful/good way. I can't explain it very well but it's as if there's the SF fan/fanzine publisher of interest to SF-world, and this other side of his life which doesn't add to that side of the biography. Dodd's not here to defend himself, of course, but he probably wouldn't have wanted everyone to know about it."

You're right of course, Andy, but it seems to me that Alan's secret hobby was not so much bad as *sad* – the poor, lonely man, living with his mom all those years in a decaying little terrace house. I did think at one time that he might have been gay (and perhaps fighting it) but apparently not, if he was so interested in these pin-up girls. Makes you wonder why he didn't ever manage meet some woman and form a normal relationship – perhaps he was too shy and socially maladjusted. Shame!

### The John Brunner Mystery

We've been running John Brunner stories more-or-less continually since John Hall's hilarious account of 'Life with the Brunners' in #7, and just when it seemed there was nothing more to be said I heard from ace-researcher Ian Millsted:

"I know you probably closed the book on John Brunner but on a recent trip to Hay-on-Wye I had a look at an old copy of *Burke's Peerage and Baronetcy* and, along with one or two other sources, pieced together the attached family tree. It is simplified of course – the first Sir John had nine children altogether and I've only shown two lines. Given some of the other names I thought it of interest.

"According to his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* the first Sir John left personal wealth at death of £899,112 – a fair sum in those days. Also, the same entry mentions that the initial capital of Brunner-Mond was under £20,000 in 1873 but by the time the company became part of ICI in 1926 the value was £18 million.

"One possible explanation of why the money didn't come the way of 'our' John Brunner may relate to his grandfather, Roscoe Brunner, and something I came across in a biography of Clement Davies, the former Liberal party leader. Davies was a lawyer working for Leverhulme in the 1920s and handled the case where Leverhulme sued Brunner-Mond for £1 million for overcharging them for supplies of alkali. Brunner-Mond lost the case and Roscoe Brunner, then-chairman of Brunner-Mond was deemed to be responsible (probably correctly). When ICI was formed a year later Roscoe Brunner was not even on the board. His wife started kicking up a fuss and Roscoe killed her and then himself.

"However this doesn't really answer the question as presumably he would still have had shares. Also the limited information I found about Patrick Brunner (Roscoe's son, and John's uncle) seems to suggest that he had some private wealth. If so then presumably John's father, Anthony Brunner, would also have been well provided-for. (Incidentally, he changed his name by deed poll when he was 18. He was christened Egbert Sydney Houston Brunner).

"One possibility is that John did something to get himself cut off from the family. Another possibility is that some money did come his way but it was being shared out between a larger number of descendants (I have not included all siblings, etc, on the family tree). Maybe John had some but spent it. It seems likely to me that a big house in Hampstead was a substantial purchase for someone who was mostly selling to magazines and Ace paperbacks until the mid 1960's. I'm guessing on that and you will have a better idea than me, but did John Brunner demonstrate a more lavish lifestyle than (for example) Ted Tubb?"

Ian attached a condensed version of the Brunner family tree which I've slightly embellished, and I was astonished to see that his family was so very well-connected. No wonder 'our' John Brunner put on such airs and graces; by birth he was a member of the upper-crust and one wonders how he felt so badly out of favour. Taking Ian's point and putting it with a bit of hearsay from Gerry Webb at *Orbital* last year, I wonder if marrying Marjorie could have been the reason? According to Gerry the family disapproved of the marriage, and I'm tempted to draw an exact parallel with King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson – good-looking young scion of princely family is bewitched by much older, foreign divorcee and is banished, never to return (and in my estimation Marjorie was about as attractive{not} as Wallis Simpson, too).

Our JB did his National Service in the RAF (possibly because of his uncle's background) and since he used to sign himself as 'Pilot Officer' I wondered if he ever actually flew a plane. So I fired off a note to John Hall, the world's leading Brunner expert, about this and about the money.



Alan with friends (no names) in Portugal, 1985



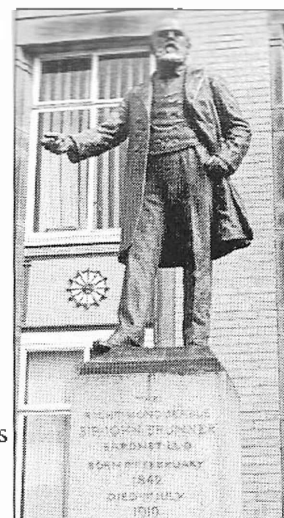


John replied. "On JB's being in the RAF, all I recall his saying is that's where he did his National Service, and I can't help thinking that if he had been a pilot we would have heard rather more about it! But the thing with the family is a deeper mystery. I might have told you before that Audrey and I went to a National Trust property called Greys Court a year or two ago. It's at a place called Rotherfield Greys just outside Henley, and is very ancient (see short Wikipedia article [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greys\\_Court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greys_Court) and was gifted to the National Trust by the Brunner family – that is the ICI Brunner family, who owned it since the 1930s. The National Trust is focussed on the history of the property and they are renovating it at present. When we visited there was a small exhibition on the history of Brunner-Mond and ICI and some pictures of old chemical works on Teesside back in the long ago. But there was no family tree on display or anything like that.

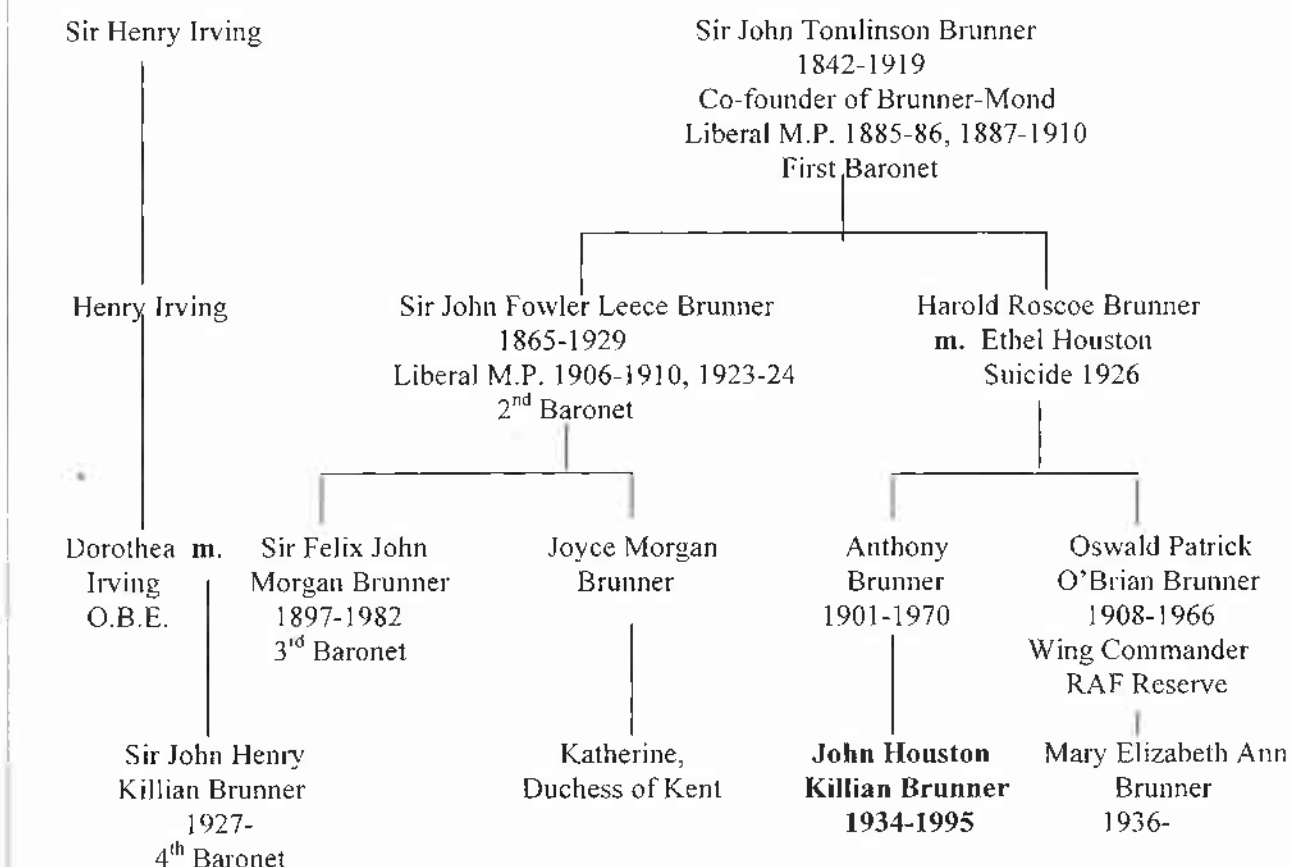
"Our John Brunner was, according to a number of sources including his own publicity, born at Preston Crowmarsh in Oxfordshire. The distance between Preston Crowmarsh (which is, at least nowadays, just a few scattered houses on a road out of Wallingford) and Rotherfield Greys is less than a dozen miles. Someone had enough money to send him to Cheltenham, but after he left he seems to have had nothing further to do with the family, which is perplexing. I don't recall him ever saying he'd had an argument with his parents though he hated going to boarding school. Why was there no inheritance or trust fund? It seems very unlikely to me that there was no interaction between John's offshoot of the family and the branch of the family that lived so close. So what happened? I'm not sure we will ever know."

After a little more research I wrote back to John with a new theory; "Our JB's father died in 1970, so could he have left a legacy, or inheritance, which JB used to purchase his Nassington Road house – I don't have an exact date for when he moved, but I'm sure it was around that time and how else could a freelance writer have moved to a big house in Hampstead?"

Alas, John immediately shot me down; "I believe they bought Nassington Road a few years earlier than 1970 – maybe around 1967 or 68 and for certain they did do a lot of work on it, which it needed – so whatever it cost, it wasn't as much as it might have been. If you look at what books he sold and advances he got in the period, say 1965-1968, and compare that with the low property prices of the time, you might find he could have afforded it. Which isn't to say he didn't get a legacy when his father died – only that if he did, he might have used it to fund the alterations to the kitchen and the garden room while I was there – but he might have done that out of an advance, of course."



#### Brunner family tree (simplified)



The chart explains the 'Houston' in JB's name, and though I haven't found the origin of that unusual 'Killian' you can see it pops up again with the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet. I also discovered that our John Brunner had two sisters – Verena Hilda May (1937-2000) & Jennifer Margaret Felicity (1939-), plus a cousin, Mary Elizabeth Ann, about whom Ian Millsted reports, "Mary is briefly mentioned in a recent biography of Lord Snowden. She was a debutante in the days when they were still presented to the Queen, I believe. She had a royal godparent as well." Investigations continue – as I said, an incredibly well-connected family!

## A long time ago in a fanzine far, far away...

...Dave Rowe ran a feature in the summer, 1973 issue of *Blum*, the fanzine he edited with Bob & Mary Smith. I was reading it the other day and it's quite funny, an account of the 2005 *Lunacon* – or maybe '*Lunarcon*' since it was (will be? would have been in some alternative reality?) held on the Moon. Written by 'Bob Holdstock, Jr.' it introduces us to a host of characters including 'jovial Andrew Stephenson, with thick black beard and ringlets down his back', and was illustrated by artist Kevin Cullen, which was a new name to me – see Page 31, and remember, we were all clean-shaven and had short-back-&-sides in those days. Well, not the Ratfans, obviously, and they're also at *Lunacon*; in fact, the narrator introduces one of them; 'Names's Pickersgill. Been writing a novel about Brian Wegenheim for forty years...'

Quick as a flash I e-mailed Haverfordwest H.Q.; "Aha! Aha! What does this mean? Is your secret out at last?"

He replied by return: "Oh good grief. There's no secret. Back in the day, and we're around 1968/69 here, I was indeed like many a foolish youth, particularly those sci-fi oriented, under the deranged impression I could be a writer. In fact I even put 'writer' on the Future Ambition part of the form I filled in when leaving school. The Assistant Head sneered at me openly. I sneered back; we'd always hated each other.

"Like too many others of the time I was much taken with the Moorcockian concept of the character who passed through many realities, à la Jerry Cornelius. You can already see where we're going here, can't you. Anyway, I did produce several thousand words of moodily introspective prose relating to my man Brian Wegenheim, the name derived, I think, from a TV news report. The name itself first appeared in print as a *nom-de-fan* in something (probably poetry) in *Fouler 2* (the first issue, remember), and I think some fragments of the real work (if we can glorify it as such) were published in fanzines, and the character name-checked in pieces by Bryn Fortey and perhaps others. The pieces I wrote were indeed largely plot-less (ideal for *New Worlds*, then...) and generally involved our man wandering aimlessly around desolate landscapes, deserted streets, or abandoned buildings, having chance meetings with other alienated persons with whom he failed to establish any meaningful contact. Yes, I did have a protracted adolescence, which I may not yet have outgrown. Of course as time passed I like many other (but perhaps not enough) aspiring writers realised I had no ideas for plot, no grasp of narrative, and was unable to build even my own character much less one on paper. But I did retain a foolish affection for my imaginary pal.

"Some years back I was running a mailing list for supposed fanzine fans, that in the way of such things became overrun by people I knew nothing of and found little in common with. I re-started the list in a modified form (that didn't turn out much better either) and wanted a title that – like a good fanzine title – had a certain air of mystery plus a strong personal connection. Re-enter Wegenheim. On more than one occasion I alluded to the background of the name, but no-one ever seemed interested or even actually asked why the list was so oddly titled. (Actually that's almost a lie, as an English fan of some vintage did mention the existence of Wegenheim as a 'character' at least once). There were sound reasons, in my head at least, for choosing the name 'wegenheim' for the list, but they don't matter now, are wholly self-referential, and anyway I have probably told you more than you were interested in anyway.

"I still have all the stuff I wrote, and while it's all very new wave in a half-witted manner I think parts of it are rather nicely written. Well, at least \*I\* know what I was getting at... 'Dust falls on Wegenheim as he sleeps.'"

So there we are, then. Gregory notwithstanding, I was curious about the meaning of the name, as was Mike Meara and several others to my knowledge, but the Master always kept an inscrutable silence. Until now, that is. Another fannish mystery resolved!

### Obsessing, maybe?

I've been fiddling around with those convention attendance figures again in an effort to get closer to the actual numbers of people who were present at various British conventions before Mark Plummer was born. Avid students of this subject (that's you and me then, Greg, and maybe Rob...) will recall we ran a chart in #8, others will say "who cares", but whether you're interested or not I can now proudly reveal some figures I'm pretty sure of, as follows:-

1957 *Cytricon III* – I 'guessed' at 40, but am now fairly sure the total number was only 30.

1958 *Cytricon IV* – My count was 49, but I've now revised this to 52.

1960 *Loncon* – Based on Archie Mercer's con-rep my count was 87, but I've been able to bump this up to 93.

1961 *LXIcon* – THEN gives a total of 77, but I now believe the number was at least 89.

I know this could be considered slightly obsessive but I've quite enjoyed crunching the numbers, particularly with *LXIcon* where exceptionally good information is available. It turns out that the '77' in THEN comes from the list in the Programme Book, but since this closed at least two weeks before the con it couldn't have been the full story. So, to refine things a bit more, I started by deducting those who *definitely* weren't there – Doc Weir, because he was dead, George Locke (in Kenya), Don Ford and Dale Smith (in the USA). That brought us down to 73.

Next thing was to look for extra names who weren't on the list but who were mentioned in the various con-reps or who I recognised from photographs. I have Tony Walsh's Prog Book with a whole page of autographs, which was useful, and Darroll Pardoe mentions two more names in his letter this time. This brought up some important omissions – Amis, Tubb, Bulmer, Carnell, Arthur Thomson, and so on, taking us up to 87. Then came the difficult bit – what about the 14 'unknowns' on the published list, names I'd never heard of? Did they turn up? All I could do was to deduct that number – taking us back down to 73 – then add on all the people in the photographs who I *didn't* recognise. That came to seventeen, near as I can make out, giving the revised total of 89 and suggesting there were some other late registrations.

This isn't foolproof – I've bound to have missed someone – Ken Bulmer for instance, doesn't appear on any picture though we know quite well that he was present, so I think 89 is quite a conservative estimate. When I started this job I already had 65 photographs from *LXIcon* (many of which appeared last time) and afterwards Keith Freeman sent me another thirteen, bless him, explaining that they were paper prints which he'd overlooked since he'd thought he only taken slides in those days. You'll see some of them in this issue. And that's all, folks....

Peter Weston, 23/10/2009





Two years ago I sent an issue to Don Malcolm in Paisley, who had been one of Ted Carnell's writers for *New Worlds* and who also contributed to *Vector* in the sixties (and incidentally, whose surname inspired one-half of the 'Malcolm Edwards' pseudonym). He replied with a note in beautiful copperplate handwriting in which he tantalised me by mentioning the great times he'd had over the years with other writers, in particular with his friend, Bob Shaw. Don and his wife Rita attended conventions regularly in the 1970s and I thought he might have stories to tell, both about Bob and his own writing experiences, and after sustained nagging Don sent me this piece. I've been able to illustrate it with previously-unseen photographs, some from Don's own album and others provided through the kindness of Bob's son, Ian. [PW]

*Don at Mancon, photo by Lars-Olov Strandberg*

## Reminiscences of a Science Fiction Writer

Or 'I knew the Late, Great, Bob Shaw'

By Donald Malcolm

Bob at work in the early seventies. Photo from Ian Shaw.



Let's get the sad part over first, that of Bob's bereavement. After Sadie died in 1991 he telephoned me and asked if he could call at any time to talk, to which I agreed, although calls in the wee small hours always set the heart racing. I was pleased to note that others in the SF fraternity had been helpful. I had difficulty in persuading him that he wasn't to blame; we are all responsible for our own actions.

First, Bob's working methods: he didn't use a typewriter, preferring a note pad. He began writing; when he had written all that he could, he sat and thought what he wanted to record next. We had a long discussion about method. He did not write a chapter at a time, according to what he told me. I have special cause to remember, as we could not have found two writers with such disparate methods — I was a batter-it-all-down then make amendments, corrections, additions, and deletions (as, for example, did Aldous Huxley; I have a copy of a manuscript sheet from *BRAVE NEW WORLD* in my collection. With the advent of computers, such examples of working methods are now probably few and far between. This sheet has several large lines and the sketch of a young girl, with no indication of who she was.)

Incidentally, the SF writers in my collection include Wells, Orwell, Huxley, Clarke, Aldiss and Priest, which reminds me...

Many years ago a certain aspiring young writer, Chris Priest, wrote to me saying that he was working on a novel (*A DREAM OF WESSEX*) and asked if I could provide a reason why a sizeable portion of South-East England had suddenly detached itself from the mainland. I could think of no geological explanation, such as the shifting of tectonic plates or the existence of a San Andreas-type fault that might have caused a gigantic earthquake, and wrote to tell him so. He replied saying that the inhabitants

who survived had simply woken up in the morning to find that it had happened... apparently no noise, dust...

Bob was an exceptionally methodical thinker who would have worked at the problem until he had found a plausible explanation (he once calculated the structural stresses for the entrance beams of one of Belfast's largest cinemas). Remember his 'spontaneous combustion' story? Bob was never lost for an explanation or a solution and invariably put them over with his legendary wit. Dear Jim White was his partner in that respect. They are sorely missed.

And here's a beauty from real life. Bob was a Public Relations Officer with the aeroplane firm, Short Brothers, and on one occasion he was leading a group of reporters on a trial flight of a new version of their 'Flying Wardrobe' monoplanes. Word came that there might be a bomb on board; Bob made an announcement to try and calm everyone down and concluded by saying that, should one engine be damaged, the other one would provide 'negative lift'.



'Get those knees brown, laddie!' Bob on a field trip for Shorts to Oman, late sixties. (Photo from Ian Shaw)



Bob, Rita, Sadie and Don outside Coventry Cathedral, after *Seacon* 75. Photo from Don.

Talking of wit, it didn't always have to be in an SF context. At one of the Glasgow cons, held in the Central Station Hotel (about to be demolished) a party of us had gone for an evening meal in a restaurant – Italian, as I recall – opposite in Hope Street. We were sitting at a long table. I was at the left corner, to accommodate my deaf ear, so that I could hear the people on my right, and Bob was across from me. On the table was a small plant of some kind. Bob pointed to it and said, 'A watched petal never coils'. I was probably the only one who heard it, a piece of sheer brilliance. Rita and I had a wonderful relationship with our Irish friends.

And then I remember spending an enjoyable interlude at a corridor party (they were popular in the seventies) with the beautiful Judith Blish and Leslie Flood. I can't remember a word of our conversation, probably not of any consequence, but who cares! But at the party I happened to pass a door, which opened to extrude a hand, palm-up. For some obscure reason I was carrying a lidless jar of pickled onions, so I quickly grabbed an onion and dropped it into the hand, which closed and withdrew and the door shut. That was Dave Kyle. I can't look at a jar of onions without thinking of the incident! But Bob delivered the punch-line; 'It was more than Blish and Flood could stand'. Brilliant.

In a way, Bob seemed to look after me. For example, we were once having a conversation and I made some minor, out-of-place remark which he countered, very gently, but firmly, without malice, but putting a flea in my ear. In 1976 I had two SF novels published by Mills & Boon (would

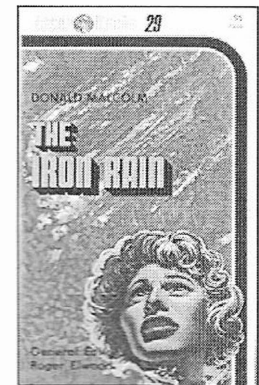
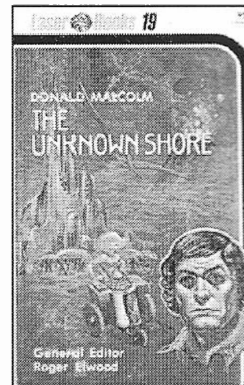


Jim White, Bob, and Don, with the display of Laser Books titles at *Mancon*, 1976. Photo from Ian Shaw.

I lie to you?) and at *Mancon* Charles Partington put up my name in big letters, so big that it could have been seen from the Moon. I'd never had any pretensions to being a novelist, preferring the short-story form, and I didn't want to write them but the money was good. I didn't tell anyone and Bob was a bit miffed and told me so as we were leaving *Mancon*. Sales in Canada and in America were 26,000 and 28,000.

Do I recall comments in a previous *Prolapse* about bad books doing well? In a way I had the last laugh when my German agent, Uwe Luserka, got *THE IRON RAIN* reprinted in Croatia. Will they ever recover!

I met Roger Elwood, the M&B editor, in the Haymarket Hotel, Edinburgh, at the height of the Festival, on a sizzlingly hot day. He came rushing in, late, said 'You're a mighty fine writer' and 'could we take a run up to Loch Ness?' Top that, lads. \*



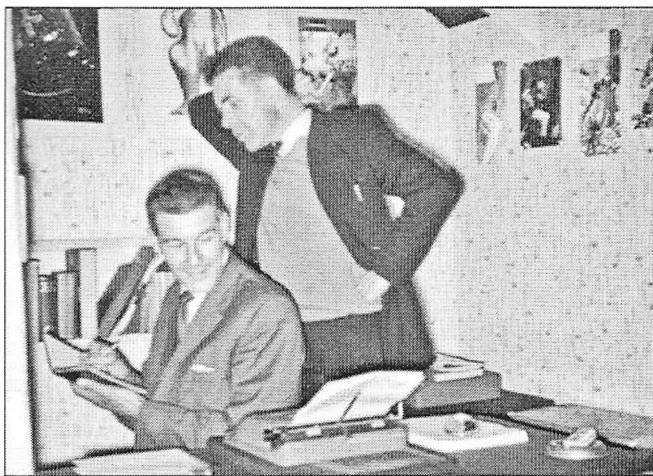
Back to Bob. One morning he and I were in a con breakfast-room when a Brian someone-or-other came and joined us. He chattered away to Bob, then, as an afterthought, turned to me and asked who I was. Bob twigged that I wasn't going to answer that 'When-did-you-stop-beating-your-wife' question, and answered for me, very effectively.

There was another amusing incident at *Mancon*. Rita and I were loading-up the car when a fanzine editor ran over to us, offering a copy of his publication from a large pile. I'd heard his name and vaguely recognised him, although we'd never conversed. I thanked him politely. At a later con he passed by, as it were. My star had risen and fallen very quickly and he evidently now saw no advantage in knowing me; an illuminating example of human nature.

On another occasion, Bob and I were discussing other subjects and outlets. I had always published a variety of work, including science articles (not as easy as they look, as Ken Bulmer can vouch) and specialist features on aspects of philately, particularly aviation, such as pre-1914 air-meetings and events – I was pretty much the expert on that era – and research work on mail flown by various airlines. One monograph on the Lanark Aviation Meeting, 1910, gained four international aero-literature awards.

\* "Hold on," I wrote, "Roger Elwood was an American editor who did all those anthologies in the seventies. Surely he didn't work for Mills & Boon?". "Oh yes he did," he replied, "under the 'Laser Books' imprint and published by Harlequin Enterprises, Don Mills, Ontario, who owned Mills & Boon." I quickly asked Mike Ashley for confirmation: "It doesn't surprise me," he wrote. "I have never pursued romance publishers but Elwood had his finger in no end of pies around that time, both in the US and UK (he was heavily involved with Transworld/Corgi for example). Laser's parent firm may well have had some arrangement with Mills & Boon. I do have a history of Mills & Boon (*PASSION'S FORTUNE* by Joseph McAleer) and it refers to M&B being taken over by Harlequin Books, effective 1 Oct 1971 (for £1.2 million), though there's no mention of Elwood or Laser Books." [PW]





Above; Don & Gerard Quinn, artist, in Jim White's workroom on a visit to Belfast, April 1963. Below: Jim & Don, at Chessmancon, 1972. Photos from Don.



Above; Rita, Jim and Peggy White, at Chessmancon 1972. Below; Rita & Don at Tynecon, 1974. Photos from Don.



Bob stuck to science fiction, with a body of work that will ensure his lasting fame. He had laid-out the framework of a detective novel and, given his particular talent for solving problems that would certainly have been a treasure to savour. I don't know if the projected book notes are among his papers. He never threw anything away, so who knows? But why did he never win a Hugo?

One evening Bob and I fell to talking about books, SF and mainstream, and it was surprising how much in accord we were. Our cross-over choice was *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*, with *CHILDHOOD'S END* a close second. The short-story was, for me, 'The Light of Other Days', and for Bob 'The Star' (my second choice). Other books that we enjoyed in common were *THE DAUGHTER OF TIME* and *THREE MEN IN A BOAT*. I do remember Bob telling me that 'The Light of Other Days' had been anthologised about forty times – something of a record, I would think. He was very proud of that story. If I could have written only one story, that would have been it. My favourite title (other than my own) is 'Moment of Eclipse' by Brian Aldiss.

Titles; I'd written a short story, 'The Aliens Among Us' (no, don't all rush to your bookcases, for you won't find it). I was always keen on titles and I really liked that one. The story duly appeared in *NEW WRITINGS IN SF* – with another title, which I can't recall.\* I remember complaining to Ken Bulmer about that and, revealing a fine line in patient exasperation, Ken explained that that was what editors *did* (in this case John Carnell). Anyway, they say it's not lost when a friend gets it, and in this case Jim White fell heir to my title.

One title, 'The House of Lights', I'd had in my notebook for about five years before I wrote the story, and how John persevered with me over that one. I sweated blood over two re-writes and from him I learned what it meant to be a pro. He told me that he took two out of every hundred submissions. Every British writer, and a few Americans, too, owed him a great deal.

I must be the only writer who borrowed two titles from Arthur Clarke. He used to throw them away by the dozen, wonderful evocative phrases. My title 'Beyond the Reach of Storms' was his phrase, from *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY*, 1957:

'Then had come that stiff and awkward parting at the spaceport, with the rain streaming down from leaden skies and beating against the smooth walls of the ship that seemed so eagerly awaiting to climb into the eternal sunlight beyond the reach of storms.'

My story† appeared in *New Worlds*, April 1964 as the final episode in the 'Preliminary Exploration Team' series. Talk about 'Star Trek' by any other name... 'A Strange and Terrible Sea' was a paraphrase of 'the strangest and perhaps most terrible seas of all', from *VOICES FROM THE SKY*, 1969. Thanks, Arthur.

As I'm writing these lines I'm reminded of how lucky I was to be a part of the SF fraternity, to meet so many great writers and friendly, helpful people. Just one example; in 1972 we had our car and an umbrella stolen at Chester (I got the car back) and immediately we had offers of help from Brian, Harry, Jim, and Bob. We were just contemplating moving to the Ritz when the car turned up, dammit! //

\* Could this be 'The Enemy Within', *NEW WRITINGS* 25?

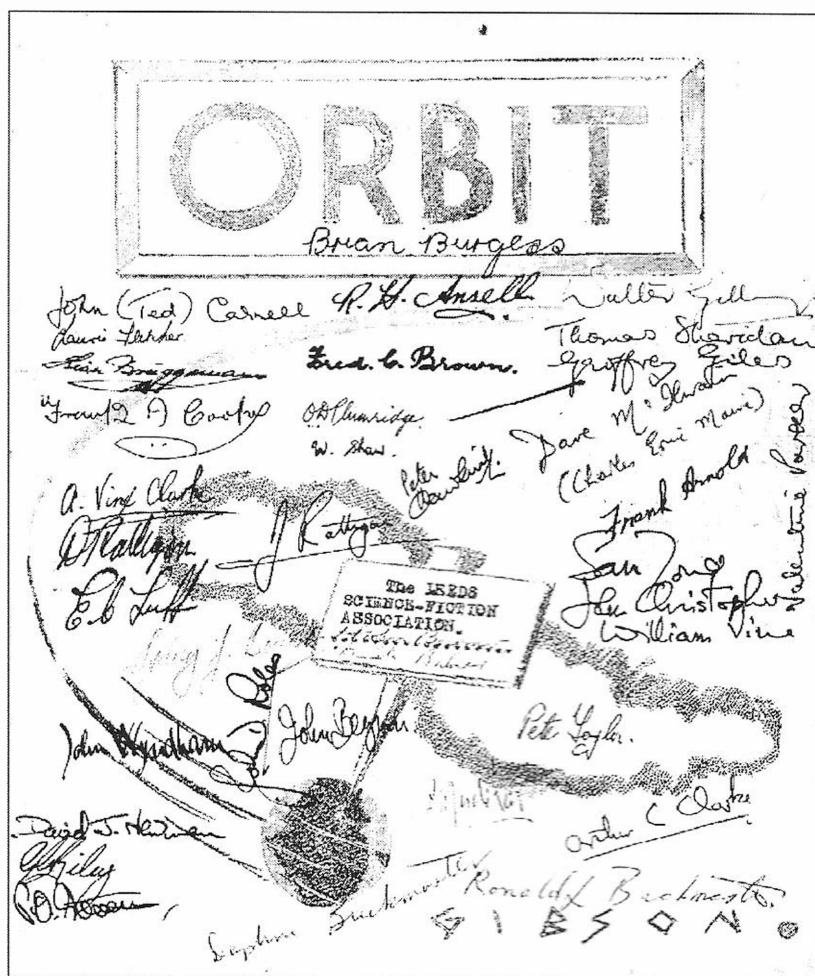
† Which we can now hear as a podcast – whatever that is – introduced as "the first space-travel story of the series and the first truly obscure find" as episode #4 in the series, 'A Bite of Stars, A Slug of Time, and Thou'. Hope they paid you for it, Don! [PW]

You never know what you'll find in old fanzines. At *Orbital* I bought two large boxes from Bob Wardzinski and had many happy hours sorting through them, even though I later discovered they were the much picked-over remains of Ken Bulmer's collection. Despite that I came across all sorts of useful stuff including an almost complete run of the Sanderson/Clarke *Aporrheta* from 1958-60 (which helped me to piece together the story of London fandom in P#12) and lots of other things including Harry Turner & Eric Needham's cheerfully irreverent *Now & Then*, with all of their Wonderful Widower's products. And I had a second bite at the cherry when, after the last issue, Dave Britton sent me a surprise present of another big box of fanzines. According to my theory every editor is in pursuit of immortality, in their own little way, so let's take a look at what I found in there.... [PW]

## In Pursuit of Immortality?

By Peter Weston

Some of the people who frequented the London pub meetings in the fifties – Clarke, Tubb, Christopher, Carnell, Charles Eric Maine, and John Wyndham using two of his many names!



And 'surprise present' was right – Dave, goodness knows where this lot came from because they go right back to the late forties and there certainly were some unexpected things in the box!

First out was *Orbit*, issues #2 & 3 (November 53 & February 54), the official organ of the 'Leeds SF Association' which as we noted last time met for much of the fifties in an attic room in the Adelphi pub on Leeds Bridge. It was edited by George Gibson with assistance from Ron Bennett, then only a newcomer, with the spectral presence of J. Michael Rosenblum hovering in the wings as 'technical advisor'. But despite having names like that on board it's still very much a beginner's effort with bits of fan-fiction, earnest little articles about nothing in particular, cartoons and a quiz, while the really interesting stuff – who these people were and what they were doing – goes almost completely unmentioned. Editors of club-zines often make this mistake; they're desperate to publish *something* but don't have any idea what it should be and end up with any old page-filler. Eric Jones did the same thing with the Cheltenham fanzine *Sidereal*, and so did I with my early *Zenith* (which started as a sort-of club-zine for the Brum group) exactly ten years after George Gibson.

I'd hoped to discover a bit more about the Leeds group but *Orbit* was a completely lacking in the sort of personal details which bring these things to life. This was a pity because few of the members appear to have had much other contact with fandom, and I don't even have any photographs of them apart from Rosenblum and Bennett, taken at *Supermancon*.

Back in 1954 Ron was a trainee-teacher and he contributed 'Science fiction in Schools', a selection of essays written by 13- & 14-year olds in his class. It's mildly amusing but slight and without much in the way of a conclusion. I was more hopeful about JMR's 'Lure of the White Horse', his report on an eight-day trip to London, but this turned out to be a very dry little essay. He visited the White Horse twice but doesn't describe the place or the people, let alone tell us any good stories. The best he could do was to get *Orbit* #1 autographed by all and sundry – something which was later framed to hang in the Leeds club-room – and only from the evidence of those signatures do we learn that he met John Wyndham, Arthur Clarke and John Christopher, among many other fans and professionals.

Michael may have been the saviour of British fandom through the war years but he was not one to put much of himself into his writings; in this report he mentions 'my wife' half-a-dozen times but never once refers to her by name – which everyone knew was 'Betty'! But crammed at the bottom of page thirteen was a plug for Pete Campbell's *Andromeda*, in which the reviewer comments that 'he whangs in a six-page supplement on the *Medcon*'. Metaphorically, my ears went back; could this be something for *Relapse*?



As we all know, Professor, the *Medcon* was a remarkably successful convention which Tony Thorne's Medway group ran in November 1953, one brief, shining moment notable among other things for the first recorded appearance of our Lost Hero, Dave Newman, and as such it's something in which both Greg Pickersgill and I have a great deal of interest. I know very little about Pete Campbell except that he lived in the Lake District and once sent me a strange little fanzine which used the '@' symbol throughout instead of the letter 'a', since he'd broken that key on his typewriter! But I wanted to see that supplement, and once alerted, Greg was good enough to send me a scan of Campbell's report the very next day. It's not bad, either, and I quickly forwarded it to Tony Thorne, who replied:

"What can I say, that report is completely new to me. It brought tears to my eyes ... as well as all the fond memories of a wonderful, exhausting day. I recall we all spent weeks, nay months, organising everything and it was well worth it. How I regret now that all the pressure of my work, soon after, took me away from what I, and the members, had created back then."

I asked Tony if he would write-up the story of the Medway group but he's busy having some success as an author these days (see Tony's web-site; [www.tonythorne.co.uk](http://www.tonythorne.co.uk)). In the meantime I continued to dig through my box and came across a real curiosity; an issue of *Renascence*, edited by the 25-year-old James Blish.

The title must be a weird American-variant spelling of our more familiar 'Renaissance', but either way this looked pretty formidable. Dated September 1946 it's described as being published for the 'Usher Society' and is labelled as 'Volume II, No.4', with page-numbers running from 83-109. It's well-duplicated and perfectly justified throughout – even, in some sections, where the text is set in double-columns. (I have enough trouble doing this with a computer, so you can imagine the amount of work necessary to achieve it with typewriter and stencil!). No artwork though, and as for the contents – well, to set the tone I'll quote a bit from Blish's brief editorial where he comments, 'The question which was asked of everyone who wrote for this issue was; "What do you think remains valid in Symbolism for the modern artists?"' We were surprised that so few translations were offered in answer.' All I can say is good job I wasn't asked for a contribution!

There's a short story and a poem, both by Robert W. Lowndes, more poetry (some in French), articles titled 'La Haut', 'The Singing of Poetry', and 'Debussy contra Berg', and generally the whole thing reminds me of what *Warhoon* might have been like if it had gone much more up-market and avoided any mention of science fiction. While James Blish was undoubtedly a very clever man this seems a bit too precious, not really part of our fandom at all, and I was just about to move on when my eye caught a letter from our old friend Eric Needham the window-cleaner, who seems to have been equally unimpressed. Addressed to 'The Perpetrators of *Renascence*', it really lets fly:-

"Today the postman brought the third copy so far of your product. This letter is to ask you not to send any more. Keep them for such people as may care to read your appalling drool. Oh, I know *you* probably like it, but it sickens me.

'I have goggled through the article (?) entitled "The Triumph" and can still not make sense of it. I have hurriedly glanced through the alleged poems and feel bilious. I shall save them in case I ever need a laxative.

'And that bloody awful de Capri effort. Do you honestly mean to insult people's intelligences by pretending that such trash is a composition, a serious, thought-out work? It may be a perverse form of Transatlantese genius to be dissatisfied with the 60,000 arrangements of the alphabet which any dictionary will supply, and to ever-so-cleverly use the rest of the symbols on his typewriter. God help us the day when someone shows de Capri a varityper. I can write that sort of junk as fast as I can type it.

'Twenty-five cents of supermen discern polymorphous platitudinous, so self-styled,  
This is the iconoclast! We runcinate for runcination's runcinance,  
A phrase circumambient reveals destroying deathless  
Revelation. We imitate not der verzweifelte Nachbar der klassische Schriftsteller.  
Nein eight seven six five for ours is a labour the whorage of language multi-  
Bastardised of old. Take your cycles, rend the legs,  
Reveal the bi-ordinal nonresonance of a quartzlined acid-vat  
Craftily caper Ichneumonidae with a flaming sword

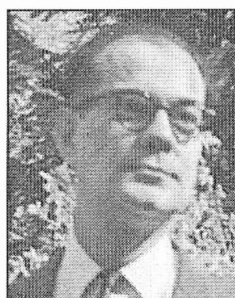
You could publish that under the title of "Thoughts on a Goldfish Bowl" and your clientele would gobble it up and ask for more. Is it that your product is a joke? If so, the joke is played-out.

'I suppose I really do owe you a measure of thanks for thinking I might like your magazine, but this amounts to prostitution of amateur journalism, and the cure lies in more drastic selection of GOOD stuff, not semi-idiots who are proud of their ability to distort English. For Pete's sake try buggering-up French or Latin since I can't read either and so couldn't possibly care.'

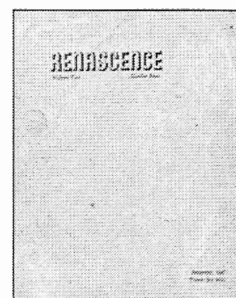


**Left; Eric Needham in the mid-1940s. Photo; Harry Turner web-site.**

**Right; James Blish, around the same time. Photo; Blish family web-site.**



***Renascence*, Vol. II No.4 – with completely plain cover printed on Old Gold paper, and absolutely no illustrations.**

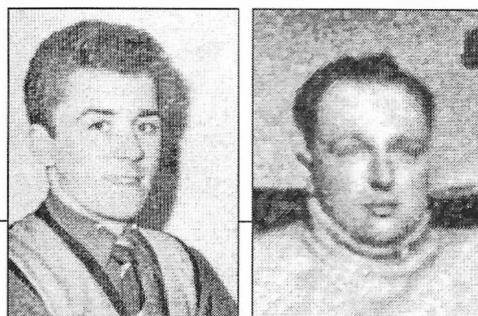


Eric's missive drew no editorial comment, and somehow that absence conveys more clearly than any words the unvoiced suggestion that Blish would have thought him to be an ignorant yahoo. Yet looking at these meticulously-typed but opaque pages I have some sympathy with Eric's blunt rejection of what he obviously considered pretentious nonsense.

That's not something you can say about Don Allen's *Satellite*, issues #5 & 6 of which I found a few layers further down in my box (Spring & Summer 1955). Don lived in Gateshead and was only a teenager at the time (he mentions the imminence of his National Service) but his fanzine is bang-full of personality. It's *not* a club-zine, though he mentions the local group in passing and there's a fair amount of material from other Northern fans – people like Mal Ashworth, Tom White (both Leeds/Bradford) and Ken Potter, with a clever piece in #5 from Ormskirk's John Ashcroft, who we met in Tony Glynn's entertaining letter in *Relapse* #14. This one has a printed cover with photographs of various fans including Don himself and a rare glimpse of the young Jim Cawthorn, then still living at home. I was also intrigued to see several references to 'Joan Burns', who I think must have been the mother of the 'elephantine Alan Burns' described by Harry Bell (also in my last issue), and back then she seemed to have been an active fan in her own right.

Issue #6 contains Don's long and entertaining report on *Cytricon I*, parts of which I ran in my 'Kettering' issue (with an incriminating picture of him under a table with Shirley Marriott). He accompanies his account with his own illos, some excellent, and a double-page spread by Jim Cawthorn (below). Jim didn't attend the con and his cartoons in themselves are not particularly funny but they're remarkable for the strong, confident lines with which he cut them directly onto stencil. The man was only twenty-five, and already a genius!

Right; Don Allen, far right; Jim Cawthorn, from the cover of *Satellite* #5, Spring 1954.



The next one I came across was a two-sheet newsletter, *Fanac* #60 (June, 1960), which solved a minor mystery. A little while ago I was wondering whether we'd ever established who was behind the 'Penelope Fandergast' column in *Aporrheta* and now in a letter Ron Bennett admits writing at least the first couple of instalments and says that 'your guess about there being several contributors is as good as any.' In the same issue there's an anxious plea (which today has become an anguished wail); "When last heard of the Liverpool Group's 1957 fan-film, 'May We Have the Pleasure?' was somewhere in the U.S.; can anyone give Terry [Carr] information as to its whereabouts?" One of my great regrets is that none of the classic British fan-films seem to have survived – not this one from LiG, nor Cheltenham's 'All this Grass is Chiming Bells' of similar date, and not even the more recent Delta Group 'Breathworld' from 1965.

And here's an even slimmer and more remarkable survival from 1960; a single-sheet from Mike Moorcock titled *Rambler Broadsheet* (price 1d.), which prints all the eleven verses (plus chorus) that he knew of the cowboy ballad of Jesse James, beginning:

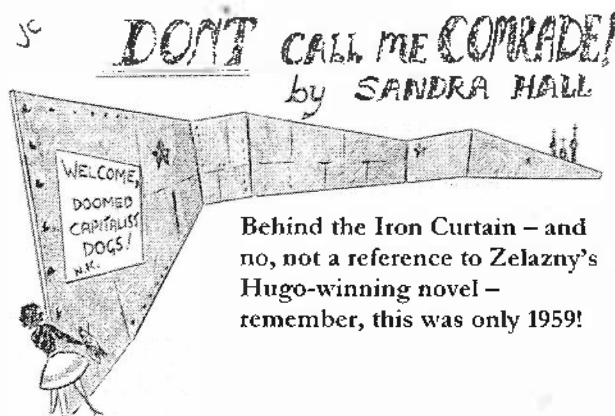
'Living in Missouri was a bold, bad man,  
Known from Seattle down to Birmingham.  
From Boston, Massachusetts to the Golden Gate,  
From Denver Colorado right across the state.'

Digging a little deeper, I found more of Ron Bennett's handiwork in the shape of a battered copy of the *Skyrack* newsletter, #11 (January 1960). Funny to think how back in the mid-sixties we young fans thought *Skyrack* was Ron's main claim to fame without realising how active he'd been in previous years (the Leeds club, various columns & articles, a genzine, and a convention) and that in a sense the newsletter reflected a winding-down of his fannish career (and no, Dave, I'm not drawing any parallels with *Ansible*!). This one notes the venue for the 1960 Eastercon (though it was changed 48 hours beforehand) and gives an update (but not a result) on that year's TAFF contest, subsequently won by Don Ford.

*Skyrack* also reviews *Eustace*, a title from the Moorcock fanzine factory I hadn't previously heard about, and again I sniffed a possible source of fresh revelations. Quickly checking with Greg's Pennacollection listing I found it was a 30-pager and I immediately asked to borrow it. Remember my motto; 'you never know what you'll find in old fanzines'!

*Eustace* certainly reflects its times; the cover is dated 'Summer 1959' but production went through first-draft in a holiday caravan, Mike's job-change and the October break-up of the London Circle. On one page Mike apologises for typos since the stencil was being typed on the 10.45 pm train to Bognor Regis!

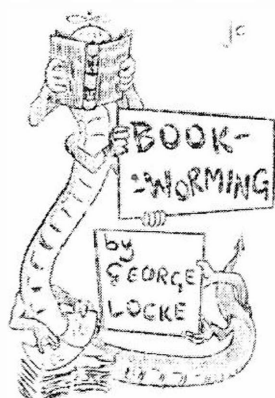
The most interesting item in the issue is the account by Sandra Hall (then Mike's girl-friend) of her holiday in Russia with her grandmother, Honey. It's a well-observed report with some surprises – that 'almost everything seemed fantastically expensive' and that 'I'm told the Russian worker is the highest paid worker in the world – he would have to be before he could buy anything in his own country'. (I suspect they were fooled by an artificially high £/rouble exchange rate).



Mike had said, "Bring me back a balalaika, will you", and Sandra took him at his word! He wrote, "Sandra took the trouble to get me a very detailed book of instructions but unfortunately they're all in Russian! I've become obsessed with the balalaika, won't rest until I've learned it. I've tried banjo tuning, mountain dulcimer tuning, guitar tuning, mandolin tuning... A bloke told me the other day that it takes the best part of twenty years to learn to play the instrument properly. Always felt as if it was strung with cheese wire!"

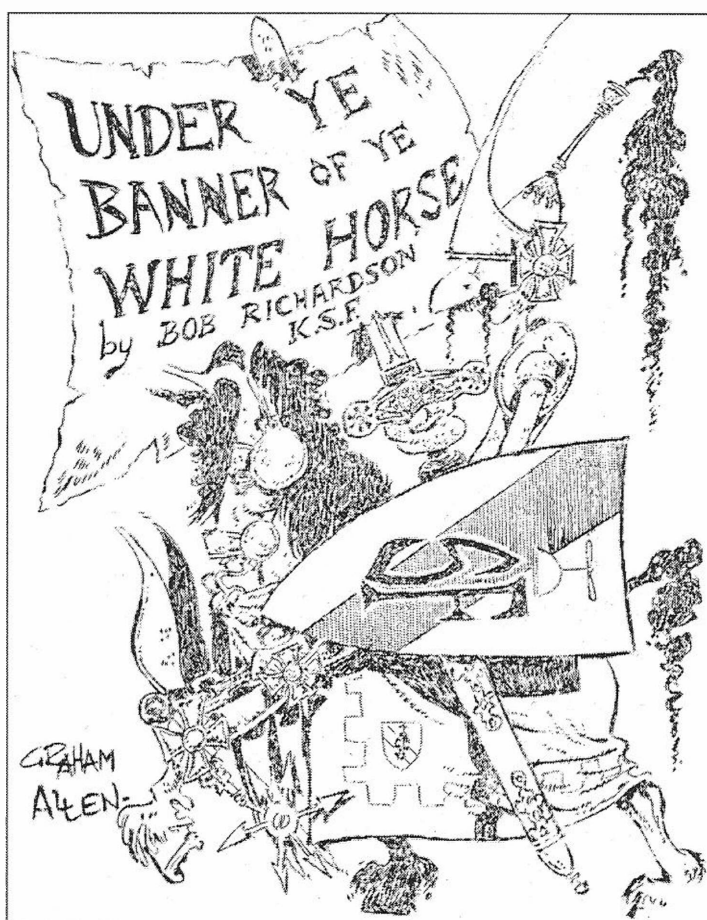
Jim Cawthorn's logo, left, shows the balalaika and a caption that translates as 'Welcome Comrade Moorcock'. Mike says that Jim usually drew his Moor-cocks with feathers and beaks!

There's a film review from Alan Dodd, a gloomy piece from Mike himself, and the start of a column from George Locke, the time-frame of which seems to fit nicely between the book-hunting adventures he described in *Relapse* #11 & 14.



This time George is back on his bike, whizzing around London to ransack the second-hand bookstalls which used to be lined-up along the Farringdon Road. He describes an unusual 'find' called 'The Gas War of 1940' and is just going nicely when it ends, with the promise to continue in the next issue – which of course never appeared.

The final item is an oddity – a fantasy written around the participants in the Cheltenham 'pilgrimage'. Sometimes I think that Bob Richardson took the St Fantony business a little too seriously; suffice to say the best thing about it is the illustration (right) by Graham Allen, who Mike describes as a "19-year-old artist extraordinary who works at Fleetway Pubs with me, as Art Editor of *Cowboy Picture Library*, and until recently we shared an office. Jim Cawthorn kindly did the complicated job of transferring Graham's cartoon onto stencil (it took him hours!)."





What next? Well, I solved another minor mystery when I looked through the 1967 *NYCon 3 Programme Book*, this one concerning a piece of Steve Stiles' artwork that had languished in my shed for the last few years. I found it among a pile of papers that Derek Pickles sent before he died and I donated it to the *Corflu* auction earlier this year. In Seattle I asked Steve (he of the dark-brown, radio announcer's voice) where it had originally appeared and he couldn't remember. But now we know, don't we! The *NYCon* book contains a folio of full-page illustrations by the young Steve, who was then running for TAFF, and I immediately recognised the third plate (right). But how did Derek get hold of it? Perhaps Steve brought it across the Atlantic on his TAFF trip in 1968 and it was auctioned at the Buxton con; we shall never know! But by now it must have travelled at least 10,000 miles since he first put Zippertone to paper!

Speaking of TAFF, an old mistake came back to haunt me when I found a voting form in the box for the 1966 TAFF contest. This was the year I foolishly let my name be put forward as one of the four candidates, something I blame entirely on my then-U.S. Agent, Al Lewis of LASFS. It was ridiculously premature since I'd only been in fandom for three years but Al had told me this was the recognised way to do it; you first stand when you have no chance, as a way of registering your candidacy so that you can win on a second attempt a few years later.

This was absolutely *terrible* advice as I'd have realised if I'd known a bit more about fandom. It made me look pushy and presumptuous, and was sure to alienate the older fans. As it was I came a poor third, beating the unknown Swede but possibly taking a few votes away from the candidate who most deserved the trip, Eric Jones, Grand Master of St Fantony and founder of the Cheltenham Circle. Eric had been popular and active in fandom since 1951 and he should really have stood for TAFF years before. I was so ignorant that at the time I put my name forward I'd never even *heard* of Eric Jones, though I was fortunate enough to meet him just once at *Yarcon* the following year. Sadly, he died in early 1967 so *he* never had that second chance.

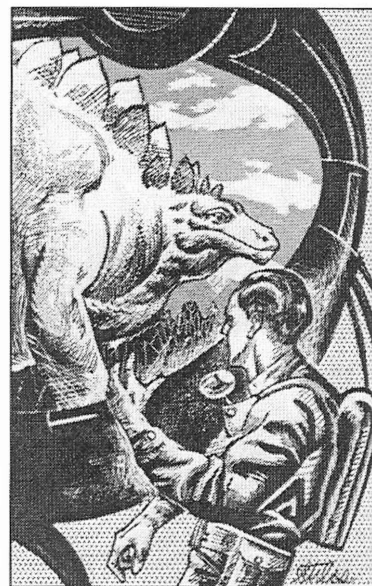
Eric was a convention regular and had been at *Repetercon*, as I was reminded by Langdon Jones' one-shot, 'Quote-cards Anyone?', his long report on the 1964 Peterborough convention. Back in 2003 I read this from cover to cover, making copious notes along the way, while I was labouring over 'STARS...' but with the advantage of an extra six years' hindsight I can't help but notice how totally at ease Lang seemed to be with the 'old' fannish crowd, despite being a fan of only 18 months standing himself. Perhaps this came from attending Ella's Friday-night meetings, an advantage not given to those of us living far from established fan-groups. It's also noticeable how completely oblivious he was to the presence of the real newcomers – Charles Platt, Rog Peyton and me among them – who appeared at Peterborough in unprecedented numbers.

That was the year Rog took over editorship of the BSFA's *Vector*, starting with #26, which wasn't in Dave Britton's box, though it did contain *Vector* #20 (July 1963), the second issue from the previous editor, Archie Mercer. I'm afraid it's a poor effort – in his bumbling way Archie was competent enough to produce an average fanzine, I suppose, but let's not forget that this was supposed to be the prestigious 'critical journal' of the BSFA, charged with presenting a good face on science fiction to the world. Yet there's nothing in this one but a reprint of that Ron Bennett article from *Orbit*, 'Science Fiction in Schools', already eight years old and not exactly riveting reading the first time round, a couple of uninspiring short articles, and a short letter-column in which the most substantial thing is Phil Harbottle (as always) passionately imploring a disbelieving world to accept that John Russell Fearn wrote stories of 'outstanding interest and value'.

It's useful to contrast this with the three issues I found of *The National Fantasy Fan*, the corresponding publication for the U.S.-based National Fantasy Fan Federation. We rarely hear a good word said about the N3F but I have to admit to being quite impressed with these issues. According to Robert Lichtman, "the N3F was founded in April 1941 by a loose cadre of members of the Boston-based Stranger Club who were inspired by Damon Knight's article 'Unite - or Fie!' published in that month's *Funfare*. Knight had said 'the withering of 'New Fandom' should be counteracted by the creation of a general-purpose organisation to link avid readers of all forms of speculative fiction.'" Robert goes on to say that he has the first issue of *Bonfire*, the original N3F 'official' publication, dated June 1941 "which per its colophon was 'conjured up and dummied by Art Widner Jr and stencilled and published by Harry Warner Jr.' By then there was already a revised constitution, and the first membership list showed 64 fans on board, with Knight member #1 and Widner #2."

The earliest issue of *TNFF* in my box is dated February 1951 and it was addressed to Ken Slater, then still with BAOR in Germany. (At one time there must have been quite a few other British members – in this issue alone I notice mention of Derek Pickles, Colling Leybourn and Mike Tealby). It's a fairly slim thing but the masthead lists all sorts of familiar names – Rick Sneary, Redd Boggs, Don Ford, Roy Lavender and so on. The next one is August 1964, edited by Don Franson, with a massive 36 pages absolutely crammed with information – fanzine listings, publishers' addresses, details of 'conventions and loads of activities in which members can get involved. Franson also offers sensible advice to newcomers who might write away for fanzine titles; he says, "You see, fanzine fandom is really a combination of two fandoms, or hobbies; science fiction and amateur journalism. With many fans who publish fanzines, AJ is dominant. So be satisfied if a given fanzine has half the science fictional content you expected."

Lastly, the issue for June 1965 is somewhat slimmer but was edited by Wally Weber, who I saw a few months ago in Seattle, with book notes by John Boston and fanzine reviews by Mike Deckinger, both of whom are still on my mailing list. *Plus ça change...* I was also amused to see that Mike reviews the Pete Campbell fanzine I noted earlier (the one that used the '@' symbol instead of 'a'). It was *Hydra* #5, and Mike's verdict on the experiment was that "the results are eyestrain!"



Terry Jeeves did the cover for *Vector* #20, which was published by Michael Rosenblum.

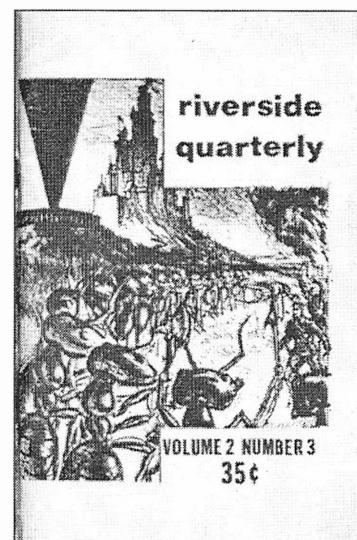
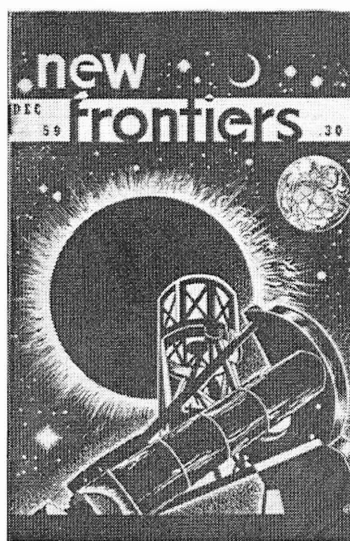
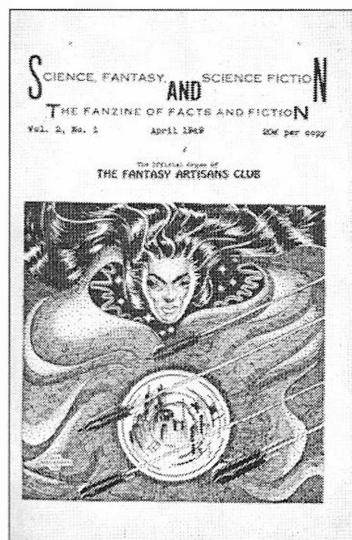
What surprised me about *TNFF* was its air of purposeful activity. If I had been a newcomer to fandom (in America, of course) this would have signposted lots of ways to get involved, which is exactly what's needed when people are getting started. If we go back to *Prolapse #5* you'll see I wrote (about the BSFA) that, "In 1958 a 'journal' was always going to be hopelessly impractical, both in terms of finding suitable content and the resources to issue it on a regular basis. But all that was really required was a newsletter, much easier to produce." And *TNFF* is exactly that sort of newsletter.

The BSFA had a Constitution burdened with vainglorious objectives like 'It shall encourage the reading, writing and publishing of good literature of this class', which is about as silly as members of a train-spotters' club deluding themselves that their 'purpose' was to supervise manufacture of better trains (OK, I know I've used that analogy before, but I like it!). It seems to me that the founders of the BSFA should have kept in mind that it existed entirely for the benefit of SF readers (with, of course, that 'secret' agenda of being a recruiting station for fandom), and that being so it could have done a lot worse than to emulate the N3F. And another thing – the BSFA was always stuck in a 'Catch-22' situation in that the more successful it was in attracting members, the less able the (small) committee was to service those members. Cleverly, the N3F avoided that problem by splitting the load and getting a lot more people involved in its organisation – Franson lists no less than 37 officers, so if only half of them were doing their job there'd still be a fair amount going on.

While we're talking about critical journals I'll also mention Mike Deckinger's *TNFF* review of Leland Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly* #3 (February 1965). Mike observes that "The feature article in this third issue gives evidence of perhaps one of the most exacting cases of hair-splitting in analytical surveys. Arthur Jean Cox has twenty pages examining the implications and profound meanings of 'heads' in the SF stories of Harry Bates..... For all I know Cox may be justified in his far-fetching propositions. But I really don't care even a little bit and I have a feeling that author Bates would feel the same way. This is the sort of article you'd show to a non-fan to convince him that fans are intellectual, but neither of you would read it." He concludes with the accurate judgment that "RQ is becoming too mannered and slanted too drastically as a little magazine. The printed format is attractive and readable; the material should measure up."

Let me stretch Mike's observation into a more general point about something which once seemed a highly desirable objective to a number of fan-editors, of whom I was one. Almost the first fanzines I ever saw were Norm Metcalfe's *New Frontiers* and Jon White's *Inside*, and they made a big impression, so much so that my 'Holy Grail' for several years was to produce a half-size, professionally-printed fanzine just like theirs. I wasn't alone in this delusion – it was a fairly common misapprehension, although comprehensively debunked as early as 1953 in *THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR* (you'll remember the aeroplanograph and the letterpress railroad). Fortunately I could never afford to realise my vision which was just as well because I eventually came to realise there's something intrinsically *sterile* about this format, as has been demonstrated many times over the years (and no, I'm not getting at the new, go-faster *Banana Wings*).

I'm talking about what we used to call 'sercon' fanzines, offset-printed at a time when most fans used stencils & duplicator on quarto-size paper, and by chance (didn't you just know I was going to say that!) I found three examples in my box. The first is quite old (April 1949), with the unwieldy title of *Science, Fantasy and Science Fiction*, subtitled 'The Official Organ of the Fantasy Artisans Club'. Someone has clearly worked hard on it – justified margins, display headings and lots of artwork (nearly all terrible) but it's exactly what Mike Deckinger meant when he said that the material just doesn't measure up to the production. It's a mish-mash without any personality, not least because the editor doesn't even divulge his name (though from various clues I gather that it was Franklin M. Dietz, Jr).



*New Frontiers* #1 (December 1959) is my second example, and while the layout is less careful the contents are a great deal more readable. Playing the 'Famous Pros' hand, editor Metcalfe features Sprague De Camp on his 'Krishna' series, Mark Clifton ranting on about what's wrong with science fiction, and E. Everett Evans' account of a party where he met 'Doc' Smith. It runs to thirty pages but there's no introduction or explanation of what it's all about nor any material under Metcalfe's own name, though I suspect he is largely responsible for the book and fanzine reviews – some better than others – which for some bizarre reason are only credited to 'The Staff'. The absence of any editorial 'presence' doesn't exactly encourage reader participation and the contents are isolated set pieces, making the magazine seem cold and oddly remote from its time, even though it does contain some interesting snippets of information.

Last of the three is Leland Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly*, and the issue in my box is Volume II Number 3 (November 1966), with pages numbered from 153-228. This 'volume' and page-numbering business is a dead giveaway to pretension, by the way, as if the everyday reader is going to rush out and get the thing perfect-bound; it's never going to happen!

Sapiro also plays the 'Famous Pros' card with articles by Reginald Bretnor, Jim Harmon and Alexei Panshin, with Silverberg and Bloch in the letter-column and excellent artwork by Charles Schneeman. In contrast to *New Frontiers* the editor is well represented but the general tenor of his style is perhaps exemplified by Sapiro's 14-page opening article, 'The Mystic Renaissance Part II: A survey of F. Orlin Tremaine's Astounding Stories'. I tried, believe me, but I couldn't read it in 1966 and I can't face it now; it might be the sort of stuff which gets submitted for academic conferences but it's terminally dull and miles away from the lucid, unpretentious prose of Mike Ashley, writing about the same period in his *HISTORY OF THE SF MAGAZINES*. And there's never a hint of humour or suggestion that SF is still alive and kicking!

That's the unifying factor of these three magazines and others like them – they treat science fiction as if it was some sort of dead body of Sacred Works to be prodded and picked at, rather than a living and vital medium with things to say. Which leads me to wonder what exactly did these editors think they were doing? Is this *really* what it means to 'present a good face to the world'? Who were they trying to impress? Once again Willis & Shaw got it right in *TED* when they described the way Jophan learns the truth about the Sercon City. A character called Dedwood explains that "it's to impress the Public. They wouldn't be impressed by Trufandom, so some of us thought we'd erect this city of Serious Constructivism to give them a better idea of our importance..."

Their 'Dedwood' is modelled on the real-life Ed Wood, arch-sercon devil who proudly boasted that he threw away his copies of *Hyphen* unopened and who produced one of the most inarticulate half-size fanzines of all, titled *The Journal of Science Fiction*. It worried me, around 1966, that these things seemed so boring. (It was only much later I discovered that all four of the editors mentioned had reputations for being what we used to call 'fuggheads').

Of course, in Britain we had the printed, half-size *SF Horizons*, from Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Tom Boardman, but that wasn't a fanzine, was it? Although I notice that in Ethel Lindsay's *Scottishe* #38 (yes, it was in the box) there's a long letter from a slightly-miffed Brian Aldiss, taking issue with Brian Varley's review of *SFH* in the previous number. Maybe this would be a good time to re-visit their little magazine – what do you think, Tom?

Let me state my own position; from the beginning I was inspired by my early reading of Damon Knight's *IN SEARCH OF WONDER* and knew that I wanted to produce a serious fanzine about science fiction, but the Sapiro route clearly wasn't the way to go. By 1967 I'd been publishing for three years and while I'd had some minor successes I knew it still wasn't right. How to improve? Remember, this was the period of the Great Fannish Drought, in America as well as in Britain, when second-rate titles like *Yandro* and *Niekas* were winning Hugos in the absence of anything better.

I needed a role model, but where could I find it? You guessed – at the bottom of the box!

That Easter I went along to the Bristol convention feeling reasonably pleased with *Speculation*, but as I described in 'STARS...' I was horrified to see my old enemy Graham Hall selling a completely new fanzine I'd never seen before. "It was titled *Australian Science Fiction Review* and I looked at it with incredulity.... It was nicely laid out, the criticism was penetrating and well-written, and worst of all, while *ASFR* was indisputably a sercon fanzine, an indefinable spark of wit and personality permeated its pages in a way totally alien to a magazine like *Riverside Quarterly*, something I had only rarely achieved myself."

And now, thanks to the prescience of Dave Britton, I have that very same issue (#8, March 1967) in my hand and can look at it with slightly more objectivity. But I can see why I was upset. There's a quirky cover (right) followed by a four-pages from editor John Bangsund who light-heartedly describes meeting Bert Chandler in his ship's cabin, discusses Tom Disch and refers to his extensive correspondence with people all over the world, including James Blish. Then there's John Foyster with a long piece on J.G. Ballard, which ends with a wonderful one-liner that says more clearly than anything that Foyster has not just uncritically accepted Ballard at his own valuation; "You see, these stories could have been written by a very bad writer."

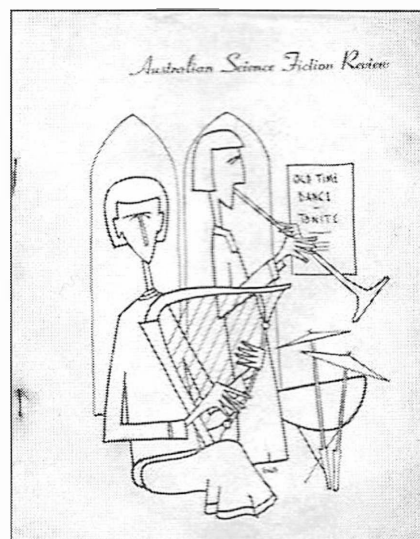
This is followed by seven pages on Ursula LeGuin (years before she became a super-star with *LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*) by Sten Dahlskog, a Swede of whom I'd never previously heard, and then chatty pieces by people like Bert Chandler, William F. Temple and Lee Harding; eight pages of excellent book reviews and a letter-column in which James Blish contributes a page-and-a-half of interesting comments. No wonder I was impressed!

How did it get so good, so quickly? Natural talent obviously had a lot to do with it, but I can take consolation from that the fact that while I was a young lad in the wilderness, working on my own, from the start *ASFR* had a 'stable' of contributors and advisors, all older and more experienced; I was just 23 while Bangsund and John Baxter were 27, Harding was 29 and George Turner was an ancient 51. While John Foyster was only two years older than me he'd been in fandom since 1958 and had obviously learned a lot.

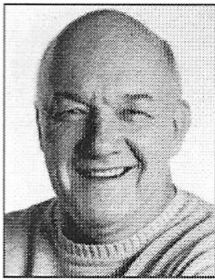
But what had most irritated me about the issue wasn't just the excellence of material, but the back-story, the way it refers to previous correspondence with people like Graham Hall, Phil Muldowney and so on, which made it clear that Banger had been sending copies to all and sundry in Britain but not to me. It was inconceivable that he hadn't seen my name and address – I'd been on the Hugo ballot in 1965 & 1966, after all – and it seemed to me then (and I think I was probably right) that he was determined to be top dog and he'd deliberately left me off his mailing list because *Speculation* was his main competitor. I felt insulted; this wasn't the fannish way of doing things.

Still, *ASFR* gave me the sense of direction I needed. Eventually I assembled my own 'team' with people like Bob Rickard, Tony Sudbery, David Redd and so on, and learned to lighten-up a little. *ASFR* faded away after a few years, though by then both *Warhoon* and *Psychotic/SFR* had resumed publishing and there was no shortage of competition.

And there we are, at the bottom of the box already, having completed a journey of sorts through twenty years of fan-publishing history, and I've tried to do my bit and give those editors a little of the immortality they were seeking. Thanks for the box, Dave, it brought back a few memories! //



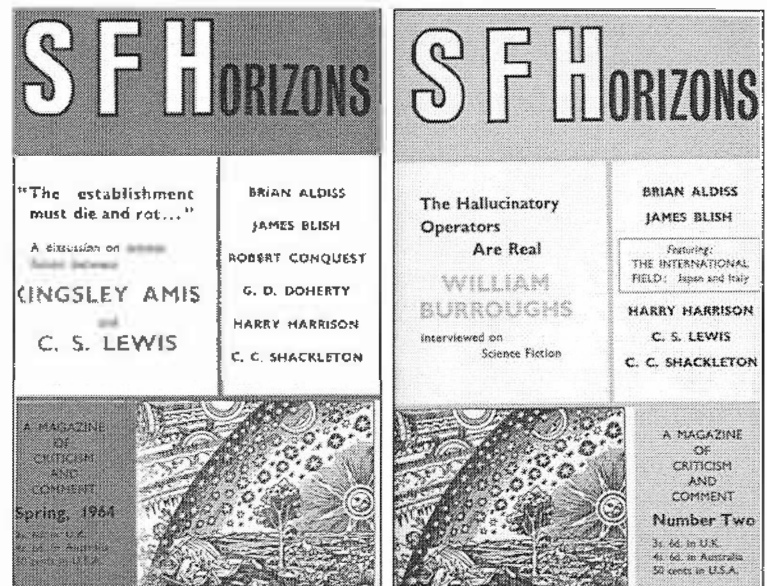




We don't really need this preamble after setting the scene, so to speak, in my article opposite. But Tom was a natural choice to take a fresh look at *SF Horizons*; like me he grew up in an economy of scarcity so far as science fiction was concerned, and remembers how we had to scabble around for the odd Digur paperback or second-hand *Astounding*, although in his case he didn't make contact with the fan-world until much later. (Professor) Tom may have reached the very top in the academic world and knows a thing or two about Tolkien, but he remains true to his first love of science fiction. [PW]  
*Photo from Tom Shippey*

## Some thoughts on SF Horizons

By Tom Shippey



Going to a reunion dinner at your old school can be a disturbing experience. You may have a clear image in your head of what someone looked like forty-five years ago, and then you meet him and neither of you recognises the other. What happened in between? It makes you realise all of a sudden the effects, mostly bad, of age and time. Reading something you haven't thought about for forty-five years is a bit different. This time you have a clear idea of where we are now, you read the old browning paperback, which may once have seemed really important, and you think variations on "What the ....? Is that what it was like back then?"

This is what's happened with the two volumes of *SF Horizons*. Back in 1964 Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison got together (with assistance from Tom Boardman) and brought out two issues of a journal of science fiction criticism, perhaps the first one ever produced. The first came out in Spring 1964, the second is dated Winter 1965, and that was the end of that initiative. What was the idea, why didn't it work, and how does it all seem in retrospect?

The idea is clear enough, and the two editors put it very straightforwardly in their first editorial. They wanted to do two things. First, get more people to take SF more seriously, by providing "intelligent and critical analysis of [the SF] field". Second, they thought the way to do that was to come down hard on "the bad work that persists within the SF field" – they picked out Lovecraft and Merritt as major examples, noting that their "desperate dramas" kept on being reprinted, which encouraged others to imitate them (true enough, especially for Lovecraft, who has a host of continuators). Putting it another way, they thought SF fans were much too indiscriminating, and SF reviewers much too kind-hearted. The fans took the view that any SF book was a good book, and this stopped anyone who wasn't an SF fan from taking science fiction seriously.

Thinking back to where I was in Spring 1964, I can see there was a lot of truth in this. I was then a final-year undergraduate reading English at Cambridge. I'd been reading SF avidly since 1958. I'd buy anything that was SF, just as Brian and Harry said, but one reason for that was

just that there wasn't very much available. 160 SF books printed in the English language in 1962, says the *SFH* editorial – yeah, says I, and how many of those were in the USA? I remember staring with hopeless longing at the occasional US publisher's list I got hold of. How could I get any of those? I hadn't got any dollars, and not many shillings, and I suspect there were still currency regulations in force. So you bought *Astounding* British editions, hung around crummy bookstores, and traded magazines with any of the few who shared your taste.

Meanwhile, it was a taste you couldn't afford to advertise. My first girl-friend dumped me because she caught me reading *Galaxy*, with the magnificent illustrations to Jack Vance's 'Dragon Masters' – self-evident childishness, she reckoned. That would have been 1961, but in the spring of 1964 my Moral Tutor at Cambridge came into my room and saw the pile of *Astoundings* I had, for once, not swept out of sight. Not long after he told me he would not recommend me for post-graduate study because I wasn't good enough, a decision I received with outward stoicism and an inner resolve to show the buggers. So, yes, I can relate to the Brian/Harry editorial all right.

Not agree with it, though. I think they made a basic mistake, about the word "criticism". In common use this means what they meant, namely telling people what they're doing wrong. *Literary* criticism, however, even then had a bias towards discovering hidden beauties, showing people how they could read something better, get more out of it. Of course, a lot of the hidden beauties were just plain old critic's imagination – and things have got worse since – but still, that was the way to go.

After all, even Lovecraft had, and has, *something*. He may have been a weirdo, probably a horrible person, he overdoes the adjectives, his climaxes are terrible (usually: there are some good ones) – but when I re-read his oeuvre years ago so as to set the *Mastermind* questions on him, I ended up frightened to climb the stairs to bed. Of course Lovecraft isn't really SF, but the point remains the same.

It's the *charm* of SF, even bad SF, the thing science fiction has got that George Eliot and Salman Rushdie haven't – that's what needs unearthing. That was the line to take. Printing a 'Cabinet of Curiosities' – dumb, badly-written chunks from mostly-forgotten authors like John Rackham and Russ Markham, four in each issue: well, it must have been good fun picking them out over a drink, but bad authors weren't going to take any notice, and it probably confirmed other people's poor opinion of SF generally. Brian/Harry saw what they did as wielding a scalpel, but it was more like biting your nails.

The main reason *SF Horizons* didn't catch on is, however, pretty obvious. They couldn't get the contributors.\* It's astonishing how similar the two issues are. Each begins with a short editorial, and then an interview with a Big Name: in the first issue, Brian and Kingsley Amis interview C.S. Lewis, in the second an unnamed interviewer talks to William Burroughs. This was a play for prestige, but the trouble is that neither Lewis nor Burroughs knew much about SF. Sure, Lewis had had a couple of stories printed in *F&SF* (both pretty bad), and had written what's called the "space fiction trilogy" twenty years before. Whether this is SF, though, is debatable – for a brilliant, original, incisively-written and even sympathetic short account, see the relevant chapter in the *Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Rob MacSwain and Michael Ward, and due to appear soon [You can guess who wrote this. Ed.] – but while Lewis always insisted he had nothing against science, he wrote that trilogy in condemnation of what he called "scientism"; and scientism, the belief in human improvement and expansion through technology, is what most of SF is about, or at any rate has behind it (a statement that would have been worth testing and refining, if anyone had thought of it).

Lewis was writing *anti*-science-fiction, and while it was nice to have his sympathy and support, the interview didn't say very much. As for Burroughs, he was extremely courteous, but what he wanted to talk about was C.S. Lewis, whom he seemed to think was a Catholic – Lewis did his best to be ecumenical, but he was by origin a Northern Irish Protestant, and he annoyed Tolkien very much by continuing to use the word "Papist", even in scholarly writing. So the interviews didn't get very far.

What followed them, in both issues, was a long piece by Brian, pages 13-37 both times (out of 64). The first one took Jack Williamson's *LEGION OF TIME* to pieces, the second one critiqued three British authors; Ian Wright, Donald Malcolm, J.G. Ballard. Both these now seem rather irrelevant. Brian was obviously annoyed by Digit Books reprinting, in 1961, a novel which came out in 1938, and fair enough. Those who remember Digit will recall the poor print and the utterly abysmal covers; enough to label anyone caught reading them as a moron. But I was grateful for them, in the conditions of scarcity then prevailing, and they did by chance print some good 'uns. I still have the Digit *FURY*, by Kuttner, and their Pohl and Kornbluth *SPACE MERCHANTS* and *GLADIATOR AT LAW*, and I would have Brian's *NON-STOP* in Digit, only it fell to bits. Some comment on the successes, and suggestions of what ought to be reprinted, would have been more positive than tearing Jack W into ever-smaller pieces.

\* It also occurs to me, Tom, that 64 letterpress-printed pages plus covers would have cost something like £150-£200 for a thousand copies, even in 1964. At a cover price of 3/6d they would have had to sell all of them to break even, not counting costs of postage or any dealers' discounts. *SFH* must have run up a thumping great

loss which neither Brian nor Harry could afford, even with help from publisher Tom Boardman. [PW]

As for the three Brits, the first two have vanished from my memory completely, even more than John Lymington and, and – Boland? Wrote WHITE AUGUST? (Another book vanished from my shelves.) Mention of Ballard reminds me that things were about to change, big time, and not just in SF, but there's only a hint of that in *SF Horizons* – which, you might say, was evidently not scanning the horizon.

Other repeated elements: both issues have a short piece by Harry, one saying in effect that SF authors had a duty to get their facts straight (no argument there), and one complaining about prissy sub-editors, where he again had a point: Harry told me that in the first draft of *BILL THE GALACTIC HERO*, which came out in *New Worlds* 153-5 (August-October 1965), he called one of the battle-cruisers, "the grand old lady of the fleet", the *Christine Keeler*, in allusion to the scandal of the tart, the Cabinet Minister and the Russian naval attaché. But *New Worlds* got scared, and he had to change the name to the *Fanny Hill*. Reminds you how things were, and how they've changed.

Both issues also had a piece by James Blish, one again about getting things right, the other surveying the then-limited field of SF criticism. Each further had a poem, one by Robert Conquest, and one (yet again) by C.S. Lewis, and both also had a piece by a guy called Charles Shackleton, said to have done a D.Phil. on rotifers at Oxford, said also to be working on "a critical history of Anglo-Saxon SF from the earliest days, provisionally entitled 'BEOWULF, WOLF MAN, AND DOG STAR'". I don't think this has ever appeared, and it doesn't sound to me like a good idea.

However, Shackleton's pieces were pretty funny, with their parodies of dud SF plots. The second one also ended, "The times they are a-changing", and they were. As Shackleton wrote, once upon a time you got to Deneb IV, got jumped by the monsters, zapped the monsters, plot A. Then you got to Deneb IV, were met by little old ladies sitting on the porch offering apple pie, they turned out to be monsters, plot B. Now (in 1964-5), you have the *SOLARIS* plot; Deneb IV, strange bug, everyone sprouts extra limbs, "they sit around and talk philosophy". Shackleton saw the New Wave coming, good for him.

Still, the *SFH* format was: Big Name interview, long piece by Brian, short ones by Harry, Blish and Shackleton, Big Name poem + One Other Item, respectively a piece on use of language by G.D. Doherty (who edited *ASPECTS OF SF* in 1959), and short reports on SF in Japan and Italy. There was, also, a good deal of cross-reference. Needed some new blood, and didn't get it. Not, of course, Brian and Harry's fault, you can't make people take an interest, and they were almost ten years ahead of their time – *Foundation* got started in 1972, *SF Studies* a year later. But with the usual 20/20 vision of hindsight, one might ask, what would have gone better?

Two thoughts that strike me are, first, the apparent reluctance to deal with proper, up-to-date SF. I mean, C. S. Lewis, gimme a break, Wells and Verne and Ray Bradbury, respectively old/unread/marginal. Shackleton in his later piece observes that the new orthodoxy is "all Earth stories", nothing else in this month's magazines (he mentions *Monolog*, *Off*, *Odious Fantasy*, *Lewd Worlds* and *Gallimaufry*, all pretty evident references to magazines we know). But that wasn't true at all. I don't know which month he was looking at, but those were the days of the big-format *Analog*, which was running *DUNE*, and serials by

Murray Leinster and Jim Schmitz, and Harry Harrison, with his *DEATHWORLD 2*. Plenty of off-planet stuff there.

Hugo winners for the preceding few years included *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, *CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*, *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND*, and *MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, admittedly, a preponderance of Earth-based stories, but none of them got much attention, or close attention. Brian quoted Lan Wright as saying *TROOPERS* couldn't possibly have a philosophical message, and any suggestion that it did was "semi-intellectual hysteria emanating from pseudo-intellectual morons" – one of the stupidest and most readily-refuted remarks I've ever read, but Brian didn't refute it. (He probably thought it was self-refuting, fair enough.)

Meanwhile, Brian (commenting on Jack W) said SF had to have "believable characters", and that sounds like the kind of remark no-one could find fault with. But I can't help thinking, *DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS*? (It did at least get mentioned.) What made that so successful was surely not the lead characters, whose names I cannot remember, they were so designedly ordinary – it was the bloody triffids, and the underlying philosophical argument about Darwinism and morals. You could well say the most important characters in Wyndham's major novels are the professors who get wheeled on to deliver the standard SF lectures, and they're not characters at all, they're mouthpieces: but they (and the triffids, krakens and cuckoos) are what make the books. Anyway, the point is again disputable, but it didn't get disputed.

In brief, I think *SF Horizons* perhaps had its eye too much on the Literary Establishment, which it hoped to conciliate, an Establishment which has after all made Brian a member of the Order of Merit (though I notice it hasn't done anything for Harry, though I have known him wear a suit and tie, if only once). Would it have done better to conciliate the fans?

Later history makes you wonder. One conclusion I come to is that if you wanted to have a journal of lit. crit. you had to attract the professional critics, and to do that you had to be based in an academic institution, preferably a university. Critics don't write for money, and they aren't too bothered, often, about attracting an audience. They write so as to have a publication to put on their C.V.s, which they can use for tenure or for promotion, and the only publications that count are academic ones. (Some promotion committees look askance at books produced for commercial publishers, i.e. books which might actually sell a few copies: "too poppy" is a phrase I've heard.) *Foundation*, after a precarious start, got itself accepted, and so did *SF Studies*. There is now any amount of lit. crit. of SF. The two recent compilations, David Seed's *COMPANION TO SF* (Blackwell), and Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn's *CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SF*, count 61 essays between them by almost as many authors (there's some overlap), the vast majority of them university academics.

So the field has come in from the cold. Has it? I'm doubtful. For one thing, as Kingsley Amis's son Martin has pointed out, back in the 1960s literary critics were big news, their views discussed and valued. Now, student enrolments in the humanities are way down in the USA, and likely to follow suit in the UK once students have to pay market rates for education. University presses are having increasing trouble selling the books which pour out from academics desperate to get or keep their jobs in a shrinking pool, and the print runs are often derisory. Most significant, in my opinion, the big general-interest intellectual journals, *Times Literary Supplement*, *London Review of Books*, *New York Review of Books*, are often openly contemptuous of the

kind of ethereal criticism spun out by the products of university graduate programs. Science fiction may have made its way on to the edges of this scene, but so what?

Meanwhile, I still don't think that the particular issues of SF have been well seen or well approached. Greg Benford has written somewhere that he thinks criticism still has to find a satisfactory way of approaching SF, and I agree with him. The toolkits developed for classical literature have been and are being applied to genre literature. But do the spanners fit the nuts?

Not to end on a sour note, one hopeful scenario is the annual conference of the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, held in Florida in March, where academics, authors and publishers all mix, add in a touch of realism to the former group and maybe a breath of sophistication? altruism? whatever? to the latter two. But it's taken a long time. Brian and Harry did have a good idea, one of several initiatives they promoted over the years, like the John W. Campbell Award, still running from the University of Kansas, or the 'World SF' organisation – is that still going? It had some good effects in its time. This one didn't work, but hell, they tried.

### Postscript

I end with a little coda on one phrase in *SFH*. Noting the handover of *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* to Michael Moorcock and Kyril Bonfiglioli, Brian/Harry described the latter as "an engagingly dark horse". He was engaging all right, very funny, immensely well-read. He was also a terrible snob. At a World SF meeting in Dublin some time in the 70s, I had to get dressed up. OK, my DJ was tailor-made for me, neither rented nor off-the-peg, my bow-tie was hand-tied, not pre-tied or a clip-on one like the oiks wear, it bore the insignia of a Cambridge dining club since closed by the authorities for bad behaviour, my cufflinks were gold, my shoes brightly polished but not, of course, patent-leather. Bonfig looks at me and says, "your dress shirt should be studded".

OK, out to dinner at a restaurant, Bonfig decides to tell, in a loud voice with very upper-class English accent, an obscene double limerick. Just as he gets to the punch-line, large Irishman gets up and says, "I don't like dat kind of ting." Bonfig immediately apologises to ladies present, Irishman continues to rumble, Bonfig says "I say, an apology once offered should be accepted, old chap", Alfie Bester gets up and starts to square off to large Irishman, I note that while Bonfig is short and fat, he is also mean and nasty (my old sergeant: "it's not what you *can* do, it's what you *will* do"), and Alfie was in the line of fire. Thinking of all the bad publicity ("famous author struck dead while companions look on") I spring between them, babbling inanely, and fortunately the chef comes out bearing a cleaver and saying "Fwhat's all dis, den?"

I get Bonfig out and take him back to the hotel, talking to him all the way, not about morals, but about issues he might take seriously, like "bad form" and "behaviour appropriate to a guest". He gets back to the hotel bar, where Katharine MacLean is sitting. As I try to buy us a drink he starts to patronise her, she challenges him to arm-wrestle, he accepts ("I say, how can a little thing like you ...?"), and on the first heave she not only pushes his arm down but throws him off his barstool. And, of course, he lands on a table full of drinks just bought by more large Irishmen. Dear God, that was a trying and expensive evening. God rest you, Bon, you were a very funny man, and I recommend heartily all your Mortdecai novels, and *All the Tea in China* too. But you were a hard man to keep company with. Ask Brian and Harry. //

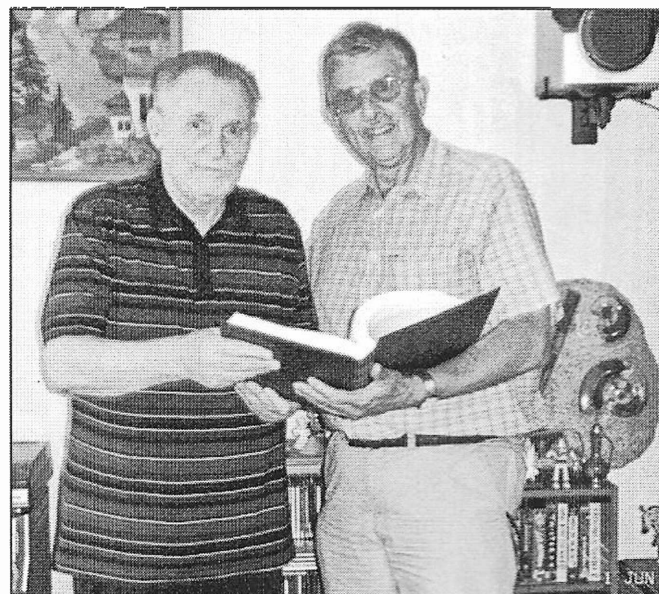


I've never met anyone quite like John Berry. Compulsive writers, yes – Asimov for one, but he was a pro, earning a very good living. By contrast John has had a busy and productive career in the police force, writing only in his spare time – but he's still produced literally millions of words of fan-fiction and articles. And that's not all. He has a massive collection of space stamps and first-day covers (many of which he designed himself) and signed photographs from just about every astronaut, with many of whom he obviously has friendly relationships. Then there's his (unpublished) novel, and his accounts of travels with wife Diane to some 40 countries around the world. He hunts fossils and he's one of the world's leading experts on fingerprinting methodology, with a leading chapter in the recognised 'bible' on the subject.\* He's now involved with the esoteric field of discovering fingerprint-type patterns elsewhere in Nature, produces a specialist magazine on the subject and has personally come up with over 150 different examples. John's 83; I admire him for his continued energy, and both of them for their bravery – he was a sergeant in the R.U.C. in Belfast through the worst of the troubles, and he told me that they'd lie in bed at night wondering every time a car drew up if one gang or another had finally come to take him away. [PW]

## RETROSPECTION

By John Berry, B.E.M.†

John during my visit in June. Some items from his various collections can be seen behind us.



Last October 2008 I published my latest fanzine associated with science fiction fandom. I think it was my hundredth issue, although I can't be certain as my fanzine publishing commenced with *Retribution* in 1956, fifty-three years ago, and I may have missed one or two.

*Retribution*, co-edited with Arthur Thomson (ATom), featured humorous and mostly fictitious 'faan fiction' anecdotes centred round my bumbling anti-hero George 'Goon' Bleary and his dedicated assistant, Art. Walt Willis praised the unusual format in one of his fanzine-review columns in the prozines, stressing that the main concept concerned humorous situations, and consequently we received numerous subscriptions, mostly from the U.S.A. On one memorable occasion in the late fifties *Retribution* came fourth in a 'best fanzine' poll – *Hyphen* was of course number one. Between 1952 and 1962 I published seventeen issues, most of them lavishly illustrated by ATom.

I was also an active member of the American organisation SAPS (the only British member) and from 1958-1968 I also produced fifty-two consecutive issues of my SAPS-zine, *Pot Pourri*. When I gave Willis my first issue he observed, with raised eyebrows and slightly flared nostrils... "Er, John, this is rather a mundane title". This was a truly wonderful moment for me, but I successfully concealed my emotion. You see, Irish Fandom in the fifties and early sixties was the epicentre of magnificent puns and verbal activity, pure spontaneous wit, and Walt Willis was the guiding genius. But he'd missed this one!

Northern Ireland has always been religiously orientated... the title is pronounced 'po-poor-ee' (according

to my dictionary, anyway). The 'T' is silent. Hence, my title was a pun on 'Popery'! Even James White, a Roman Catholic, missed it – or did he? Maybe they collectively chose to ignore my unsubtle word-play, feeling sorry for my effort, an Englishman becoming involved in Irish religious affairs on an international scale.

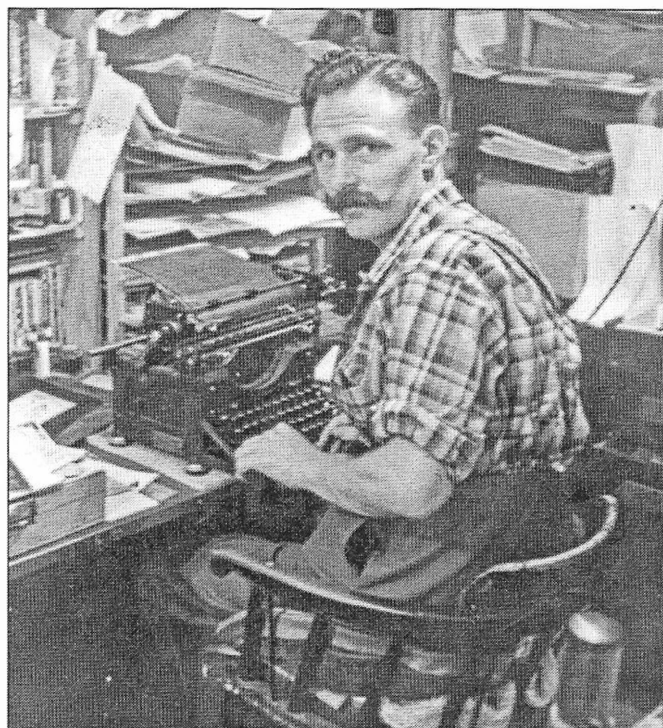
James, and Bob Shaw became professional writers, and Bob (under the guise of BoSh) was an accomplished artist. Willis himself, of course, wrote for the top fanzines. Every day I spent in their company was blissful but I was always envious of their rapid-fire spontaneous puns. As an example, Burnett Toskey, an American fan visiting Irish Fandom, was being driven round County Down by Walt Willis. They passed the Lord O'Neil estate, protected by a long continuous wall. "We don't have places like that in America," observed Toskey. "How about the Waldorf Astoria?" quipped Willis.



Bob, Walt & James in playful mood in the fan-room at Oblique House, about 1955. Photo: Ving Clarke album.

\* 'Advances in Fingerprint Technology', 2nd Edition, by H.C. Lee & R.E. Gaensslen, 2001, £73.00.

† British Empire Medal, awarded for John's police service.



John, hard at work at 'Mon Debris' in the late fifties.  
Photo by Viné Clarke, digitised by Rob Hansen.

With Atom I was also a member in the late fifties of OMPA, the English equivalent to SAPS. We contributed nine issues of *Veritas*, which once again benefited mightily from Arthur's superb artwork. Then there were two issues of IPSO an ill-fated literary organisation edited by George Locke and myself.

Sometimes at night when sleep is a distant luxury, I take my mind back to the halcyon days of Irish Fandom. How tremendously fortunate I was – Atom and BoSh were always happy to provide illos on tap for my publications – Willis, White and Shaw were prepared to write introductions and articles on request, and to supply punning titles – such as this one by Bob Shaw – 'High, Wide and Transom'.

During the half century to date I've also produced numerous 'one-shots'; Bleary adventures were detailed in *Cloche by Night* and *Fission in Troubled Waters*, both appearing in the middle fifties. In 1957 we did *The Thomson Saga* which commemorated Arthur and Olive Thomson's visit to my house in Belfast (humorously named 'Mon Debris' by Walt Willis). It had a photo-sheet and six of my stories, as always illustrated by Arthur.

In the early sixties I produced the 48-page *The Compleat Fan*, with a front cover by Eddie Jones (RIP). It carried eleven of my stories with superb illos by Atom and even a couple which I did myself. A year or two later came *Harlequin*, with a witty introduction by Bob Shaw. It had 38 pages and semi-hard covers, and included ten of my stories plus a tremendous bonus of eleven full-page Atom-illos. It's now pretty rare – a few years ago I read about a SF convention in the USA where *Harlequin* was auctioned and made \$30.00.

At this juncture I must reveal that when I prostrated myself before Walt Willis on my first visit to Oblique House in 1954, I considered that any contribution I might make to *Hyphen* would be from an artistic point of view. I do have somewhat of an artistic bent, I'm able to enlarge or reduce items I'm drawing or painting exactly to scale... I was an official police scene-of-crime 'sketcher'... my water-coloured flowers were kindly accepted by friends and relatives. Yet I recall only having one drawing in *Hyphen*; my forte quickly became humorous writing.

I was discovered by Willis; on my third visit to Oblique House I tentatively proffered an article I had written regarding my initial feelings about the members of Irish Fandom, and he published it in *Hyphen* under his title 'Coming Up for the Third Time'. (How superb, a neofan of three-week standing appearing in those hallowed pages, the unfulfilled ambition of many BNFs!)

In the nineties Ken Cheslin (RIP) and I began to put my stories together into what became ten thick collections with an incredible total of 636 pages. In there are a truly amazing 394 Atom-illos, plus 50 by Steve Jeffery who has proved a worthy successor. The first five volumes, from 1992 to 1996, featured my 'Goon Bleary' character:-

Vol. 1. (1992); *The Early Years* had ten of my stories with 43 wonderful Atom-illos.

Vol.2. (1993); *The Middle Ages* with 48 pages was also an Atom/Berry issue, with eight illos and five stories.

Vol.3. (1994); *Nor the Years Condemn* had 60 pages, with 42 illos by Steve Jeffery 20 from Atom, with one story from Bob Shaw and another five of mine.

Vol.4. (1995); *Kitsch in Synch Legends* had 53 pages and five authors. Walt Willis had two stories, Arthur Thomson, Bob Shaw and James White had one apiece, with four of mine. They were illustrated with 39 Atom-illos with another half a dozen from Steve Jeffery.

Vol.5. (1996); *The Bleary Eyes* had five authors – one story each from Wally Weber, Terry Jeeves, Greg Benford and Ron Bennett, and five of mine – plus 51 Atom-illos and two from Steve Jeffery.

The second series of five Cheslin/Berry publications ran from 1998-1999, and were entirely about Irish Fandom:-

Vol.1. (1998); *Fables of Irish Fandom* (70 pages) contained fifteen of my 'fables' and 47 Atom-illos, including numerous full-pagers.

Vol.2. (1999); *The I.F. Files* a 73-pager, has eighteen of my adventures and no less than 52 Atom-illos.

Vol.3. (1999); *Tales of Oblique House* outdid itself with a truly magnificent collection of 60 Atom-illos to my fourteen stories, with 78 pages in total.

Vol. 4 (1999); *Each Charter'ed Course* (71 pages) had a further seventeen stories and 30 illos by Atom.

Vol.5. (1999); *Fandom Denied* was an 80-pager, with an amazing 72 Atom-illos and twenty-one of my stories.

When I looked through this material recently, preparing this article, I was filled with awe. Ken Cheslin was physically disabled but was enthusiastic enough to battle with his ill-health (and sometimes mechanical failures of his printer) to produce these high page-count publications. As for Arthur Thomson, what can I say that has not already been said about his genius with the stylo? He died in 1990, and much of his creative work was executed before the availability of sophisticated photocopying equipment.

He illustrated my fanzine stories in the late fifties and early sixties utilising a technique that is probably almost unimaginable to present-day fan artists. I would send him batches of stencils and attendant brief story lines, and within a couple of weeks he would return a carefully-packed parcel of fully-illustrated stencils. I still recall the thrill of opening the envelopes, even though it was over forty years ago.

What Arthur did was to place a piece of carbon paper, face up, between the waxed stencil and its base. He used a stylus (which he made himself at the aircraft factory where he worked) to cut the designs into the stencil, depicting exactly the sketchy details I had submitted to him.



Arthur at work at his home in South London, early sixties. Notice the ashtray and packet of 'Senior Service'. Photo from Ethel Lindsay's album, digitised by Rob Hansen.

The sheet of carbon paper performed a twofold purpose – it showed what he had drawn, and it also permitted the stylus to penetrate the stencil gently, rather than directly cutting into it. No matter whether it was a half-page heading or small space-filler, he was skilled enough to project my notions perfectly.

I must confess now that I, and probably most fan-eds for whom he did illos to order, became somewhat blasé, recognising ATom's magnificent skills but accepting their availability for a mere postage stamp. It is only since I prepared the five volumes of my Irish Fandom stories that the full impact of his exquisite skills has struck me. I have examined a considerable number of his illos, from fillers to full page A4's, and have marvelled at his concise artistry.

I have found myself studying his drawings for long periods, now noting subtle details that had eluded me for many years. With merely dots and dashes for eyes and mouths he has captured expressions ranging from sheer delight to griminess and frustration ...admittedly the stock-



Arthur's sense of humour is well demonstrated in this topical cartoon from 1971 (from *Each Charter'ed Course*).

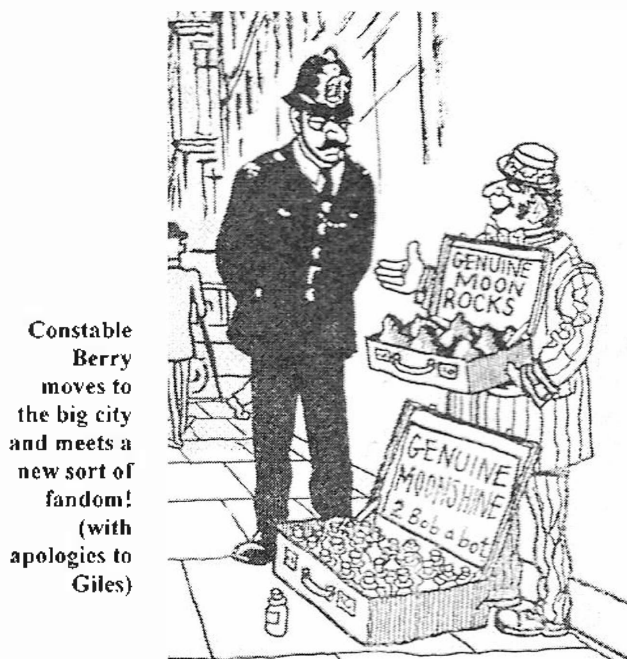
technique of highly-paid commercial artists, but Arthur did his drawings for pleasure, both his own and that of his appreciative fannish readers.

His BEM's are magnificent, usually executed in great detail but all immediately available to the viewer as distinct personalities. I regret very much that on the few occasions I met Arthur I did not proffer him the full measure of ego-boo due to him. Of course I told him that he was a magnificent artist, the major stylus-exponent in fandom, but I probably didn't say it with sufficient authority... possibly I was so selfish that I expressed these opinions mainly to obtain more illos from him for my then-vast output.

Now, to repeat myself, I see his genius before me on every page in these five volumes where his drawings appear. I see a vivid imagination at work, but always on cue... never inhibited... give him a pile of stencils and his stylus flashed almost recklessly... I'm sure he chuckled to himself as he created immediate characterizations of so many fans, giving their physical idiosyncrasies just the faintest exaggeration so that, without rancour, they recognised themselves and smiled with pleasure.

He captured the major players in my Irish Fandom stories wonderfully; not only because of the fannish situations I placed them in, but because he had met them all, and was thus able to insinuate clever nuances which shouted out loud without being vindictive. I now belatedly accept that the ATom illos carried my fanciful stories.

Ken Cheslin and I continued publishing, and the year 2000 saw my *Wholly Berry*, a 90-pager with nine of my stories illustrated by a galaxy of fandom's supreme artists – Atom, Steve Jeffery, Eddie Jones, Steve Stiles and Joe Mayhew, with Alan Hunter contributing seven magnificent full page illustrations and ATom also supplying two full-pagers. I really was proud of this one-shot.



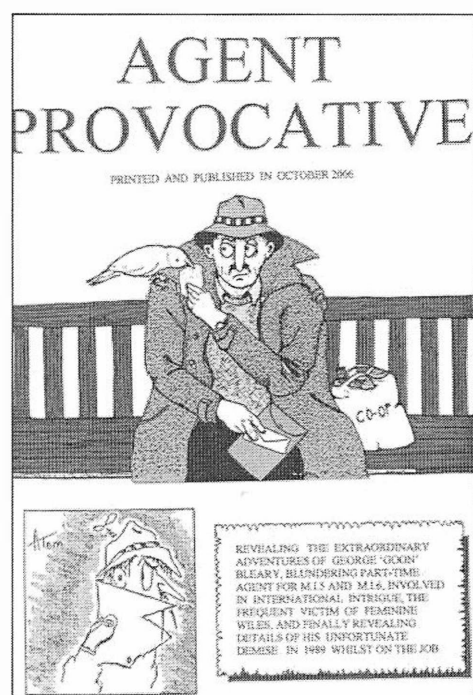
Another Cheslin/Berry project in 2000 was my *Robbery with Violets*, a thick 114-pager beautifully printed with over 30 Atom-illos and with ten chapter headings which I sketched myself. My twenty-one stories concerned the varied career of a village constable, and I publicly admit for the first time that numerous incidents in the narrative were personal experiences. For five years I was that constable! (On my transfer from being a village constable in County Down to the City of Belfast, Bob Shaw commented; "Berry moved from bounding the peat to pounding the beat").



In 2001 I published my 94-pager *Grecian Odd Essays*, eleven stories regarding my numerous holiday experiences in nine Greek mainland resorts and islands, including a one-day visit to Turkey, where I was arrested. ATom had three entries, but my stories featured thirty of my illustrations of ancient pottery, which we found on our travels... I was always very lucky in this respect!

My *Horsed Vassel* came out in 2004, with 94 pages professionally printed by a firm in Welwyn Garden City. The twenty-four stories concerned my experiences in the British Army from 1944-1948. I drew all the chapter headings; rather mundane, I'm afraid, but I used eight Atom-illos with a militaristic bent, and as a tremendous scoop reproduced one of his full-page colour paintings, showing his little space men firing an ancient cannon with a space rocket in the background.

During the summer of 2006, my 80th year, I began to feel unduly tired and in June of that year I was diagnosed as having prostate cancer, and commenced treatment – fortunately (so far) the cancer is not aggressive.

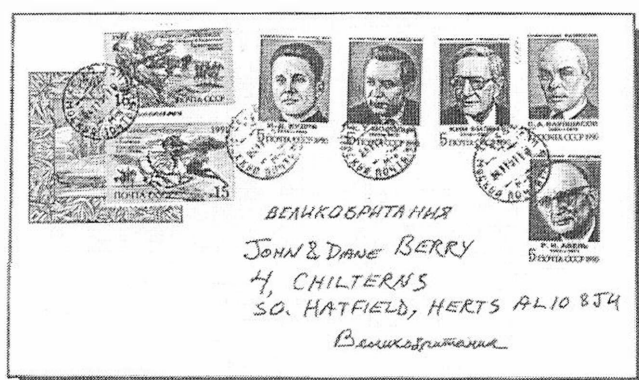


Steve Jeffery captured the spirit of the 'Goon Bleary' character with his cover and interior illos.

Not to be defeated, in October that year I produced my most ambitious fanzine, *Agent Provactive* containing ten George Bleary stories, most of them published for the first time. Back in the early sixties Walt Willis advised me to use the Bleary character in a setting outside the fannish sphere, namely, as a bumbling spy for MI5 and MI6, and I was pleased that that friends and relatives who read the stories thought they were original and humorous.

*Agent Provactive* was printed by the afore-mentioned Welwyn company and a wonderful job they made of it, with a transparent sheet protecting glossy card front and back covers, and spiral binding. And what a front cover... Steve Jeffery did a full-colour image of Bleary, dishevelled, sitting on a park bench, feeding a white blackbird he had befriended, and below as a comparison, was an ATom sketch of Bleary from the fifties. It had 117 pages with a dozen Atom-illos, plus fifteen by Steve Jeffery and three which I executed myself.

The longest story, 'Simple Spyman', concerned circumstances in which 18 British agents were parachuted into Albania and were all speedily captured upon landing (TRUE!) and presumably executed. Eventually, the penny dropped – at MI6 HQ someone in the know had alerted the Albanian authorities; er, yes, it was Kim Philby.



Someone with a good sense of humour had inside knowledge of John's 'Bleary' yarns and of his interest in stamps. Who could it have been? Time to own up, maybe!

In my story the British and American espionage organisations wished to know if, after a number of years, it was safe once more to parachute agents into Albania. The agent had to be unaware of the activities of the British and U.S. Secret Services (in case of capture) and totally expendable, and so Bleary was selected. (As a background tapestry to the story I described the Albanian scenario... in 1989, my wife and I were on the first tourist flight to Albania).

Bleary was subsequently parachuted into Albania, worried because he couldn't speak Albanian; he needn't have fretted because his CIA contact informed him his 'cover' identity was as a deaf-mute imbecile. And my fannish spark was not completely eradicated – one story in the collection is entitled 'The Willis Benediction'.

My latest and probably last effort is *No Boundaries* (2008), with ten more Bleary stories impeccably illustrated by Steve Jeffery, who also provided a superb front cover. Here, for the first time, I revealed and illustrated a mysterious First Day Cover I received from Moscow in December 1991, featuring four Russian spy stamps, including Kim Philby. I have absolutely no idea who sent it and no-one has ever claimed responsibility; I had no friends or contacts in Moscow at this time, although I had featured Kim Philby in some stories prior to that date. It certainly is a mystery!

The 78 pages of *No Boundaries* include fifteen illos by Steve Jeffery, including a full-page colour drawing of MI5 female agent Hilary Fortesque. The last page has Bleary in a charity-shop suit, pointing an aggressive rubber-suckered plonker – at the bottom of the page is the notice that the Bleary Casbook is closed. Amen.

Mundanelly, I would also like to mention that from 1975 to 1991 I edited 64 consecutive issues of *Fingerprint Whorl*, the official journal of the Fingerprint Society. It was professionally printed and circulated to a thousand members in ninety countries. I'm continuing to publish my own fingerprint journal, *Strabismus\**, and am currently working on the thirtieth-annual anniversary issue – issues normally have a hundred-plus pages. Contents feature fingerprints, DNA, and esoteric fingerprints research carried out by myself and numerous researchers since 1979. //

\* From Google: 'A journal edited by John Berry (Hertfordshire) from 1979 dealing with the appearance of the basic seven ridge characteristics occurring throughout nature, the total at the end of 2004 being 1.556. Originally published under the title RIDGE DETAIL IN NATURE until 1998, this reference should be used for further information.' [PW]

# The Melting Pot

Yes, 1972 was a very good vintage but there's not much of it still around....

Help, we can't let all those creative juices go to waste! So I need your help to re-fill the Pot. Irresistible editorial interjections in *italics* and [brackets] in the usual way.

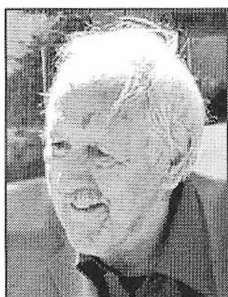


Illo by Dan Steffan. Fan-artists, do please try an interpretation of the theme!

"I've had it a month now and hardly dared open it in the knowledge that once I do not only is the morning gone, but an extra day or two when the guilt feeling impels me to take time off to write a LoC." – Bob Parkinson.

Brian Aldiss,  
Oxford

Dear Pete,



Brian in 2005.  
Photo by PW

Many thanks for *Relapse* 14, well up to your usual low standards. Every page read with interest and without the specs as depicted on p.17. Unlike my writing, my eyes have improved. SF can do this for you.

That Gloucester con was memorable. We were fortunate in having Kingsley Amis for GoH. His wife Hilly came too. Kingsley got a certain amount of flack for making fun of a Clarke novel (was it *A FALL OF MOONDUST?*) in which there is a soppy love affair/romance between a chap and a girl, an activity which Clarke seems not deeply to have researched. Kingsley read passages in a pansy voice which had one half of the audience in stitches and the other half roaring with anger, hearing their idol mocked. Or was that at the first Peterborough thrash in 1963?

That was the year dear old Bruce Montgomery was GoH. Bruce did the Faber series of BEST SF in hardcover, while I was competing for stories with the similar Penguin series. Those were great days, when Kingsley and Bruce and Bob Conquest had enough literary clout to shoot down or argue with any ill-informed critic of SF who raised their heads above the parapet of a literary journal.

Bruce was kind and generous and learned (he and Kingsley had been at St John's College along with Philip Larkin). Bruce was much wealthier than the others. While Kingsley and Larkin drank beer in 'The Bird and Baby' - C.S. Lewis's pub, incidentally - Bruce would retire to the Randolph Hotel to drink whisky. He was already, even as an undergrad, composing music for British films. Often I benefited from his hospitality - and his whisky. His chaser was Canada Dry, of which the Randolph kept a special stock for him. When I asked why he insisted on Canada Dry, Bruce looked at me as if I was mad. "It always advertises on the back cover of *Astounding*," he explained.

Harry and I went down later to visit Bruce in Devon. He kept an uncorked flagon of Johnny Walker on a table at the foot of his bed, and had a good swig of it when he woke up. He died of alcoholism, as did Kingsley - alcoholism or one of its attendant ills. As you say, Bob Conquest never came to a con. He now

lives rather grandly in California. I recall that he was getting married for a fourth time; this time to a super lady called Caroline ('South Caroline is a sultry clime...'). I asked him why he bothered. Bob's reply: "Well, I look at it this way - 'one for the road'..."

Ella Parker says of Kingsley, "Yes, a nice fellow, Amis. I liked him..." How condescending can you get? Kingsley was a brilliant comic, a terrific companion, and then at the height of his fame. He loved SF with all its rough edges. Indeed, he once warned me, "Don't get too literary..." But I was already expert at ignoring good advice.

[The way I read it, Ella wasn't being condescending, just honest. She hadn't expected to like Amis but found that he was a decent chap. Here's Kingsley and wife - wonder what she thought of it all! Interestingly, the Programme Book gives their address as 'Swansea' at the time.]

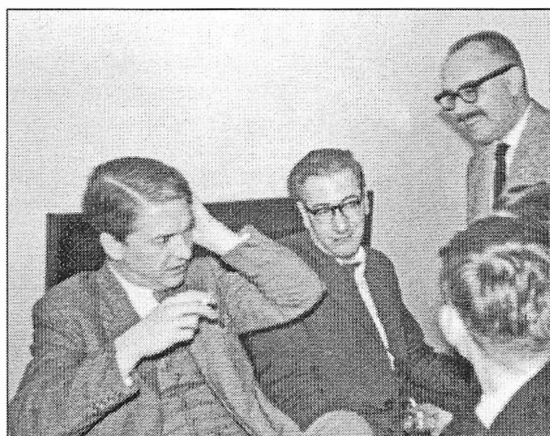
Below, at LXI con  
with Margaret,  
Hilary & Kingsley  
Photo from Norman  
Shorrock



Harry Harrison  
Brighton.



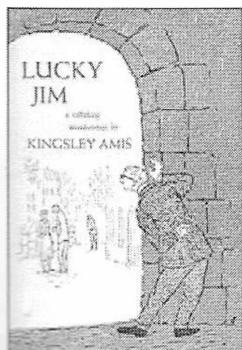
Above: Harry at  
Interaction.  
Below: at LXIcon,  
1961. Photo by  
Eric Bentcliffe.



Jim Linwood  
JLinwood  
@aol.com



Jim at Cytricon V  
2008.  
Photo from Jim.



Cover of the first  
U.S. edition

Hi Pete,

Ahh, Gloucester, how could I forget it. Or the trip there...

I came from Denmark by train. Slept my way across Germany and only emerged from my compartment when we had crossed the French border. That way I did not have to face Germans at breakfast and could have a French lunch. Which didn't last long. I boarded the ferry in the Hook of Holland and sailed into a storm right out of The Cruel Sea. Saw all of the food I had consumed now consigned to that same cruel sea.

It was Good Friday and of course the train was late. The one I boarded was an antique with transverse compartments and no aisle. No buffet car – which I couldn't have reached in any case. We rattled and banged across England. I leapt down at every station to bang feebly on every empty/broken chocolate machines.

In the fullness of time we reached Gloucester and, famished and thirsty, I staggered to the hotel where good times were well in progress. The first pint vanished. Only when I clutched at the second did I realise I wasn't alone at the bar. Shouted greetings to Brian Aldiss and Dave Kyle; met Kingsley Amis and Geoff Doherty for the first time. All of them had been holding up the bar for some time. Obviously. When Geoff Doherty, senior English master at a posh school said, "You can't shay that," Kingsley Amis, Oxford don responded, "Not only can I shay it but you can shtick it up your arse!" His audience roared with laughter at this witty rejoinder, clapped each other on the back, drank more. I drank more pints quickly, catching up, and very soon what I had mistaken for alcoholic muttering became witty repartee.

That was Day one.

On the evening of day two we beheld the tourney. *Relapse* #14 describes this singular event in exquisite detail. Though many enjoyed this clash of Titans I found it more than a little off-putting. Simply: I hated it. Looking for a quick escape I slipped past the mayhem and sought safe harbour behind the curtain on the stage. With my pint of course, to see Kingsley – with his pint – slipping behind the curtain on the other side. We sat and talked and drank to the thudding clatter of wood on cardboard. We had a fine time and settled all the world's SF problems.

We became close friends after this evening. I shall always be grateful for the fannish slaughter that brought us together. It was indeed a match made, if not in heaven, at least in fen mayhem.

Hi Peter,

Many thanks for *Relapse* #14. The highlight was Bruce Burn's evocative memories of *LXIcon* - his first and my third convention. Here's what I wrote in my OMPazine, *Jetstream*, soon after the con:

"The *Lexicon* was Fabulous! As lack of time prevents me from writing the conrep I promised Pat Kearney, I want to say how much I enjoyed the above mentioned event, and I hope Cheltenham will put other another swinging convention some time. For me the highlight of the programme was Amis on "That juvenile, illiterate, badly-written, pseudo-literature called S-F", which will be discussed in fighting terms until Amis speaks again at another con. I may be wrong, but I got the impression everyone in the hall except older fans and pros were agreeing with Amis. This is borne out for most of the outcry after the talk came from the pros. Ted Tubb elected himself devil's advocate, and questioned Kingsley liking J.T. McIntosh's BLISS OF SOLITUDE, which Tubb said was sheer pornography. To this Amis gave an unintentional squelcher: "Then I must be more blasé than you... I didn't think it was pornography".

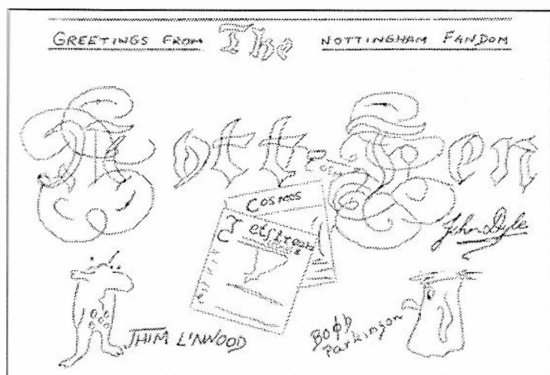
'One innovation introduced at the *Lexicon* was the Auction-Block. At the time I made a running list of the prices various pros were sold for, and to whom they went. Since then I have noticed disagreement as to what actually happened, so I'll reprint my list, but its accuracy is not guaranteed:

Brian Aldiss.....	22/-.....	Ken Slater
Ken Bulmer.....	10/-.....	Norman Shorrocks
Walt Willis (in his absence).....	20/-.....	Ethel Lindsay
Kingsley Amis.....	50/-.....	SFCoL block-bid
Boob Parkinson's beard.....	5/- (eh,eh,eh).....	Boob Parkinson
Bruce Burn's beard.....	12/-.....	Al Rispin

It was a convention I'd been looking forward to because Kingsley Amis was to be GoH. NEW MAPS OF HELL had just been published and championed my favourite authors Pohl & Kornbluth, Sheckley and Bester over Heinlein, Asimov and the rest of the *ASF* crew. Furthermore, Amis had entered the genre with a clever 30-minute radio play, *Touch and Go*, in 1957. I was expecting to meet a facsimile of his creation LUCKY JIM but as he took the stage, he appeared to have a donnish arrogance augmented with an affected upper-class accent. He seemed closer to Professor Welch than Jim Dixon. I was amused later to learn that Amis came, like most fans at the con, from a lower-middle class background and grew up in the London suburb of Norbury, as did Mike Moorcock.

As the convention rolled on Kingsley turned out to be a "nice fellow" as Ella put it. At the auction Kingsley became excited when a Bantam paperback copy of Vonnegut's *UTOPIA 14* was held up by Ted Tubb. "I haven't read that!" he exclaimed, and bid a generous amount which he had to withdraw when





An advert which Jim and other Nottingham fans placed in the LXIcon Programme Book.

Brian Aldiss pointed out to him that it was a re-titled **PLAYER PIANO**. Kingsley was getting into the swing of things and was spotted prowling the hotel corridors at night. A femme-fan told me that there was a knock on her door during a late night-party. She opened it to find Kingsley who "undressed me with his eyes".

This conjures up the tale Brian Aldiss recounts in his autobiography about the time in 1963 when he, Amis and Harry Harrison travelled to the SF film festival in Trieste. They went to a beach on the Istria peninsula where Amis fell asleep and his first wife, Hilary, wrote on his back "ONE FAT ENGLISHMAN - I FUCK ANYTHING". Brian and Harry both took photographs of this which will no doubt turn up in *Relapse*.

Bruce fails to mention the other famous author who made his debut at *LXIcon* - Martin Amis. He was 10-years old and spent most of the time running screaming through the hotel corridors to the annoyance of the attendees. A few years later, Kingdon Road fans cheered when we saw him fall to his death from the riggings of Anthony Quinn's pirate ship in *A High Wind in Jamaica* - his only film performance. I've recently 'discovered' Martin and am enjoyably ploughing through his novels.

The link to Charles Platt's extract from his autobiography came up with the same alternate vision of the *Globe* as in his otherwise excellent *DREAM MAKERS*. I was an infrequent visitor to the *Globe* around this time and recall meeting Chris Priest, Bill Harry, Graham Charnock, Greg Pickersgill and Roy Kettle who didn't fit Charles' description of drably dressed middle-aged men swapping pulps, or pimply students. You were right not to include Charles' piece as it was dishonest - the *Globe* was never like that.

[Alas, Brian & Harry both say it's been many years since they last saw that picture of Amis, though you never know what might turn up! And now, Jim, I'd like to add-on a slightly later e-mail you posted following Mike Moorcock's visit to London on 29th June:]



Mike on stage.  
Photo by Paul  
Mison,  
www.flickr.co  
m/blech/

I went to the 'Mike Moorcock and London' event at the British Library where he was in conversation with Alan Moore, graphic novelist (*From Hell*, *Watchmen*, *V for Vendetta*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*) and Iain Sinclair.

On entering the conference building, 15 minutes before the event, I was amazed to see around 250 people queuing for the sold-out show. I got a seat at the front next to the wheelchair lift that had been specially installed to place Mike onto the stage. Mike arrived with Linda, Alan Moore and Iain Sinclair and was placed on the lift which refused to work - the great minds struggled for a few minutes with various buttons until someone from the library fixed it and Mike was lifted up onto the stage.

Apart from the problem with his right foot, Mike seems in good health and his voice is the same one that regaled us with the same tales aeons ago. Iain chaired the meeting and prompted Mike and Alan into tales of their London - highly mythologized as it wasn't a London I recognised. After Mike had told us how he dodged V-1's in Norbury during the blitz, he reminisced on how he saved SF by editing *New Worlds*. Apparently, he had read no SF until he was the editor and bought a large number of *Astoundings* from a South London bookshop. Having read them all he declared that the genre was absolute rubbish and proceeded to change things together with his buddies, Jim Ballard and Bill Burroughs.

During question time the respectful audience (middle-aged/middle-class) seemed to know more about Elric and Jerry Cornelius than *MOTHER LONDON* or Colonel Pyat. There was no-one I recognised among them and I wished that Peter or George Locke had showed up - questions from 'old wave' fans would have been more challenging.

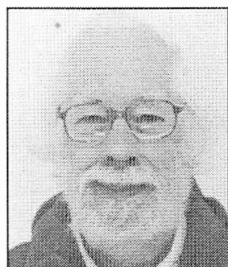
Both Mike and Alan were witty and amusing - a wonderful one-and-a-half hours - and, thankfully, no-one mentioned M\*ch\*el J\*cks\*n. In view of the crowd queuing to have books signed, I didn't stay on to socialise. Here's a recent piece by Mike expanding on his memories of London:

[FT.com / Reportage - A call to preserve memories of London](http://FT.com/Reportage-A-call-to-preserve-memories-of-London)

I hadn't heard the one about him playing guitar in a brothel.

[To the tune of 'On the steps of a Moscow Latrine', no doubt! Seriously, Jim, what could I have asked Mike? Something like, 'Were you wrong about science fiction? Was the 'New Wave' just a load of hype? I wouldn't have been so impertinent!]

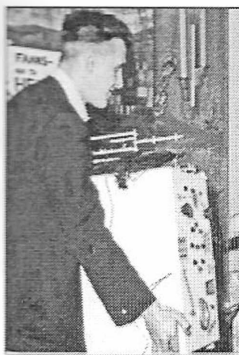
**Darroll Pardoe**  
pardos@global  
net.co.uk



Hi Peter,

So far as I'm concerned the most relevant bit in the issue is Bruce Burn's account of *LXIcon*. It was my first convention too, though I have to work from memory since, unlike Bruce, I didn't make any notes of my experiences at the time. So I'm a lot more fuzzy over it than he appears to be. I travelled down from Birmingham with Ken Cheslin on a train packed to the eyeballs with merry-makers apparently on their way to Weston-super-Mare or other holiday destinations.

The first person to accost me as I walked in the hotel was Brian Burgess, who was peddling, not pork pies but old fanzines. I soon hooked up with two other young fans and we hung around together for mutual protection for most of the convention - these were Bob Little and Harry Douthwaite. Bob I only saw a couple of times subsequently (the last was in 1965 at the *Brumcon*); I believe he became a student at London University. Harry I lost touch with in the mid-60s. He made contact again in the mid-80s (I think he'd become aware of Ro's *Ghosts and Scholars* magazine) and we had a brief exchange of



Eric Jones' psi machine. Photo by Eric Bentscliffe

correspondence. He was out of work at the time and spending his way through the money his deceased father had left him. We were going to meet up in Manchester for a chat, but somehow it never happened and I lost touch again. I wonder what's happened to Harry?

Anyway, back to *LXIcon*. I don't think I actually spoke to Kingsley Amis – I was still in awe of Guests of Honour (I was only 17). But I do remember young Martin Amis running around under everyone's feet. I was in the overflow hotel, somewhere on the other side of Gloucester, which involved walks through the deserted streets at 4 a.m. in the company of one or two other people who were also exiled to the overflow. There was a slight problem on the Friday night in that the hotel locked up at night and we were issued with keys to the back door. The problem was that the alley from the street through to the back of the hotel was not exactly obvious. It took some thought and the assistance of a passing policeman with local knowledge to suss it out.

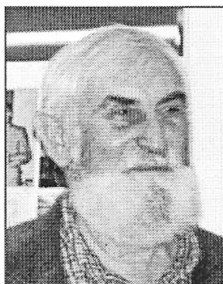
I remember that Chinese restaurant. Most of the convention seemed to be eating there – but then there wasn't a lot else in the way of eateries open in Gloucester over the Bank Holiday weekend. Don Ford's slide show was great, except that at one point the slides seem to have got rearranged so the taped commentary was more than a little confusing! Eric Jones's *psi* machine in 'This is your Fan Life' was a wonderful contraption, all flashing lights and whirly things.

Sorry my memories of *LXIcon* are so fragmentary – but it was nearly fifty years ago. Mainly, I enjoyed meeting all the people I'd been corresponding with or heard of in fanzines. Previously the only fans I'd met had been those who'd made the journey to Stourbridge.

Ro and I stayed in the New County on the first night of our honeymoon in March 1970. We were heading from Chelmsford to Pembrokeshire and Gloucester was a convenient half-way point to stop off for the night. It hadn't changed a bit in the nine years. Is it still there now?

*[Some of us were thinking about that hotel as a possible site for another re-enactment, Darroll, for 2011, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LXIcon. Unfortunately, however, while the building is still there it looks as if the current owners have exciting plans which would make a fannish weekend difficult if not impossible to arrange. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/gloucestershire/8231276.stm> So that's where you found Harry Douthwaite; he did some excellent artwork for the Cheslin/Hale Lex Spinge in the mid-sixties. But neither he nor Bob Little are shown on the membership list. How am I ever expected to get those attendance figures right! And here's another LXIcon veteran ....]*

Alan Rispin  
alan@rispin.  
fsbusiness.co.uk



Alan at  
Cytricon V.  
Photo by Steve  
Green

Good God, Peter W. is the mother of all nags....

So OK, I got *Relapse 14* and have read it with much enjoyment as it brought back many happy memories of fannish times. I'm only writing this Loc because I want to see what Bruce wrote of the time when we lived together in Warrington Crescent. It was a huge Georgian terrace and we had a ground floor room at the front. As usual in these places the kitchen was shared with the other inhabitants on the ground floor. Somewhere in attic there lurked the landlord. The room we shared was truly gigantic. Bruce had a bed in the opposite corner to me and I felt I needed binoculars to spot if he was there in the morning.

I was proud of my new beard, despite my boss back in the drawing office not noticing for 3 weeks that I hadn't shaved. I went to the local barber near Warrington Crescent and asked him to trim it – but I think my accent or his Greek language meant that his understanding was not perfect. His first cut took off the whole of one side, so I jumped up and complained – not that he could do much about it. I was forced to have a goatee for the meantime and let it creep back into place.

The only other time that it came off was when I went offshore in the early 90's and the Rig Safety Officer took one look and presented me with a razor. I protested and he explained that they were drilling in a reservoir which could produce sour gas (H<sub>2</sub>S) and that the Breathing Apparatus he was about to show me how to use would allow 15 minutes safe breathing when the mask was placed over the nose and mouth. With a beard it could be as low as four minutes.

I shaved it off. I was thankful when the explosion happened the next day. But that's another story.

I was truly sad to hear of the death of Jim Cawthorne. He consented to be the artist for my zine *Hungry* and I was amazed how he could work directly on stencils. When I moved to Newcastle to go to Univ we kept in touch but I am sad to say marriage, babies and in his case demolition of his last address came between us. I ended up working 0.5 miles away from where his Gateshead flat used to be for over twenty years. That enough then? Chalk up another old fan disinterred.

Bruce Burn  
hbum@xtra.co.nz



Bruce in 2008.  
His picture.

Hello Peter,

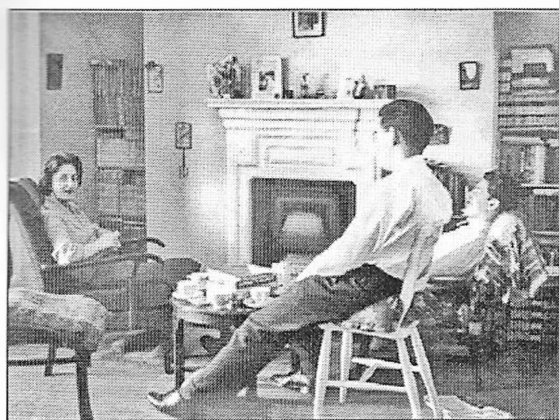
You sneaked that one past me. The latest *Relapse* suddenly appeared in my post box yesterday... Magnificent. It's a genuine delight. The obvious interest of a fascinated readership must be very heart-warming for you. I feel very honoured to have an article in such great company. Glow, Peter, in the satisfaction of having produced such an excellent fanzine. In its pages we relish the humour, the drama, the comedy, the intense scrutiny of detail, and the broad canvas of our whole fannish experience. On every page a surprise and a delight, and we poor readers have to devour an issue in a single sitting, ignoring the world around us as we wallow in nostalgia.

"Carbuncle" – now there's a word you don't often find in a fanzine. In fact, this is the first time I've seen it in fannish circles, but I know the circumstances of finding such a swelling in a tyre. This is not the carbuncle of medical interest, a sort of relative to a hernia. This is the road-users carbuncle, familiar to motorists and cyclists alike before the days of synthetic rubber. Not that you usually find the swelling before it's too late, as George Locke discovered and related in his article in *Relapse 14*. You usually find the tyre has suddenly gone flat, bursting at a weak point, and losing all its air.

George and his fellow book-gatherer John Eggeeling's account of their road trip around South-West England in the late sixties makes fascinating reading, and not just for the list of books they perused and purchased. Somehow, the tale they weave provides a feeling for the times, over forty years ago, when cash was not just king but all we had, when it was quite accepted that we'd drop in to stay a couple of nights with distant friends, when book-dealers would charge only ten percent commission from only one end of a deal!

There's more nostalgia to be gleaned from Mike Moorcock's eulogy to Jim Cawthorne. I remember the fine art work of Jim, especially his drawings in *Camber*, and the willingness he showed to provide it for any fanzine editor who asked. He seemed such a quiet chap, brimming with talent and pre-occupied with fantasy. I recall visiting him once in Earl's Court where he lived for a while, but lost touch when I moved to south London.

Then we come to the letter column, a full third of the issue. It's a great delight, with short snippets from people half a world and most of a lifetime away from where I've made my home. George Locke



again, with memoirs of Betty and Gene Kujawa, and I keep seeing the names of old fans from the Ooold Days: Joe Patrizio, Ina Shorrocks, Jim Linwood, good grief even John Baxter, that suddenly I don't feel quite such an ancient monument myself. Jim's letter reminds me of Don Geldart. I'm sure Don said he worked for MI6, rather than MI5, and when he was hospitalised I'm fairly sure it was to a facility away from his usual place of work.

About Courage House: the picture Jim took more recently shows the front of the stately manor which was in Surbiton, and Ethel's large room is indicated by the upper floor bow windows to the left of the building. In there, she had all her fanac, a Gestetner, and her normal accommodation. I think you'll find a couple of pix taken in that room among my pictures. The rest of the building was the Nurses' Home for the Royal Eye Hospital. All very English Country House, and absolutely perfekt.

*[Yep, Bruce, here's your picture of Ethel at home with Jim Groves and Joe Patrizio (in the armchair). I wonder what the other nursing sisters thought of her strange hobby and even stranger friends? And there's yet more to come on Don Geldart, that mysterious James Bond-like figure who flits through our continuing narrative; although as yet I haven't been able to coax him into Telling All...]*

George Locke  
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Dear Peter,

I loved Mike's piece on Jim Cawthorne, especially the bit about improvising tools for working on stencils. I had my own equipment. I used to work in the pharmacy department of a hospital, and I was able, in their laboratories, to make a few aids. Like styluses – I used to take pieces of glass tubing, melt them in a Bunsen burner and draw them out into points with different-sized blobs at the end for simple line drawing. Not that my drawings were anything but simple! And for wheel pens – I excavated the innards of watches from junk shops, selected cog wheels with the serrations I wanted, took hypodermic needles, bent them in such a way that they would hold the wheels, stuck the needles onto an old syringe, and played with them happily. They worked a charm. Still have them in a drawer somewhere – perhaps they could be auctioned for a fannish good cause!

Even in this day of computers, I haven't quite lost the knack of improvising. My word processor has a mind of its own, and, for example, insists, when I write a date, on typesetting 5th March with the "th" raised above the line. If I didn't like that, what could I do? Type out 5the; type a space and then go back and delete the "e". And I've evolved other little tricks to fool the machine. Has anybody, I wonder, done a book on how to beat the "defaults"?

Of course, the first thing I did when I read your editorial was to download the Platt piece of fiction. Suitable for *Relapse*? I dunno, it seemed pretty tame by today's standards. I think I recognised Mike Moorcock and John Brunner from the descriptions, but nobody else.

The Bruce Burn collaborative story of the *LXicon* was fascinating, but I couldn't remember a thing about it, and thought my memory was fast approaching Alzheimer Lane. Then I remembered that I was serving Queen and Country in Kenya at the time. Don Geldart seemed to have been pretty active at the con, judging by the report. Later that year, about September I suppose, when my unit was posted in a great hurry to Kuwait to help fend off a threatened Iraqi invasion, I met Don in Kuwait. I think he said something like "Welcome to the sharp end." We met and chatted a few times while we were there (three months in my case), and when we returned to England we were pretty close friends for a few years. He and his partner lived for a while quite close to Rita and me in Tooting, but then we fell out of touch.

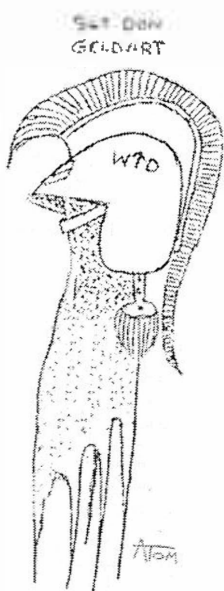
I thought your presentation of my book-hunting trip piece was as good as the Bruce Burn ensemble, and the front cover was fine. The only slight criticism I have is with the map. There's no way we would have returned via the old A4. At that period of my driving life I was fixated on the A303 and would never have used any other road to return to London from the South West.

I promised to turn over a new leaf and not write about books any more – I do enough of that for *Bookdealer* magazine – but I must respond to Alistair Durie's letter by urging him to do with his collection of *Hutchinson's Magazine* what I did with my set of the *Premier Magazine* – prepare and publish a checklist. Meanwhile, congratulations on another fascinating dip into the past. The Betty Kujawa anecdote in the last number was part of a bus tour I took through the USA in 1966 – I missed England winning the world cup as a result – 99 days for \$99 was the Greyhound bus deal. Much of the



George at  
*Cytricon V*

Photo by John  
Dallman







Cover of George's catalogue.

time I spent with fans - did I ever write the experience up? I could try and excavate some memories, like meetings at LASFS and a convention in Cincinnati, staying with the Busbys in Seattle and Charlie & Marsha Brown in New York, and meeting the guy who was to change my life.

At the moment I'm in the throes of re-jigging my half of the Cecil Court shop to make it into an SF/Fantasy/Mystery dealership only, and I'll be including all the accumulated fanzines, artwork and so on that are relevant. It'll be second-hand stuff almost entirely; perhaps the occasional specialty price item, but everything else 19th and 20th centuries. And some of my collection will be consigned to the shelves. Paperbacks, unless valuable, will be ruthlessly despatched to the 'outside' book shelves. I've just spent £5000 on genre stuff at auction; mostly of mystery interest (with a lot of SF included) but including a complete set of *Science Fantasy*, another of *London Mystery Magazine* and another of *Suspense*. And Mike Moorcock will be interested by a blast from the past - an allegedly complete set of *Collectors Digest*, hundreds of numbers from 1946, an old boys' book-collecting fanzine which Mike knew well.

*[What you didn't say, George, is that you also took a substantial part of your collection to the ABA Book Fair at Olympia in June. I really must mention the catalogue you subsequently sent me - a handsome 52-page A4 book which is almost a collectors' item in itself, with your long tribute to Jim Cawthorn and 15 of his full-page drawings. And I'm awed both by the quality of the material - antiquarian early fantasies, first editions, manuscripts and so on - and by the prices, which are well out of my league! (I understand there are a few copies remaining at £15 each, contact George at the e-address above). Finally, I'll have to ask the obvious question; who was this 'guy who changed your life'? Talk about cliff-hangers!]*

**Fred Smith**  
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Dear Peter,

Many thanks for the latest ish, which as usual is full of goodies. George Locke in his very interesting article reveals that he is a glider pilot and I was surprised to learn that he was once editor of *Sailplane & Gliding* magazine, a publication that I have read many times, since I too have been a glider pilot for over thirty years. In fact I'm still flying solo and just yesterday had a flight at our club (Scottish Gliding Union). I've also flown at other clubs around the country and might even have been at the same one as George at some time or other!

Re. Milcross Book Service again, it was the outfit that I first found as a source for magazines and paperbacks after coming out of the RAF in 1948, though I quickly discovered Ken Slater's empire shortly after. I was well aware that Milcross was run by Frank Milnes but didn't know that it had started up before the War. By the way, am I misremembering that Frank married the beautiful Liverpool femme-fan Pat Doolan, someone that I was in love with (in addition to Frances!)? Or have I got that all wrong?

*[Ina referred to Pat as 'our very own blonde bombshell', and here she is with you at Supermancon, Fred. Maybe you frightened her into the arms of the undeserving Frank Milnes!]*



**Bob Parkinson**  
bobparkinson@  
ntlworld.com

Dear Peter,

Thanks for yet another paper copy of this metamorphosing fanzine from a time-warped somewhere in the 1960s. The Keith Walker quote on the masthead should be sufficient warning - I've had it a month now and hardly dared open it in the knowledge that once I do, not only is the morning gone, but an extra day or two when the guilt feeling impels me to take time off to write a LoC.

Besides which, I'm getting these doubts as to whether you really exist. When you made your visit to London in March, Gerry Webb grabbed me at the BIS to inform me that there was a get-together with you that evening, except that I already had an appointment (with my wife) to be somewhere else, so that was another opportunity missed. And then I took on the speaking engagement at *LXcon* in Bradford, & I thought - but surely he will be there. And this is the occasion you decided you could give it a miss! However, I did meet up with people I had not seen for decades, including Ina (who came and found me!), Peter Mabey and Rog Peyton - but no P. Weston. It's that time-warped getting in the way again.

*LXcon* was kind of relevant to Bruce Burn's memories *LXcon* in 1961, 'cos I was there! There is a problem with ransacking my memories that far back - they say that if you can remember the 1970s you weren't there. On that basis I was definitely there in the 1960s & 1970s because I can hardly remember a thing! I have to kind of work it out. As a member of the Cheltenham Science Fiction Circle I was actually involved somehow - in fact a number of those involved like Keith Freeman and myself were not actually based in Cheltenham at the time.

I was away at Uni & did things in the holidays. I can remember cycling from my parents' home in Cheltenham to inspect the New County Hotel as part of the preparations, but very little of the event itself. Bruce quotes Rob Bennett's *Skyrack* report that 'the Programme booklet... was produced by Norman Shorrocks assisted by Bob Parkinson and Eddie Jones' - so it must be true, but I can't remember any of it - and being mentioned ahead of Eddie! I remember us doing a Harrison anthem in the CSFC basement using multi-tracking on Eric Jones' Ferrograph tape machine (it



Bob with Terry Jeeves' prize-winning painting, 'It Never Rains on Gafia'. Photo by Keith Freeman.



*Amis certainly 'joined in quite well', though this scene is actually from his Second Coming in 1963. Photo from Norman Shorrock*

actually took two machines as I remember, but I can't remember who owned the second one).

I'm pretty sure that Brian Aldiss was responsible for getting Kingsley Amis for us. Amis' NEW MAPS OF HELL had recently been published, and it was such a surprise that anyone from the literary establishment even admitted the existence of SF that he was a kind of hero even if he was somewhat critical in his GoH speech. (Some of us had had hints from one of his earlier novels – is it TAKE A GIRL LIKE YOU? – where one of his characters is reading an SF novel with a plot that sounded a bit like an early version of the *Star Trek* 'Trouble with Tribbles'.) But at least he mixed in with the rest of us curious folk.

NEW MAPS OF HELL still resides on my bookshelf, unlooked at these many years. It was published in 1960 based on lectures he had given the year before, and glancing at it nowadays I am struck by the way that it

was of its time and might have needed to change considerably a decade later. It did cause a certain controversy among SF fans because, while it was from a sympathetic reader, it did not simply suggest that science fiction was the best things since sliced bread. But I seem to remember that KA joined in quite well, even if he did not then become a member of fandom!

I look at the pictures & they seem to relate to some distant past, but the details elude me. Maybe I need to find the right brand of biscuits (another reference to "à la recherche le temps perdu" I'm afraid).

In your introduction you mention going to *Corflu* in Seattle and visiting the Museum of Science Fiction. This brought back another, more recent memory. I was going to a conference in Vancouver at the time, and a colleague and myself had decided to take a week off and get there the long way round, flying in to San Francisco & then driving up the West Coast through northern California, Oregon & Washington. What Mark hadn't told me in advance was that he suffered from vertigo, and I had chosen a route that took in all the scenic (read precipitous) roads I could find, so as an encore on reaching Seattle I took him up the 'Space Needle'. We found our way there, and after we had parked I went to feed the meter & called back "do you think an hour is going to be enough?" Mark had meanwhile identified the SF museum across the road and the guitar museum (he is a guitar aficionado) and called back "I think we are going to need a little longer than that", pointing at the Frank Gehry construction.

*[That was time well spent on your LoC, Bob! The 'get-together' must have been a figment of Gerry's imagination; I spent the day with Rob Hansen before briefly showing my face at the 'First Thursday' meeting before going home. Anyway, I'd like to know who tipped-off Gerry I was coming to London!]*

**Andy Sawyer**  
A.P.Sawyer@li  
verpool.ac.uk



*Andy in 2009.  
His picture.*

Dear Peter,

Another *Relapse*, full of fascinating stuff as usual, and it was good to see the reproductions of your Leeds Fandom displays which I noticed at Eastercon on the day I was there. I particularly enjoyed the George Locke/John Egging piece too, especially the bits that one or other of the parties can't actually remember. Now that Fantasy Centre is gone (I think this weekend I'm writing is officially their last days) there's an entire piece of the history of our field gone.

George mentions individuals buying and selling books; I'd love to be able to track how a particular book travels from person to person, as collections are sold, broken up and the bits of it become the nuclei of other collections. Some people think it's sad when large individual collections are broken up. It is in a way, particularly when they're collections on the level of all the SF published between certain years, or say all books published by a certain publisher, but on the other hand while there are still collectors it's good to know that books are circulating. The only really depressing thing is when collections end up in a skip, as I've known to happen.

Poignant piece on Jim Cawthorn, one of the best artists in our field. Interestingly, you say that the sketch on top right of p. 11 reminds you of a scene in Vance's DYING EARTH. It could be, but it also reminds me of a scene in one of the early Elric stories which I'm too idle to look up. Glad to see the letter from Tony Glynn; an amusing story about him discovering His Fan. I wonder if any of the Ashcrofts in Ormskirk were/are him? Perhaps we'll never know.

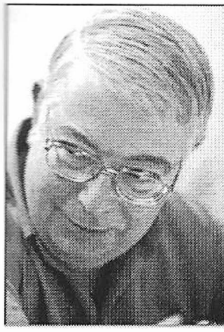
I now have, courtesy of Malcolm Edwards, eleven boxes of stuff taken from John Brosnan's flat after his death. I've not even opened the boxes yet, because I also had 20 boxes of books from a collector in Aberdeen which came my way just before that, and I need to get them processed first. However, I'm told that there is a lot of fannish stuff as well as John Brosnan's own books and file copies of magazines he wrote for. A conversation about this over the last few days makes me wonder if there is anything from those days when just about the entire SF community was filling the pages of *Knave* magazine (except for the pages devoted to the visual images...). If anything is discovered, the news will be passed on to you.

*[Thanks, Andy, for putting me in touch with Tony Glynn in the first place; I'm hoping to meet him next month at the Rotary conference in Southport. And now a dissenting voice....]*

**Mike Meara**  
meara810@bt  
internet.com

Hello Peter!

I know a lot of your readers find much in Bruce Burn's 'The Wandering Ghu', but I fear I'm not one of them. This episode ought to have got me interested, since it is at least about matters fannish, but somehow all the fine detail seems inappropriate for events so long ago, especially as Bruce admits he's working from 'scraps of notes' for some of it, and others have picked him up on some previous details. Eleven pages of this is too much for me, but I shall eye-track my way through it eventually, I expect.

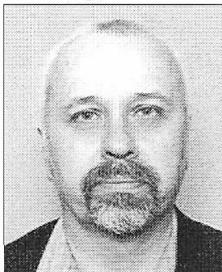


Mike at *Cytricon V*  
Photo by John  
Dallman

Below; Andrew  
Stephenson in 2005,  
according to Kevin  
Cullen in *Blunt*,  
1973. (Reprinted  
thanks to Dave  
Rowe, Bob Smith &  
Mary Peek).



Rob Hansen  
rob@fiawol.  
demon.co.uk



A dramatic new  
picture of Rob  
Hansen!  
Obviously a hard  
case!

Mike's piece on Jim Cawthorn is full of lovely personal details, and is clearly from the heart. Most enjoyable to read, though I never met either Jim or Mike.

I saw the Leeds/Bradford fandom display boards at *LXcon*, but found them quite difficult to read. They were, quite rightly, placed in a busy thoroughfare where lots of people would see them, but that made it difficult to stand back far enough to read them comfortably, without also standing in the way of fans rushing to and fro. They look and read much better on the printed page.

But my star of this issue: George Locke. His great letter in *Melting Pot* is just a bonus on top of his fascinating piece with John Eggeling. Even though the books the pair were buying were (and are) of no great interest to me, I can't resist a good book-hunting tale. Sadly, I have to agree that these days are pretty well gone for ever, thanks to the internet. All the more reason for George to write them up!

The *Melting Pot* is always one of my favourite parts of *Relapse*, but you've excelled yourself this time, Peter! I know you can only work with the material you've got, but even excellent material (as here) can be improved by presentation to match, and the whole thing just flows effortlessly - except we know it just *looks* that way. An object lesson on how to put together a lettercol, an art which, to quote Mr Langford, is much in need of bettering at the moment.

I was particularly taken - can't imagine why - by John Baxter's hilarious tale of 'live models' and the film viewer. Your pic of Paula Page (from your own collection, Peter?) reminds me of how strangely un-erotic I found these retouched shots to be, even as a pimply youth; once I - an only child - found out that women had something more interesting going on in their nether regions, this type of picture lost whatever small appeal it ever had. I think you're wrong about Bettie Page being 'similarly endowed', though: she was much more balanced as regards her physical attributes. Were they by any chance related, as *Private Eye* might say? Fred Smith goes on to talk about 'Yank Mags', but I think he means something different...

A very good letter from D West on the BSFA; I found myself agreeing with almost every word. This would have made a good lead piece for a feature on the BSFA, Peter. Except that D would have said that we don't *need* a feature on the BSFA.

That youngster Ian Milsted mentions Andrew Stephenson, who I remember as a jovial, bustling intellectual figure from my 1970s days. Is he really still around? It would be good to hear from him in your pages, or have I forgotten that we already have? As for the Platt item, I had a quick look and I think you've made the right decision. With all the characters hiding behind pseudonyms, I can't tell who is who, so it loses a lot of its appeal; however, it might not be publishable at all if they weren't used!

Despite my reservations about Bruce's piece, I really enjoyed this issue. You're doing a great job on several different levels, much like a classic SF novel - which one are you?

[Me, collect dirty books? Not since about 1957, anyway! Paula's picture came from the internet and I was comparing her with Sabrina rather than with Betty Page. And in Charles Platt's story, 'Harry Smallpiece' is Mike Moorcock, 'Bradley Williams' is John Brunner, others are probably composites. Andrew Stephenson responded to a recent issue: "I am 100% pragmatic about *Prolapse*. It is an admirable and uplifting piece of work which clearly helps keep a lot of dodgy characters off the streets; and I do support its existence. But I know me: send me a copy and it'll moulder unread for yonks." Does he think he can escape that easily? - Mike, you know I'm one of THE PUPPET MASTERS!]

Peter,

Rog Peyton's LoC about the venue for Asimov's London visit [He said it was the 'One Tun' rather than the 'Globe'] sent me scurrying about looking for verification, of course. First place I looked was IN JOY STILL FELT, Asimov's memoirs, where I discovered the following for 12 June 74:

'In the afternoon, I signed books for ninety minutes at London's largest bookstore, with fans queuing up in good order for blocks. That evening I attended a science-fiction fan-club meeting at a bar, one that had the air of an impromptu convention. Ruth Kyle was there. She and Dave Kyle were living in England at the time, and Dave was recovering from an appendectomy.'

Which was all he had to say about the meeting - no mention of Arthur C. Clarke, even. He says he travelled up to Brum by train on the 13th, where he signed books, and gave a talk to Mensa on the 14th where Dave Kyle, Jay Kay Klein, and Clarke were present. No mention of giving a talk to the Brum group. I'd forgotten just how sketchy a memoir this was.

Following this, I spent about twenty minutes going through the news pages of *Science Fiction Monthly* which was a complete waste of time. They mention Asimov is coming over, and later mention that there's a tape on sale of his Mensa talk, but on the London pub meeting they are silent.

Looking on the web, I found a complete itinerary for Asimov's visit, which mentions him giving a talk in Brum on the 13th at the Holiday Inn, hosted by Jack Cohen, and also says his meeting with SF fans in London was the last ever at the Globe: <http://www.andrew-may.com/asf/asimov.htm>

And of course, from contemporary news-zine *Checkpoint* #49:

'It is hoped to organise a special 'Globe' meeting to honour the visit of Dr. Asimov, at which he will be present. I've had conflicting reports on the date of this, but Wednesday 12th June seems to be most probable. Need I point out that this may well be the last-ever meeting at the 'Globe'??

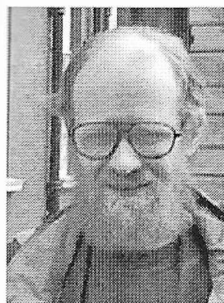
So, such documentary evidence as I can find appears to support the 'Globe' over the 'Tun. Also, Gerry Webb was at a meeting at the Melton Mowbray and when I asked him about it he too was adamant it had been at the Globe. Pretty much everyone and every reference we can find disagrees with Rog.



I've just had some new passport pics taken so I'm attaching a scan. Latest, hot-off-the-presses photo of me, now sans hair.

[*"Aaaargh!" I said, "An international Drugs Baron! Seriously, your 'new look' will take a bit of getting used to, but I think it suits you; makes you look ageless and vaguely East European!" Following your suggestion, Rob, I tackled three other people who were there, and asked for a definite answer. The first to reply was the afore-mentioned 'jovial, bustling, intellectual figure' (told you he wouldn't get away!)]:*

**Andrew Stephenson:** Asimov was definitely at the 'Globe'. If he went elsewhere, I can not say. It was a crowded evening, with the usual overspill out onto the pavement. One feature I recall well was this pushy BBC World Service yahoo who grabbed Asimov for an interview (I seem to remember he said it would be going out to their African Service, Ghod Knows Why) and Dr. A expressed his willingness to be flexible; so maybe La Beeb has archives of the night, too. Rog may have been sniffing too many Ace Doubles.



*Gerbish – 2008.  
His photo.*

**Gerald Bishop:** 'Twas on the Wednesday, and odd week of the month to suit Ike's hectic schedule for the week he was here. There was fun arranging the meeting, because of the cessation of the 'Globe' &/or availability of the 'Tun'. So not sure if it was the First 'Tun' or Last 'Globe'. Or: Second Tun or Penultimate 'Globe'.

My personal feeling is that it was at the 'Globe'. Don't remember the alleged 'walk'. I do remember that Ike spent much of the time outside the pub, 'cause he didn't like the smoky atmosphere. I think Arthur Clarke was there as well, he flew in on the Tuesday for Ike's Inauguration as World Vice President of Mensa at the Savage Club. In one of the boxes of books in my conservatory, I have some of the rare, unsigned, versions of the Programme Booklet for the week, but not sure which of many boxes it is. That booklet was typeset the week before the visit, so should be accurate. (I edited it....) I'll let you know when I come across a copy.

**Dave Rowe:** I distinctly remember the Isaac Asimov meet being at the 'Globe'. I well remember the two fellows from Mensa handing out the programmes and looking slightly lost, and recall Asimov roaming around (especially towards the end of the meet) and talking with everyone individually. Vera Johnson had saved him a seat at one of the functions at the '73 Worldcon. Asimov didn't remember her but in typical character asked if she wanted him and her "to go away to some dark and secluded place."

[*So there we are – we now know the answer – or do we? Meanwhile, here's Don West to put me right on Leeds fandom, and with some home truths about Ken Potter*]

**D. West**

Skipton, Yorks

Dear Peter,

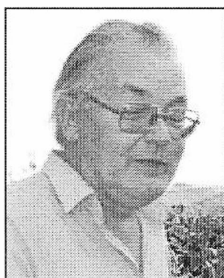
Your two pages on Leeds/Bradford fandom of necessity gave a condensed version, but apart from missing out a great deal you have gone astray on some of the details from the 70s onwards. You say: "Fandom in the city was reborn with the 1973 group at the University, with Alan Dorey, David Pringle, the Harveys, Graham James and Mike Dickinson. They ran the 1979 Eastercon *Yorcon 1* at the Dragonara Hotel and repeated it twice more in 1981 and 1985."

Well, I'm not sure when or where Mike Dickinson first appeared, but Alan Dorey was not at the University before 1975 (and had left by 1985) and Graham James appeared in 1978, having discovered fandom (with Simon Ounsley) via a writing course in Hebden Bridge. By 1979 the Harveys were long gone from Leeds, though they were of course active elsewhere with both fanzines and conventions. But there's a long list of others who were involved at various times from the 70s onwards, including Paul Oldroyd and Chris Donaldson, Lee Montgomerie, Kate Jeary, Tony Berry, Michael Ashley (not to be confused with Mike Ashley), Nigel Richardson, Pete Lyon, Mike Ford, Jan Orys, John Collick, Dave Mooring, Tom Shippey, Simon Polley, Debbi Kerr, and Jenny & Steven Glover.

You don't make this clear, but there were actually two Leeds groups from the 70s onwards: the Leeds University SF Society (LUSFS) which had rules, formal meetings and all the trappings of officialdom, and the Leeds Group, which had no rules at all and consisted of whoever turned up in the pub on a Friday night. There was some overlap, but on the whole it's the informal group which must be credited with achieving more, since LUSFS (like a miniature BSFA) had a mainly passive membership with a rapid turnover. Main LUSFS activity was the club-zine *Black Hole*, a publication of varying quality. (Sometimes it was fairly awful and sometimes it was extremely awful.) There were also a few

meetings at the University with guest speakers. (You may remember appearing yourself. They also had Bob Shaw. They even had me.)

Meanwhile, the pub-based Leeds Group in its prime (roughly 1978-1998) organised three Eastercons and 5 or 6 other conventions, ran parts of the BSFA and Foundation, published *Interzone* and fifteen or twenty fanzine titles, and won twenty-six Nova Awards. On the other hand, we did lose TAFF three or four times. Nobody's perfect. Meetings had from four to forty attendees, since apart from the locals there were often week-ending visitors. Thus the tentacles of Leeds influence reached everywhere,



*D. in 2006. Photo  
by Ian Sorensen*

*Graham James,  
Linda Strickler,  
Simon Polley at  
Yorcon-3.*

*Photo by Arnold  
Akien*



inspiring Chuck Connor to invent the tag of 'Leeds Mafia'. This may have been meant as a put-down, but like Eric Mayer's (American) 'Cafe Fandom' it was more often taken as a compliment.

However, it should be emphasised that nobody ever 'led' the Leeds Group. Your statement that "In 1987 Leeds fandom led by Mal Ashworth ran *Conception* to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first SF convention" would have greatly embarrassed and annoyed Malcolm. As he said in his introduction to the *Conception* Programme Book (the cover of which you reproduce, and which you should have read): "For the fact is that the moving spirit, guiding light and ass-kicking supremo of this weekend's event is an American (expatriate) fan, Linda Strickler James."



*Hazel Ashworth,  
D. West, Dave  
Wood, at  
Conception,  
January 1987.  
Photo by Vin  
Clarke.*

That's explicit enough, and would be confirmed by anyone else who was there. On this occasion it was Linda Strickler, on other occasions it was someone else. The way that the Leeds Group worked was that different people were active on behalf of different projects and the rest made their contribution (or not) as they saw fit. One contributor in 1987 was Geoff Ryman, who was often around Leeds in those days and is the 'unknown' in the photo at the bottom of page 3. There were far too many awkward and insubordinate characters for 'leadership' ever to be more than a temporary and limited arrangement.

Still, as is well known, everything goes to hell if you wait long enough, and the Leeds Group (at least in that particular incarnation) can now be regarded as defunct. Death, dispersal and domesticity have all taken their toll and though a few survivors still keep in touch and see each other occasionally the regular meetings tailed off several years ago. I

suppose somebody really ought to produce a coherent account of who did what when, but the trouble with fan history in general (and Leeds fan history in particular) is that so much of it took place in bars that the details tend to get lost in the alcoholic fog. Perhaps there should be a Designated Sober Person who has to remain conscious and write all this stuff down. Be a bit dull, though.

A history of Ken Potter might not be dull, though it probably wouldn't be very edifying. Jim Linwood's brief report that he is now "suffering from dementia, living in sheltered accommodation" seems a sad but unsurprising conclusion to an erratic and disaster-prone life. I only met Ken a couple of times, but I used to hear about him from Hazel and Malcolm, with whom he kept in (spasmodic) touch. The usual news was that he'd fled his creditors to a new address, discovered a wonderful new money-making scheme, and received a stunning new revelation of Cosmic Truth and The Meaning of It All. The fact that all these things had happened to him several times before never seemed to register. He was not a man who learned from experience.

In later years he had little money to lose (though he did manage to unload some of the little on that Bookmakers' Pension fund, the Infallible Racing System) but he dearly loved a get-rich-quick scheme. He used to send them on to Malcolm: invitations to purchase gold bricks at a reduced rate from Post Office Boxes in Zurich, and other equally plausible offerings, all of which struck Ken as terrific ideas. Meanwhile, he was giving up his phone partly because he couldn't pay the bill, but mainly because it was irritating to have people calling-up demanding their money all the time. He had one credit card, issued by a bank in Chicago, which he hoped was sufficiently far away for his financial history to remain obscure and for him to be able to escape if he had to default.

Hearing of his current condition Hazel remarked that she wasn't surprised since she'd always figured the drink and drugs would catch up with him. Perhaps they did. Nowadays 'binge-drinker' is rather primly applied to anyone who knocks back more than a couple of pints at a time, but the Potter binge-drinking was much more drastic. Hazel recalls walking round town with him on a visit and having difficulty finding a place for a drink, since so many of the pubs had barred him. In the 60s and later he was also a reckless consumer of LSD and whatever other chemicals were available. Moderation was not a concept he recognised. Another characteristic anecdote is of the time he ordered some takeaway food for three or four guests: when it arrived Ken felt a little hungry, so he ate the lot.

I don't know all the places he lived, but he did seem to move around. He was in Findhorn with the astro-veggies for a while, then in Hebden Bridge, another centre of Alternative Culture. It's a town where you see lots of creaky old hippies ambling along, their beards grey and their thinning hair pulled back in rather attenuated ponytails. But it's also known as the Lesbian Capital of the North, which Ken might have found less congenial, since he was one of those who work on the theory that if you proposition twenty women, nineteen might say 'no' but the twentieth might say 'yes'. Using this approach on his students helped lose him his job as a college lecturer.

He was not unintelligent and he could be agreeable enough in small doses, but he does seem to have been almost entirely lacking in common sense. When I met him I thought that though he meant no harm he was what might politely be called 'scatterbrained'. (If Hazel is correct, 'brain

damaged' might be more accurate.) Most people say or do daft things occasionally, but with Ken it was a full-time occupation. An interest in esoteric religions and mystical beliefs might be legitimate enough if pursued in a reasonably thoughtful manner, but Ken tended to fall for whatever piece of Age of Aquarius gibberish he had happened to read in the last five minutes.



*Ken Potter with  
Gerry Webb at  
Ella Parker's  
flat, after  
Loncon II,  
August 1965.  
Photo by Merv  
Barrett.*

His only real and lasting faith was in the printed word: if somebody had written it down then it must be true. Perhaps hoping to make this work for himself he produced a 54-page booklet of his very own: 'THREE BIG WORDS: a modest contribution to the New Age' (Cardboard Sea Publications 1990). The Three Big Words are, of course, "I love you", which seekers after Good Karma are exhorted to apply to everyone and anything. Unfortunately, though unexceptionable enough, the message never goes beyond the usual woolly-minded platitudes to provide information of practical value. It's all just a matter of laying back, loving everybody, and getting in touch with your inner nitwit.



Irene Gore, Dave Wood, & Ken Potter, undated photos from Dave Wood's web-site.

With such an inclination towards religion (of a sort) it might seem surprising that when his wife Irene joined the Jehovah's Witnesses Ken didn't follow her. However, the likelihood is that Ken considered the Witnesses far too ordinary and conventional, while the Witnesses (who are a fairly hard-headed lot, apart from their belief in the literal truth of the Bible) considered Ken far too unordinary, unconventional and downright deranged. The last communication received from Ken was an account of his discovery of a new College of Esoteric Knowledge run by some Secret Masters (sic) operating out of Frinton-on-Sea. There's no answer to something like that, and even his best friends must have got rather tired of making excuses for him.

Presumably that's what happened with Dave Wood, who always gave the impression in conversation that one of the reasons he dropped out of fandom after his marriage was to get away from Ken Potter. He and his wife had both known Ken since childhood and by this time they'd had enough. (Well, he was that kind of guy: he messed up his own life, and if you let him into yours he'd mess that up too.) In the 80s, after Dave came back to fandom, he used to tell Malcolm never, ever, to give his (Dave's) address to Ken. So it's rather a mystery why he would want to track him down, as told by Jim Linwood. Perhaps Jim can explain. And perhaps he can find something positive to say about Ken Potter, since I seem to have presented an exclusively negative view. But he really was a hopeless case.

No such problem with Jim Cawthorn, who was definitely a good guy. I met him once, in 1975 when visiting Graham Hall in London. I liked him personally and respected his talents. It's interesting that Mike Moorcock considers some of his fanzine art better than the professional work, since this has always been my own view.

Perhaps, as suggested, this is due to the difference in medium: on stencil solid blacks are difficult, whereas with pen and ink they can be too easy a shortcut and may be overdone. Another factor might be that the stencil work was of course printed same size, but the pro work was probably reduced. Contrary to popular opinion, size does matter. There's a vague notion that reduction 'sharpens up' a drawing, but it ain't necessarily so. Reduce the blacks and you also reduce the whites, which alters the balance and can make a picture denser, darker and flatter than it should be. Perhaps not enough allowance was made for these effects, or perhaps the reduction was overdone. Whatever, Jim Cawthorn still deserves to be remembered and the Moorcock piece is a fitting tribute.

*[Great LoC, Don! My Leeds photo-page went wrong because I wasn't sure exactly who was around at the start of the 1973 group so I used the names with which I was most familiar. Of course I meant that it was the group who ran the 1979 & subsequent Yorcons, rather than any particular member – lack of space caused an unfortunate telescoping. And I was wrong again about Conception: perhaps because I have such strong memories of being there with Mal Ashworth. As for Ken Potter – I never met him but it all sounds very sad, an extreme example of a fan who wasn't able to cope with the real world. Hazel wrote separately and said, "I have to say that some of the things Ken did really were beyond the pale in anyone's book and it wasn't surprising that Dave Wood wished to keep clear (and this was someone who had known him from the age of four, along with his future wife Brenda, so I don't suppose the decision was lightly taken). Likewise with Malcolm, who'd known him for very many years before he resurfaced in fandom." Oh dear ....And now something from a man who doesn't write LoCs – but I kept on nagging....]*

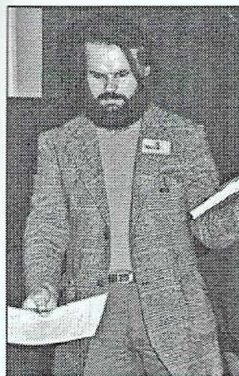
Peter,

Keith Walker  
FanzineFanatique  
@aol.com

Well I'm sure I've bored folks with all this before but here goes. I came into fandom more by accident than design. I had been a science fiction reader since my teenage years. I picked up second-hand SF & horror from market book stalls and those peculiar private lending libraries where you got half price back on return. They used to sell-off paperbacks (mostly) that were too tatty to recirculate and I bought these up for a couple of bob (well probably less than that in those pre-decimal days, you could buy new for that price).

I began buying horror film magazines in 1958 with *Famous Monsters*. I also bought some old SF pulps from the same bookstall in Monmouth Street, London, until I had a row with the stall holder for rummaging through his stock hidden under the adventure and ultra-soft porn he mainly sold. My buying and reading were put on hold during my National Service (mostly in Germany) followed by a couple of years at drama school and a short time in professional theatre when I lived on a shoe-string. I almost discovered fandom or at least one version of it in the mid-sixties when I was tempted to send off for a copy of the fanzine *Gothique* advertised in a pro-film mag., but I moved from the North to London to





Keith handing  
out the fanzines  
at Tynescon,  
1974.  
Photo by Mike  
Meara.

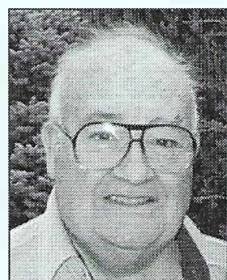
continue my nurse training and it wasn't until I'd finished and became qualified (well doubly-qualified in fact) that I wrote to Chuck Partington for a copy of the semi-pro version of *Alien Worlds* and discovered fanzines. He didn't have a copy to send me even for ready money but he gave the addresses of Mike Ashley and Mike Harris. Mike Ashley sent me a list of fan-ed's. I duly sent off letters and shillings and got back fanzines, often several issues, and was plunged into fannish fanzines though I didn't understand what they were about at first. But there was some sercon stuff there as well. At some point I even came across a zine called *Speculation*. Wonder what happened to that?

Mike Harris had just pubbed his lastish of an ink-stencilled zine called *Monsters Incorporated* and went on to put out a few issues of a more ambitiously printed *Twilight*. I remember the latter since it featured some film crits by a young Ramsey Campbell, with which I wasn't too impressed. Having by now moved on from loccing and contributing to other zines I had ventured (with the help of Dave Sutton) to pubbing my own ish. In one issue of my pretentious news-zine, *Scream*, I criticised Ramsey and earned my first threatened libel threat. Happily this was resolved and he went on to fame and fortune while I settled for obscurity.

Well I did go on to create the British Fantasy Society (as well as having a go at creating several others), and publish more fanzines than I can remember, amongst them my almost infamous fanzine review-zine, *Fanzine Fanatique*, the latter still going strong after thirty years and living proof that you don't learn anything by experience.

*[And now, on the general theme of 'it was tough in the old days', we continue Tony Thorne's story from last time, having left him stranded in the Strand. He missed his train after a Globe meeting, dodged a couple of drunks, was accosted by a prostitute and made his escape. This was 1954, remember.]*

Tony Thorne  
Tonythorne@  
al.com



Tony in 2009,  
from his web-site

I finally arrived at Charing Cross. I had passed a few hotels but they all looked either expensive or too far from the station. Eventually I saw a little yellow light in a back street. Yes, it was one. A real Hotel. I rang the doorbell and waited. Silence, then – slither, slither, clink – then a ghastly CreeeeAAK! The door opened and there stood an Irish hotel proprietor. I knew he was Irish because he was very tall and seemed to be leaning over, or maybe it was the walls. Anyway, I nervously cleared my throat and asked if he had room for a bed-&-breakfast. To my amazement he vanished, appearing through the gloom a minute later and saying, "Yes sorr, come in." (Told you he was Irish).

In I went and peered around. It was dark, dank, dingy and damp, and of course dear as well. There were WET PAINT notices all over the walls but no paint anywhere, just scraped plaster with an odd brick here and there. I signed the register and paid my dough (he insisted on payment in advance).

He motioned for me to go up the stairs and eventually reached my room, No.8. We went in and then over to another door in the corner. "In here," he said, "I think the small bed is made-up." I looked in. It wasn't, just a spring base. He gave me a look of hate, "It'll have to be the double, then."

He paused by the door. "I'll bring your breakfast up at about 8.30" he scowled.

"Er – I have to leave at 7.30 to catch a train, "I said, "I wonder if you'd mind getting it earlier?"

He paused, shocked, on the landing. "Seven, then," he snarled. "I'll TRY and get it by then."

I made a mental note not to touch any breakfast and carefully closed the door. I was amazed to find it had a chain, and a key, too! Aha, I thought, I'll leave it unlocked. That'll fool him when he comes through the secret panel in the wardrobe! I looked at the wardrobe, and dammit if it wasn't shoved up against another door. The panel crack didn't seem so funny, then. If I'd had some bells or old tins I could have tied them to trip-wires, if I'd had any trip-wires.

It came to me suddenly how utterly tired I was and so I wearily undressed and got into my pyjamas. Then I began the hunt for the bedside light-switch. I finally located it just out of reach of the bed, of course. Roughly gauging where the bed was, I reached out for the switch and prepared to leap... now this is the truth... the light went out before my hand was within three inches of the switch.

Imagine the scene. I stood there momentarily petrified. Then slowly I took hold of the switch and clicked it again. Nothing happened. I clicked it again and again. Surely, surely, the management couldn't have turned it off at the mains? Then I remembered that hideous leer; of course, the midnight predatory prowl was about to begin and any minute I would hear those lurching steps in the passage and the creak of the wardrobe door. I edged cautiously over to the doorway and felt for the switch there. To my relief the light came on. A loose wire must have chosen an awkward moment to come loose.

Well, all being calm again I aimed myself at the bed and flicked the switch. Then I leapt. And missed! At least I thought I must have missed because brother, no bed was that hard, surely! But it was. I decided to make the best of it and settled down as comfortably as possible. Then the noises started.

Yes, the NOISES! Soft little creaky ones, harsh big rattling one, with everything in-between to make up a searing symphony of sound guaranteed to prevent all hope of sleep forever. I got out of bed and switched on the light again/ I went to the window and jammed it shut. I went to the little room door and slammed it shut over a newspaper. I got into bed again. I had forgotten the light! I got out, gibbering, switched it off and collapsed into the bed. Believe it or not, this time I did manage to drop off, but many and fearful were the dreams I had that night.

*[Will Tony survive the night? Will he get breakfast in bed? Will he ever get home again? And to think how these softie modern-day fans complained about the poor old George at Kettering! Don't forget to take a look at Tony's fascinating web-site at <http://www.tonythorne.com/>]*

Cartoon by  
Dickie Howell,  
from 'STARS...'





## WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

**Keith Armstrong-Bridges**, who recalled "a drunken young fan at Buxton launching himself downstairs with a cry of 'Catch Me' – we didn't, and he then stood up under a wall-mounted fire extinguisher that did not suffer fools gladly." And **John Berry** finally saw the light; "The latest *Relapse*, its contents and your visit have made me realise that the Willis term for myself as being a 'NONCONPOOP' as being totally valid. I realise what I have missed over the decades. You have provided a gold-mine of information for future fannish historians, and the photographs are particularly important." I bet John will love **Sandra Bond's** comment; "I remember reading Magnus Magnusson's history of MASTERMIND and nearly dropping the book when I found John Berry and the fingerprint fanzine (yes, really!) FINGERPRINT WHORLED played a significant part in the show behind the scenes (John's co-editor founded the club for former contestants, which proved highly popular)."

**Ramsey Campbell** blew the whistle; "No nostalgia for you this time, but an interesting coincidence. A couple of years ago some new neighbours moved into the house directly opposite ours. Melanie turned out to be a cellist who teaches the instrument at the very grammar school in Liverpool where I was educated. We've dined out a few times with her and husband Nick and her mother Sylvia. Over our last meal Sylvia mentioned that she was related to a science fiction writer, though only by marriage. Even when I recalled her title – Lady Platt – the penny hung suspended for a moment. But her husband was indeed Lord Platt, Charles's uncle". **Graham Charnock** advised me about his web-site for convention reports ([www.cartilegeworld.co.uk/index.html](http://www.cartilegeworld.co.uk/index.html)), while **Graham James** grumped, "Interesting to see the Leeds Bradford stuff as displayed at the Bradford Eastercon which I dropped into on the Sat evening and ended up with a Russian meal out with Rog Peyton, Mike & Pat Meara & Brian Parker. Some of the facts are not wholly accurate but it would take that Leeds' group write-up to set them straight – yea the one you've been after." [Fortunately, D. West has saved you the trouble, Graham!]

**Jerry Kaufman** also put me straight; "I will make one minor correction to your report of your *Carfax* travels. The 'Museum of Science Fiction' is accurately called 'The Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame.' Shorthand, this comes to EXP/SFM, or for those who ignore the music portion, Science Fiction Museum or SFM." While **Robert Lichtman** noted; "In Jim Linwood's list of 'Ten Things I Learned at *Cytricon I*' he mentions a copy of Earl Kemp's WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION? at £950. That rang a bell, and I went to the last catalogue I had from George Locke where I found the item in question at that price. But Jim fails to note the additional materials in this offering: 'Together with some ephemera from Kemp puffing the 1962 *Pitcon* [sic, it was in '60] and listing the offerings on auction, including the entire archive of letters for 'Who Killed SF?' (your cataloguer would love to know who bought that!)."

**Chris Miller** surfaced after nearly forty years, "Yes, indeed a surprise to receive the current ish – I didn't know anyone had that photo of me and Alan [Ned] Rispin taking pot-shots at each other! It may be some time before I can send you any material, although I will definitely be able to update/amend the OUSFG/Marcus Ramsay Wigan page, & maybe some others." [I'm still waiting, Chris!] And an update from **Geoff Nelder** had previously thought his father, Bill, had done the cover for *Vector* #1; "I received a reply today from Terry Jeeves who confirms he drew the spaceship for that cover. My dad did all the artwork for Eric Jones' *Sidereal* and probably some for other early *Vectors*. He passed away recently after his move to Peebles, and Steve Upham at Screaming Dreams has asked me to write a kind of obit for to be published on-line in his *Estronomicon*. I'm putting together a piece about his art in the 1950s and his influence, with Eric and my mother, on my own sci-fi interests. I co-edit *Escape Velocity*, a joint US-UK on-line sci-fi magazine. I was born to it. Maybe a mention of my website, please? [Well OK, Geoff, though I do wish you'd use 'SF' instead of 'sci-fi'; <http://geoffnelder.com>]

**Joe Patrizio** wrote, "I thought that the way you integrated my old con report into Bruce's piece was neat and worked well. It's funny, but while some of the things Bruce and I write about could have happened yesterday, other bits just don't trigger any memories at all. Anyway, another excellent piece from Bruce; hope there are more to come." And **Lloyd Penney**, notes, "Fay Symes might be interested to find that the horrible Bill Shatner movie she remembers seeing, 'Kingdom of the Spiders', was filmed in the late 70s in the small village of Qualicum Beach, British Columbia, and I was living there during the filming. Never saw Bill, for he came, shot his scenes, and left post-haste. When the movie premiered, those few of us who actually paid to see it were not looking for a particular actor, but for the background shots outside our homes." While **Ian Peters** asked, "Mike Moorcock is making an archive of Jim Cawthorn's work, and I have a largish picture of Jim's on my wall. It has a Pellucidarian theme. Do you think Mike would be interested?" [Undoubtedly, Ian, and we'll print it next time]

**Greg Pickersgill** praised, "George Locke article is fascinating and the Bruce Burn quite brilliant. Very nice to see he has several good words for both Norman Wansborough and Brian Burgess. Good man, pass on my compliments to him, please." And **Ian Watson** wrote sadly, "What can I say fannishly about the newest *Relapse*, accompanied by a ticked warning... except that I experienced the Asimov visit of 13 June 1974 by heading not very far from the School of History of Art in Summer Row with a book to be signed by The Eminence, to Andromeda a little further up Summer Row, and that Asimov was wearing a big badge which blared, 'Give Up Smoking.' "I'm trying to," I lied propitiating. "Good," he said. One word from Asimov during my life, and verily that word was Good!" Finally, another bit of bluff from **Wally Weber**: "*Relapse* Number 14 arrived in my mail on Wednesday the 10th. After ego-scanning this marvellous publication I am of the opinion that the only thing preventing it from being as good as Number 13 is that it is 8 pages shorter. I am so ashamed, knowing that if only I had sent you the first three chapters of my letter of comment on #13 and if you had printed 10 percent or more of that, # 14 would have been superior to issue #13. Other comments were received from Hazel Ashworth, Keith Freeman, David Redd, Andy Richards, Doreen Rogers, Colin Steele, and Ian Whates; Thanks, all!

## WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS LIMITED-EDITION PAPER COPY? (Only 100 printed):-

- ☒ It would surely be inconceivable to leave you out (though a LoC would still be welcome).
- ☒ You've helped with this and/or previous issues (ditto).
- ☒ Somewhere inside your name is mentioned... now that merits some sort of response, doesn't it!
- ☐ This is a sample issue and you really need to show your interest in some way... if you *are* interested, that is!
- ☐ Oh dear, I hate this one; but we've reached the end of the road unless I hear from you RSN.

Tired? Lacking motivation? Just tell me and next time I'll e-mail the colour version as a pdf, my preferred option for overseas readers. And this issue will go onto Bill's eFanzines site after four weeks. Remember, 'you're never too old to relapse', and that the fanzine is nothing at all without *your* memories of fannish times past!

– Peter Weston 23/10/2009