

*"Relapse is the best fanzine currently being published anywhere in the world, for my money" – Sandra Bond, mailing list comment.*



*'Right you lads, now we're going to have a nice little convention all of our own.'*

*- Fandom goes to War, with the usual apologies to 'Giles'*

**INSIDE;** 'A Tale of Two Fandoms' by Bob Parkinson; 'Extracts from Bill Temple's Diaries' by Joe Patrizio; 'They Called him "Spaceship" Clark' by Harry Turner; 'The 1944 Eastercon' by Rob Hansen; AND MORE





# RELAPSE

Hold onto your seats because with this issue we plunge into Deep Time and it gets a little bumpy on re-entry. Once again *Relapse* is brought to you by Peter Weston, 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS (Tel 0121 354 6059), and I'll be looking out for LoCs and anecdotes at: [pr.weston@btinternet.com](mailto:pr.weston@btinternet.com). The privileged few get the rare paper edition but just ask and I'll gladly send the pdf (my preferred option for overseas readers) and it will go onto the *eFanzines* web-site four weeks after printed copies have been posted. Our mission is to explore the rich history of British SF fandom, with a dedicated team which includes Chief Researcher Greg Pickersgill; Special Researcher Ian Millsted; and Research Consultant Rob Hansen.

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"How you can actually pull the whole zine together and produce it I still don't know" – David Redd, LoC

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As you'll see this is a 'Thirties & Forties' number, which was not my original intention but this time the fanzine took off in a direction all of its own. That's partly because I've been exceptionally lucky in stumbling onto not just one but two 'primary sources' – the sort of material which, as Tom Shippey says, if it were in a 'respectable' field like Renaissance art or the study of French chamber-pots would easily be worth a book or two and would probably get me tenure.

Well, no academic plaudits here but even so I'm delighted to feature two very different eye-witness accounts of the earliest days of organised SF fandom in this country; the first from Bob Parkinson who presents the memoir of Les Johnson, first secretary of the British Interplanetary Society, and the second from Bill Temple's journals, edited by Joe Patrizio.

Both are illustrated with some amazing pictures from two further sources – from Ted Carnell's photo-album, thanks to the kindness of his grand-daughter Susannah Belsey, and from the superb web-site on Harry Turner's life & times created by his son Philip. I use the word 'amazing' because ancient photographs are so easily lost and yet these pictures have been treasured, first by Ted and Harry themselves as reminders of their lost youth and then by their families, kept safe for seventy years so we can appreciate them now. And appreciate them I do; looking at those young, innocent faces I feel all over again a kinship and an affinity for their flaming enthusiasm for rocketry, spaceflight, for science fiction itself and for those many wonders which were once in the inaccessible future. Everyone was 'goshwow' in those days!

Their stories take us up to the outbreak of the Second World War and then I've taken two extracts from Philip Turner's site since as Philip says, "my Dad intended these pieces for circulation among people who would appreciate them." His father Harry was one of the most influential early fans, both socially active and noted for the quality of his writing and artwork. The first item is an earnest 1938 letter from the original SFA which shows how seriously they took their interest in science fiction, the second describes how fans found they had to adapt to a very different life in the armed forces and how Arthur Clarke, for one, didn't let this distract him from the enthusiasms which would ultimately make him famous.

And Rob Hansen drives home these points in his account of the 'Cosmos Club' and the 1944 Eastercon at Teddington, Middlesex; there might have been a war going on but it didn't stop fans from getting together, and as Rob says, "this was as full and complete a convention as any that had been seen in Britain to that point. Organising and running it under wartime conditions was a magnificent achievement." What would they have said if they'd known that real rocketships would start to fall out of the sky just six months later and a few miles up the road!

Back as long ago as issue #5 John Hall made a comment [about fifties fans] with which I immediately disagreed. He said, "because those guys were fans there is an assumption that we would have known each other instinctively across the years, but that might be a tad romantic....People not only looked and dressed differently, I believe they *were* different." The argument has rumbled on intermittently ever since but I'm more sure than ever that John is wrong, that the fannish mind-set is something which has remained constant despite the immense changes in material circumstances since the early days. I can empathise with Harry Turner who fell foul of the 1875 Explosives Act, having done exactly the same thing myself twenty years later; I understand why Bill Temple spent his evenings cranking-out fanzines and envy him for the close friendships he enjoyed with Arthur Clarke, Sam Youd, Ted Carnell and all those other kindred spirits.

Of course, my own formative years were closer to 1930 than 2010, so where younger, modern-day fans are concerned John Hall might be more correct. After all, they can no longer be so optimistic about the onward march of progress (Bill Temple was convinced that 'Science would solve all the world's problems'), or so enthusiastic about science fiction itself (Wally Gillings confessed that 'he practically lived for SF'). And perhaps we older fans have become jaded; as D. West said in #14, "Even concepts which are technically original will cease to have an impact on the hardened SF reader; they may be 'new' in one sense, but in another sense they are merely the same sort of thing – just one more wild idea."

By contrast, in this issue you'll read about a time when fandom was new and all things were possible, when genre science fiction itself was only ten years old. This was the first generation and they were all so *young*; teenagers or in their early twenties. Clarke contacted fandom at sixteen, Les Johnson was twenty when he joined the BIS, even Gillings was only twenty-four when he met Bill Temple and he was probably the oldest of the lot. They didn't have any old-timers hanging around; these fans were doing everything for the first time and that's probably why I so much enjoy reading about their exploits. Enthusiasm, after all, is infectious.

This all fits in rather nicely with an exchange Greg Pickersgill and I had around New Year. Greg wrote, "I was just spending a few minutes tidying the UK fanzine heaps, and it crossed my mind – not for the first time – that I (we) rarely have any occasion to refer to fanzines published post-1970; makes one wonder really, is it because that era just isn't interesting, or because we think we know everything because we lived through it, or because in general those fanzines are very content-light, in that there may well be a lot of amusing stuff therein but there's actually not much hard information about anything."

I wrote back to say, "I think we like early fandom because it was so enthusiastic about science fiction, something which was gradually lost as time moved on. Even by the fifties the 'goshwow' attitude had become a bit of a joke. And also, so many of those early fans were inspired to turn their enthusiasms into careers, which didn't seem to happen so much in later years. It makes their fandom seem more focussed, somehow."

Greg wrote back rather doubtfully, "I do see what you mean. But in reality there was as much genuine interest in SF in the 70s & 80s as in earlier eras, it just wasn't expressed in the same way. Of course there is also the point that there was a degree of desperation in the pre-60s, simply because SF was in general so much harder to come by, and by 1970 (say) that had all changed totally and not necessarily for the better either."

"Actually I do feel, honestly, that our researches are influenced by the fact that we do not *know* any of these people personally. Think – in a different context you would be researching for example, Tim Illingworth, Martin Hoare, Graham Boak or Phil Probert. The problem is that the project would be coloured by personal contacts, either good, bad or indifferent, and it would be much more difficult to be dispassionate. We know all these old fans as simply old fans, and not as the annoying bastards they probably were at least half the time. We don't know anything about them as people, really. To a certain extent what we're doing is re-making a fandom in our own heads, creating a ramshackle patchwork utopia filled with people who while occasionally incompetent are good-hearted and constructive and with whom we accept for the moment that we share more than might divide. There are many worse ways of spending one's time."

#### **'John Ashcroft, my fan, where are you now?'**

So wrote Tony Glynn in his LoC in #14, recalling a meeting with a youthful admirer at the 1954 *Supermancon*. That was the end of the story, I thought, but during a routine search through *New Worlds* I came across an inside-cover 'profile' of that very same John Ashcroft in the March 1961 number, in which he revealed that he had sold his first story to editor Carnell when he was only sixteen. I sent the profile to Tony (newly on e-mail) who was thrilled:

"That discovery was quite something! I see he lived in Halsall which is close to Ormskirk, but I looked up the numerous Ashcrofts in the phone directory and there are none with the initial 'J' in that area. It would be good to have some contact with him and perhaps get him into *Relapse*. Of course, he might be ex-directory. Then again, he could well have moved away, possibly with marriage or emigration, and we can't discount death. Selling to Carnell at 16 must have made him the youngest pro-writer of his time and he certainly seemed an intellectual type of youth. His comments in the *NW* piece are mature and thoughtful and he was surely a loss to the field, though he might have carried on writing in other fields. Did he ever show up in any fanzines? He might not have been the joining kind but he was sufficiently interested in fandom to attend at least two conventions. I wonder if he ever had any contact with the Liverpool group, not too far away? I've been searching the net and the only luck I have is the discovery that he had a letter published in *Nebula 22* in 1957."

Intrigued, I hauled out my trusty *MITSFS Index* and it turns out that John had nine stories in the British magazines between 1954 & 1963. Perhaps he was inspired after meeting Tony because quite soon afterwards he started to sell, first to *Science Fantasy* then to *Authentic*, *Nebula* and *New Worlds*. I was only able to sample four of the stories and they're all 'gimmick' pieces on the line of 'things-are-not-what-they-seem', but not bad for their time. I also checked *Nebula 22* and found Ashcroft's full address (in 1957), which, I thought, might be the breakthrough Tony needed in order to trace him.



**Left: John Ashcroft the author in 1961, from his *New Worlds* profile.**



**Right: The Shorrock's room party at *Supermancon*, 1954. Is that John Ashcroft in the centre (marked)?**

I wrote back to Tony, "As far as I know John didn't attend any further conventions after 1955 – at least, I haven't found his name on any membership lists, and he doesn't seem to appear in any LaSFaS records. However, based on that picture from *New Worlds*, I think I CAN identify him on a picture taken at the Shorrock's room party at *Supermancon*; see what you think." And there the matter rests. He would be seventy-one by now – that's not too old to relapse!

#### **The John Brunner Mystery (cont/d)**

This one will run and run. The original 'mystery' – why did 'our' JB have to scratch a living from hack science fiction when he came from a wealthy and incredibly well-connected family? – has led on to all sorts of interesting discoveries. First off the mark was that man from the Encyclopedia Company, Dave Langford, who wrote on 6<sup>th</sup> November to take me to task (in the nicest possible way):

"At last you have ensnared Hazel, secret mistress of family history with 16,000+ people on her database. The Brunner family tree fascinated her, although she rather wished it hadn't been simplified."

"No doubt 5,271,009 fans have written-in to query the full name you quoted, 'John Houston Killian Brunner': wasn't it Kilian with a single I? And Kilian Houston rather than Houston Kilian? This gave me a flashback to 1995 when I wrote a little tribute to John for *The Skeptic* – a British equivalent of *The Skeptical Inquirer*, copying the American spelling because it was founded by U.S. expat. Wendy Grossman. In this piece, following the received wisdom of the SF *ENCYCLOPEDIA*, I quoted the full birth name as John Kilian Houston Brunner."

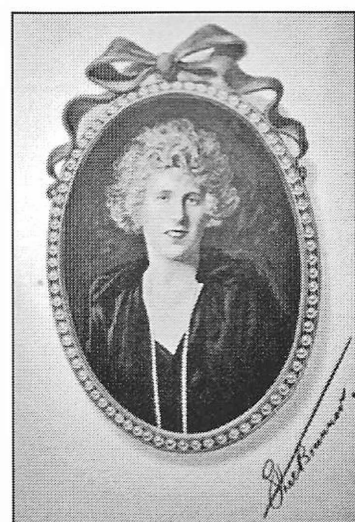
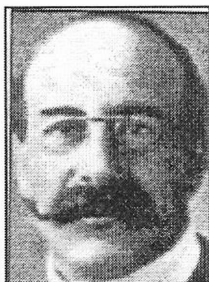
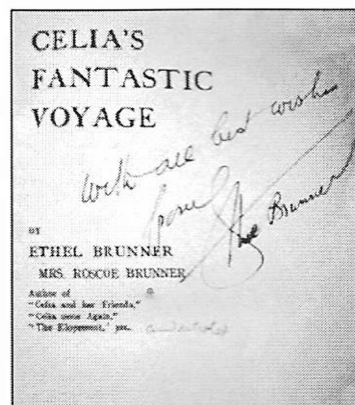
"Next issue – it was 1996 by then – I was haughtily taken to task by James England, SF fan and author of one novel, *THE MEASURED CAVERNS*, published by the illustrious Robert Hale Ltd. According to him, shoddy researcher Langford was utterly wrong about those middle names. John had made them up and James knew this because John had told him so. As you know, Professor, John made use of them for an early working name, 'K. Houston Brunner'; James had presumably misunderstood a reference to this.

"He'd annoyed me just enough that I paid actual money to the Register Office for a copy of John's birth certificate. Which confirms his birthplace of Preston Crowmarsh (father's residence) and most definitely shows his given names as John Kilian Houston. One L only, and in that order. I still have the copy, tucked into the back flap of *THE STONE THAT NEVER CAME DOWN*, so here's a scan to add to your ever-growing Tower of Fan-historical Documentation to the Moon."

I sent the certificate on to our sleuth Ian Millsted, who replied, "Thanks for JB's birth cert. – his father's occupation ('of independent means') reinforces the idea that money was passed down in the family at least that far, possibly in the form of shares in ICI. No reply yet from John's cousin, Mary Brunner, and I wrote some time ago. I have been in touch with the current Sir John and his brother Hugo but neglected to ask about the Kilian name – maybe I can get back to one of them (Sir John lives in Australia). I've had a quick look for contact details for the sister (Jennifer), without luck, and will keep trying."



John Brunner and girl-friend Paula at Chessmancon, 1972. Photo by Mervyn Barrett.



Left, Ethel Brunner; Above, top, Sir Alfred Mond, bottom, Roscoe Brunner. Note the strong resemblance to our JB! Photos from George Locke & Ian Millsted.

Then that indefatigable ferret, George Locke, wrote on 12<sup>th</sup> November: "Your little family tree on the Brunners has kinda confirmed something I had long suspected – that the author of several romantic novels about a girl called Celia, published between about 1917 and 1924, WAS related to Brunner. She was Ethel Brunner, and her books are damned rare, but I have one or two copies in one of my boxes – I vaguely remember they were inscribed. So I guess that's where Brunner's literary talent came from – his grand-mother. And I've just had another idea. JB was pretty precocious as a writer, and was active as a fan in his teens. I'm wondering whether he ever employed the name 'M. Houston' for his fan fiction? I have a short novel with that by-line but it's in the shop, where I must disappear to now."

George didn't keep me guessing for very long. On 15<sup>th</sup> November he continued: "Following from my earlier email, I've done a wee bit of checking. Firstly, I have a 1954 copy of *EYE*, addressed to Pilot Officer J. K. H. Brunner at RAF Bletchley so that's where he spent part of his National Service time. Incidentally, this doesn't mean he was actually a pilot; it's the RAF equivalent of Second Lieutenant, and all it means was that he was an officer; he could have been a clerk or mechanic or something.

"I found the two books by his grandmother, Ethel Houston; my gawd, they're seriously peculiar! The second, *CELIA'S FANTASTIC VOYAGE* might even be definable as fantasy or utopian, but there are 400 pages of turgidity and eccentricity to wade through. But it has a coloured frontispiece portrait of the author. My copy, signed by her, was published in 1924. JB wouldn't have known her of course, since she died in 1926, but he could have inherited his literary gifts from her, and more than likely read her books. The trouble is, Peter, a little digging has revealed a whole can of worms – Ethel was shot by her husband in 1926, who then killed himself – or so it is generally believed. But I came across a recent book which, according to the bit available on line, suggests that might not have been the true story – political and business stuff.

"Meanwhile, I have a strong suspicion that three stories (one a short novel) and a poem in the 1950 fanzine *Nekromantik* signed 'M. Houston' could well have been JB's work: the short novel reads just like one of those 'Vargo Statten' things of the time, and as you know, he actually published one as by 'Gill Hunt' in 1951. Maybe this one had also been submitted and rejected, so he lumbered poor old Manly Banister (editor of *Nek*) with it?"

I passed George's message onto Ian Millsted, who came straight back to me: "How fascinating about Ethel Brunner. I had wondered about looking more into the added mystery of Roscoe and Ethel's deaths. The book George is talking about may be *FORMULA FOR MURDER; THE ICI MYSTERY* by R. M. Bevan. Hugo Brunner told me about this, but I've not yet bought it because it's a bit pricey. I do have, and am currently reading (for a separate political article) the 'Biography of Sir John Brunner' by Stephen Koss."

Just before Christmas Ian wrote again with the full story: "Further to George's information about John Brunner's grandmother, Ethel, being a writer it seems she wrote four books. These were *CELIA AND HER FRIENDS* (1916); *THE ELOPEMENT* (1917); *CELIA ONCE AGAIN* (1919); and *CELIA'S FANTASTIC VOYAGE* (1924).



"The books all feature the same cast of characters which seem to have been based on those around her. Celia was Ethel Brunner herself. Her father-in-law, Sir John Brunner, is fictionalised as Lord Tyneforth while his partner in Brunner-Mond is represented by Stalybrass. Roscoe Brunner and Alfred Mond are also there in fictional form.

"In his book *FORMULA FOR MURDER* the author, R. M. Bevan, suggests that the deaths of Roscoe and Ethel Brunner were caused by the actions of Sir Alfred Mond. He raises some interesting questions about the police investigation but I'm not convinced by the conspiracy theory he develops. It seems more likely that things were not looked into properly because of inept police and coroners rather than some grand cover-up.

"Roscoe and Ethel Brunner left cash assets of £200,000 which would be worth many millions today<sup>1</sup>. Bevan does not record what other assets there were. It might be interesting to find out what shares in Brunner-Mond/ICI they held. The money probably went to the two sons, Anthony and Patrick, as their daughter, Shelagh, was by then married to Prince Ferdinand de Liechtenstein (nephew of the Crown Prince).

"John's uncle, Patrick Brunner, was sometimes described as a film producer although the only credit I've found for him is for a dramatic short called 'Happy Event' from 1939. He is credited as director. (If that was his sole film then uncle and nephew have that in common, I believe. I've never seen 'The Terrornauts' from 1967 which was scripted by 'our' John Brunner, and while I've heard it's awful I'm curious to watch an SF film with Charles Hawtrey in the cast).

"In Patrick Brunner's case perhaps war service halted his film career. There is some speculation that he wrote speeches for Winston Churchill, so perhaps writing talent ran more widely within the family than we thought. In 1933 Patrick had married Elaine Howlett whose father Richard Howlett had been valet to King George V for over thirty years (and Queen Mary was a godparent to their daughter Mary – known as April).

"Elaine, described in her obituary in *The Independent* as "Highly perceptive, determined, and sometimes jolly difficult", arranged the purchase of Wotton House in Buckinghamshire. The neighbouring South Pavilion was the home of John Gielgud for many years and the Gielgud archives in the National Library contain an item called 'Another world than this' – an anthology of poems for Patrick Brunner. This is dated 1967, just after Patrick's death but I don't know the full story.

"The South Pavilion is now owned by Tony & Cherie Blair, and *The Sunday Telegraph* on 6<sup>th</sup> January carried an article about Tony Blair wanting to make changes to South Pavilion to which some neighbours are objecting. The article contains quotes from David Gladstone, who is the husband of Mary/April Brunner (John's cousin). He is the great-great-great nephew of William Gladstone, the former Liberal Prime Minister. They live next door in Wotton house and they and Blairs have dined with each other.

"With regard to John Brunner's father, Anthony Brunner, it is worth referring to the Bevan book again, since the author interviewed John a few months before his death and wrote as follows:-

"'By nature, John Brunner seldom looked back; his roots and his ancestry held little appeal'

"Brunner told Bevan that his father suffered severe losses in the Wall Street crash. Although his birth certificate gives father's occupation as 'of independent means' it seems likely to me that there was enough money left for Anthony to live without working, but not enough to allow his children to live independently throughout their lives.

"On his aunt, Brunner said 'When Aunt Shelagh married the Prince it was a morganatic marriage ... The Prince was definitely a playboy and even on the night of their wedding he left her to flirt with an actress. It was a loveless marriage and they soon divorced. Aunt Shelagh eventually re-married to an Austrian/Hungarian citizen who came to be interred on the Isle of Man during the Second World War.'

"Of the deaths of his grandparents Brunner said, 'I was told only the briefest of details by my father. It was a family scandal not really to be discussed.'

"I contacted R. M. Bevan who wrote "From what I remember of John Brunner he was a real odd-ball ... certainly not the easiest I ever interviewed." He hinted there may be more to come regarding the Roscoe & Ethel deaths.

"Picking up on Greys Court mentioned in *Relapse* #15, when I mentioned this to my wife – who is not an SF reader but is a keen National Trust visitor – she dug out a booklet from a long ago visit. Greys Court was donated to the NT by Sir Felix Brunner in 1969. I think, in general, that side of the Brunner family seems to have had a happier time of it."

Thanks Ian, for a splendid bit of research; as I said last time, what an incredibly well-connected family! And as a long-shot I asked John Burke (with whom I've recently established contact) if JB ever mentioned his family during the two years he worked for John at the 'Books for Pleasure' group. He replied, "John was a very prickly, not to say arrogant, character. He wrote some good stuff, but none of it was anywhere near as good as he confidently supposed it to be. He put up the backs of all my other staff at Paul Hamlyn, and when in one of his fits of pique he offered his resignation I simply had to accept it rather than calm him down, or the rest of the team would have lynched me." No surprises there, then!

I think there are still a few questions; surely JB's father couldn't have lost *all* that money? The Wall Street crash was in 1929, yet on that 1934 birth certificate Anthony Brunner still described himself as 'of independent means'. How come JB went to a good private school yet didn't go on to University (which would have deferred, if not avoided the draft)? Why didn't his father pull a few strings to get him a position in the City or somewhere? How on Earth did he manage to resist boasting about his well-connected family when he boasted about everything else? I had, earlier, suspected his 1958 marriage to Marjorie might have caused a falling-out but if there *was* any sort of breach it's clear that it happened a lot earlier; JB himself describes how in 1954 "I was living in a two-guinea-a-week room on an income which averaged £4 per week," he recalls, "I learned an awful lot of ways of cooking potatoes".

And here's a tit-bit for Hazel; Anthony Brunner married his wife Amy Phyllis (usually known by her middle name 'Felicity') on 5 March 1934 and JB was born on 14<sup>th</sup> September. He was certainly premature, one way or the other! But unless we hear from the still-extant cousin or sister we're unlikely ever to know any more, so for now at least this one will have to rest. However, there are a few more Brunner stories in *The Melting Pot*, later in this issue.

<sup>1</sup> According to the National Archive Currency Converter, that sum is equivalent to £6 million at today's prices! Anthony Brunner would have been well set-up if he received a half or even a third – and remember, he probably inherited shares as well. Where did it all go?

## Now about Jim England...

Earlier in the above investigation Dave Langford mentioned James England's solitary SF novel *THE MEASURED CAVERNS*, which intrigued me because I used to know Jim England, as he was then. Well, not 'know' exactly because we never actually met, but readers of that literary epic *WITH STARS IN MY EYES* will recall that he was the butt of a nasty little trick perpetrated by Charles Platt back in the bad old days of the mid-sixties. Jim lived at Kingswinford and ran something called BASRA – the British Amateur Scientific Research Association (which was a very dead duck indeed) and wrote several articles on 'Concepts of SF' for *Vector* which at the time struck me as being extremely boring.

So I was amazed to discover that Jim had managed to sell a novel, if only to the third-rate firm of Robert Hale, and especially so since I had casually written-off later-day fans as prospective authors back at the start of this interminable editorial. Naturally I asked Dave to tell me more:

"I remember that the novel was reviewed in *Vector* – pause to check BSFA index – yes, in #91, January 1979, by David Wingrove – which crossed with JE's letter in *Matrix* the following month complaining that it hadn't been reviewed. Actually, I associate this with a complaint he made about having been dismissively reviewed just because he'd been published by Robert Hale, but this could be False Memory Syndrome or maybe I saw that somewhere else altogether in another fanzine. I don't have a copy of his book, but was just about to order some stuff from ABE books and saw one going for only a quid: will take a look. See how Weston the all-powerful Puppet Master controls my every action! But maybe *THE MEASURED CAVERNS* will prove too boring to write about.

(Later) "It's not actively bad in the Thog or Fanthorpe manner, but uses too-familiar SF devices in a distinctly ungripping way. As indicated by the blurb, our wimpy hero John C. is one of various kids raised in isolation cells with TV communication only (shades of 'The Machine Stops') and lied to about the world above ground (as Dick's 'The Defenders'). JC makes minor illicit discoveries about Sanctuary, foreshadowing a Conflict with Authority which never actually happens; this drags on for two-thirds of the book. Suddenly, for unrelated reasons, he finds himself in the dread Outside and plays Candide for a short while in what proves to be New York, still with a singular lack of tension or urgency even though he gets hit in the mouth once. Back among the underground conspirators, JC endures an info-dump about the Sanctuary setup which makes it seem (if possible) even less interesting than before; and happily goes back to his cell. That's it.

"It is a sad thing to read the very brief ENGLAND, JAMES entry in the current *SF Encyclopedia* draft, to call up the list of incoming links, and to find that the only other entry (of 10,050+ words) which mentions him is that for ROBERT HALE LIMITED. Perhaps we're seeing the result of another fiendish trick by Charles Platt; 'Aha!' cackled Platt evilly. 'Since I happen to be reading the slush-pile at Robert Hale Limited, I will destroy the reputation of this James England by ... Ho! Ho! Ho! ... passing *THE MEASURED CAVERNS* for publication!'"

## Missed Opportunity?

Since the British Interplanetary Society figures large in this issue, I sat up when Andy Sawyer recently wrote on the secret e-list, "I had an enquiry about Colin Askham, who was in the first Liverpool group with Les Johnson and a leading light in the BIS. He told me that Askham was a mate of John Moores, who started Littlewoods Football Pools in 1923".

Bill Burns answered, "the story is told in Barbara Clegg's 1993 book, *THE MAN WHO MADE LITTLEWOODS*. The pools business was set up while Moores, Askham, and a third partner, Bill Hughes, were employed by the Commercial Cable Company, having met at the cable station in Waterville, Ireland. They had started a little supply business on the side (strictly against company regulations) and when they were transferred to the company's offices at Liverpool they got the idea for the pools. They couldn't use their own names for the company but Askham had adopted that name after having being brought up by an aunt of that family, having been born Colin Henry Littlewood, so they used that for the company name.

"They made no money at all initially and had to pay expenses, so by Christmas 1924 something had to be done. John Moores still had faith in the idea, so he bought out Colin and Bill for the £200 each that they had put in, and took sole control of the enterprise. Then the idea took off and Moores became a zillionaire and started other things such as the Littlewoods department store. Colin Askham remained close with Moores for many years; the last mention of him in the book is regarding a trip to Europe that he took with John and his family in 1953 as his personal assistant."

What a missed opportunity! If Askham had hung on a bit longer he could have been the benevolent millionaire the BIS (and the SF community) needed. Andy, of course, is employed by the John Moores Liverpool University....!

## Funny how things work out....

The idea for a 'Deep Time' issue first came to me nearly a year ago when Sam Youd (that's 'John Christopher' to you) kindly sent me a short account of his days as an SF fan and would-be writer in the early nineteen-fifties. I thought a couple of other pieces from the same period would make a good feature and indeed, thanks to Rob Hansen I recently made contact with John Burke, now 87 and living in Scotland, who has written a similar article of his own. But then Bob Parkinson and Joe Patrizio told me about their 'finds' and I realised this would push us back quite a bit further, right to the dawn years of British fandom in 1934.

Shortly afterwards Rob described the 'Cosmos Club' on the secret e-list and I thought it deserved a wider audience, while at roughly the same time I discovered Philip Turner's web-site about his father Harry. So here's the result – a busy 44 pages, and Sam and John Burke have been crowded out! My apologies to both, but I'm definitely going to publish their pieces next time in a special 'fifties' issue with, hopefully, another series of extracts from Bill Temple's diaries along with stories about other fifties professionals and fan-groups. Plus more photographs of times gone by.

Lots of other things are in the pipeline; Bruce Burn is working on further instalments of 'The Wandering Ghu', we'll have more to say about Kyril Bonfiglioli, and sometime soon Sandra Bond should be finishing her masterpiece, provisionally titled 'A Requiem for *Nebula*'. I'm still sitting on Chuck Connors' account of eighties fandom ('Of Times Remembered'), just waiting for the right time to fit it in, I'm hopeful of hearing more from George Locke, and there's Wally Weber's Illustrated TAFF Report to finish. I also want to continue the 'Forgotten Fans' feature, missing from the last few issues. I long ago sent out the assignments (translation; pleading letters) and I remain hopeful of results, sooner or later. Fans on my list include Ron Bennett, Eric Bentcliffe, Brian Burgess, Vince Clarke, Terry Jeeves, Ethel Lindsay & Walt Willis. And we might even have something more to say about John Brunner!

- Peter Weston, 26/01/2010





Bob Parkinson was a member of the Cheltenham SF Circle back in 1960 and subsequently wrote for various fanzines including my own *Speculation* until the early seventies, after which we lost contact until Jim Linwood recently put us back in touch. In the meantime Bob was hardly idle; he went into the aerospace industry and as Dr Bob Parkinson, M.B.E., he's now right up there with Gerry Webb as an Aerospace Consultant Engineer specialising in Spacecraft System Design and is President of the British Interplanetary Society, along with many other qualifications. He has written numerous papers and books on subjects such as HOTOL and Blue Streak, and is an accomplished space artist. Go to his website; (<http://homepage.nflworld.com/bobparkinson/>) it's a lot more exciting than my door-handles! [PW]

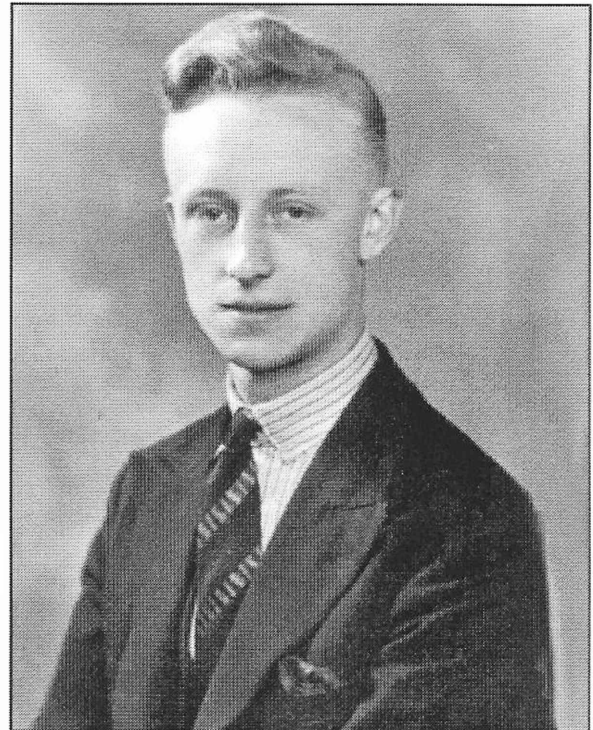
*Photo from Bob's web-site*

## A Tale of two Fandoms

### SF fans and the space enthusiasts

Edited by Bob Parkinson,  
from a memoir by Leslie Johnson

Les Johnson in  
the mid-thirties.  
Photo from Ted  
Carnell's album



For the benefit of new readers, in 2008 I assembled a history of the British Interplanetary Society.<sup>1</sup> It was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society, and in that year the Society also hosted the annual International Astronautical Congress in Glasgow. I got the job by dint of having been around longer than most (I joined in 1957), but the origins of the BIS go back to pre-War days. Digging in the archives I came across a carbon copy of a 125-page typed manuscript by one Leslie Joseph Johnson, who was actually the first Secretary of the Society, back in the days when Philip Cleator founded it in Liverpool. From internal evidence the MSS seems to have been written about 1982, but Johnson had obviously kept all his records.

Having run the manuscript through the copier to make sure we had a back-up copy, I started to read. My first shock came on page 5, when I read the roll-call of the first half dozen who met at Philip Cleator's house at Wallasey on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1933 to discuss forming the BIS;

*"Apart from the host, Philip Cleator, those present included Leslie Joseph Johnson, Colin Henry Askham and Percival Norman Weedall; ... while Norman Weedall was a confirmed Science Fiction enthusiast."*

At that point I realized that I had met Norman Weedall when I was a very new fan at the time the Cheltenham Science Fiction Circle made a visit to the Liverpool Group back in 1960 or so. Johnson had already noted the link between science fiction and interplanetary flight in the early pages of his memoir;

*"The ordinary members of the Society in those early days were practically one hundred percent science fiction readers. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Hon. Secretary, himself an ardent science fiction fan, apart from seeking publicity through reports of meetings sent monthly to Practical Mechanics, made a special point of obtaining members through the correspondence columns of the American science fiction magazines."*

The subsequent history and growth of the BIS in Johnson's memoir is contained in the book, and I do not intend to repeat more than is necessary here. But the memoir also keeps bringing up the parallel history of science fiction fandom in the UK and a number of very familiar names (well, familiar to me at least), and so I thought it worth extracting some of the relevant bits for the interest of others. All the quotes (but one) are taken directly from Johnson's document. One passage talks about how the American SF 'pulp' magazines came to the UK. (I had an uncle who had a pile of these pre-War pulps stacked in his garage when I was a boy – which probably set me off on a lifetime's reading of the genre.)

*"The first of the Hon. Secretary's letters to the American Science Fiction magazines asking for members for the BIS was to appear in the April 1934 issue of Amazing Stories, followed by a similar letter in the November 1934 issue of Astounding Stories."*

"Current issues of these magazines (dated two months ahead of their actual publication dates) were usually available from a limited number of bookstalls in Britain at prices ranging from 1/3p. to 1/6p., but the vast majority of the science fiction readers of the time were introduced to the cult by picking up so-called 'remainder' magazines. These could be obtained from branches of Messrs. F. W. Woolworths and from second-hand bookshops at 3p. per copy.

"Remainder' magazines were unsold copies sent over from America as ships' ballast. They sometimes bore a special mark rubber-stamped on the front cover. Other copies had the top right-hand corner of the magazine cut off; still others had had the front covers ripped off. The covers were sent back to the publishers in order to get credit refunds. These unsold copies took some months to percolate through to the British market, usually arriving some six months or more after their publication in the USA.

"One of the earliest results, obviously following from the letter that had appeared in the April 1934 issue of *Amazing Stories*, was a letter received from a 16-year-old lad named Arthur C. Clarke of Bishop's Lydeard in Somerset. His letter was dated July 30<sup>th</sup> 1934.

"On August 25<sup>th</sup> 1934 an enquiry was received from one Eric Frank Russell (who said he had seen the letter published by Teck Publications – *Amazing Stories*), and on September 14<sup>th</sup> of the same year a letter from Walter H. Gillings, with whom the Hon. Secretary had been in correspondence in 1931 on the subject of setting up Science Fiction Clubs throughout Britain."

The fledgling Society had financial difficulties in maintaining a printed 'Journal' (and Cleator objected to having a mimeographed 'Bulletin') but it is clear that Johnson as Secretary kept up a very active correspondence with certain members, in particular Arthur Clarke and Walter Gillings, and – by the end of 1934 – Eric Frank Russell.

"Following receipt of the first letter by the Hon. Secretary from Eric Frank Russell and a personal visit to Mill Lane by all six foot three of Russell, correspondence commenced between them – although they lived only about ten miles apart. At first, this was centred mainly around the possibility of Russell's articles on 'Interplanetary Communications' appearing in a publication of the BIS, but rapidly developed into regular exchange visits and collaboration in numerous projects involving the writing of science fiction."

It should be pointed out that at this time Johnson, while a senior officer of the BIS, was still just twenty. Indeed, Philip Cleator records in one of his memoirs [*'Terminal Testimony'* JBIS 39, pp 147-162 (1986)] that, having been appointed Secretary of the Society in October 1933, "within days of his appointment, I received a telephone call from his mother with the news that she was about to insist that her son end his association with the Society, on the good and sufficient grounds that such a bizarre and demanding interest would seriously interfere with his studies."

Meetings of the Society were held at a room above McGhie's Café at 56 Whitechapel, Liverpool – a location Johnson observes was still in existence at the time of his memoir (in the 1980s). "At street level, No. 56 is currently tenanted by 'Tape Electronics', and on the First Floor, at the top of the wide staircase up which trod pioneering members of the BIS in the middle thirties, is 'Sukie's Unisex Hair Styles'". However, this location (and the early members of the Society) nearly did not survive. In February 1935, Willy Ley made a visit – on his way to become a refugee from Nazi Germany in the USA, and a few weeks later Johnson records:

"The Members were so engrossed in their deliberations one evening that in spite of the noise and commotion prevailing downstairs, it was not realised that the premises were on fire. While comments were being made by the Members with regard to the likelihood of a drunken brawl prevailing in the lower portion of the café, or perhaps even in the street outside, they did not immediately appreciate the reality or indeed the desperate nature of their situation.

"Not until the door burst open and a smoke-begrimed fireman appeared brandishing an axe, did they come to any understanding as to what was happening. And the fireman, himself, was as astonished as anybody else to find the members of the BIS oblivious to the fact that the downstairs portion of the café had been gutted – while they were debating as to how a rocket ship could reach the Moon!"

In late 1935 another contact was made of some importance to the Society and science fiction: "About this time, a letter was received from Eric Frank Russell asking for a current issue of 'The Journal' of the Society and any back numbers available, to be sent to one Dr. W. Olaf Stapledon, a Professor at Liverpool University, who was also the author in 1930 of *Last and First Men* – a science fiction epic. Unfortunately – or otherwise, as the case may be – Stapledon had never heard of science fiction (apart from H. G. Wells) until Eric Russell and L. J. Johnson visited him (and were royally entertained) at his bungalow at Caldy Hill, Wirral, Cheshire."

And then – "At the close of the year, a letter dated December 30<sup>th</sup> 1935, was received by the Hon. Secretary from one Edward John Carnell, Science-Fiction League Member Number 1197 – the Hon. Secretary himself being able to boast of having been SFL Member No. 383. Mr. Carnell was writing to the Hon. Secretary rather than to Mr. Cleator because he was familiar with the name of the Hon. Secretary through the 'frequent' letters that had appeared in *Wonder Stories*.

"Mr. Carnell went on to explain that he was the London Correspondent of George Gordon Clark's *Brooklyn Reporter* (a science fiction 'fan' magazine), and it would be quicker for Carnell to communicate with the Hon. Secretary on behalf of George Gordon Clark than to have to endure the delays that would otherwise be involved in transatlantic mailings.

"Carnell was endeavouring to find out the extent of science fiction enthusiasm in Britain (which he suggested was 'extremely low'), together with news of Rocketry and Esperanto."



Les Johnson & Eric Frank Russell together in 1937. Photo from Ted Carnell's album.





First meeting of the BIS 'London Branch', 27<sup>th</sup> October 1936. Front row, l to r: Ted Carnell, Arthur C. Clarke, Walter Gillings, Prof. A. M. Low, P. Bois, Jack Happian Edwards, Elizabeth Huggett. Back row; Klemantaski, Strong, R.A. Smith, T. White, Day, Bein, two unidentified. This is a composite picture and Carnell's image has been air-brushed, probably for publicity purposes. Ted Carnell's wife Irene (Clove) was also present (not shown). Photo from E.J. Carnell's album.

By 1936 a substantial group had begun to form in London. *"It was at this stage in the proceedings that Eric Frank Russell and Leslie J. Johnson decided that it would be an appropriate moment to visit London, both from the point of view of Interplanetary Travel and of science fiction. ... Amongst other destination that they had in mind were the Editorial Offices of the proposed new British Science Fiction Magazine, where the prospective editor was Mr. T. Stanhope Sprigg of Newnes Publications. They were also to have what turned out to be a momentous first meeting with Edward John Carnell and Walter H. Gillings, neither of whom up to that time had ever met, and in fact knew very little about each other or about each other's activities. ... At the end of the visit, they (EFR & LJJ) left Paddington Station, London, at midnight, and after dropping newspapers and milk churns at every railway station in Wales, reached Lime Street Station, Liverpool at 8.15 am – with Johnson reporting for duty at the Liverpool Education Offices at 9.00 am."*

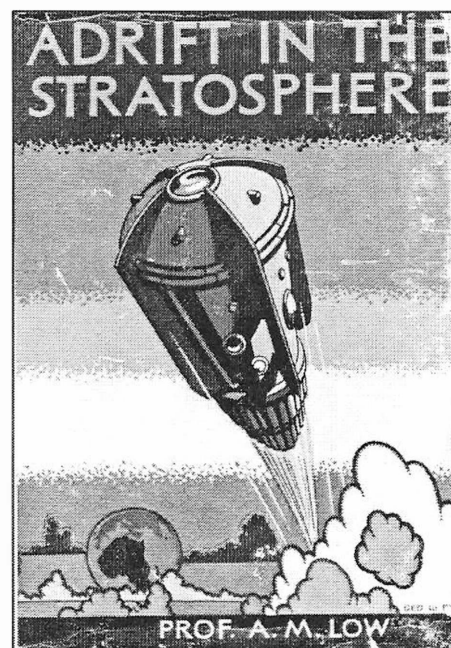
Carnell then went on to become an active member in the London Branch of the BIS. During the summer of 1936 he met with others at the Radio Show at Olympia; *"It was there that Carnell was able to meet [Jack Happian] Edwards in September, when they were joined by Eric Frank Russell, as well as by Gillings and Clarke. Also visitors to Edwards at Radiolympia were Maurice Hanson and Dennis Jacques of Leicester and Nuneaton respectively; the two last named were Joint Editors of Novae Terrae ('New Worlds'), a science fiction fan magazine, which they produced on behalf of Chapter No. 22 of the Science Fiction League."*

Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> 1936 was chosen as the first official meeting in London for BIS members, held in the offices of 'Professor' A. M. Low. Low, an inventor and writer on popular science, was not actually a Professor of anything, although he seems to have adopted the title from a brief period as Associate Honorary Assistant Professor of Physics at the Royal Ordnance College between 1919 and 1922. A note on the dust-jacket of his juvenile novel, *ADRIFT IN THE STRATOSPHERE* describes him as one who 'during the War was Officer Commanding the Royal Flying Corps Experimental Works'.

A small committee was formed including Edwards, Arthur Clarke, Jim Strong, Ted Carnell and K. W. Chapman, who met in a little Italian restaurant off Piccadilly. Initially the group had been simply the 'London Branch' but increasing problems in running the Society from Liverpool meant that by November the London Group would become the headquarters of the Society.

*"Accordingly, Mr L. J. Johnson arranged that his Fiancee (Miss Hilda Margaret Crossen) and himself would visit London on Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936, in order to give London members an insight into BIS affairs. They would arrive at Euston Station at about 2.00 pm, meet the London Committee members in the afternoon, and then proceed to 'the Mason's Arms', Maddox Street, for 7.00 pm, where the Londoners in general would congregate."*

*"One of Johnson's most persistent memories after the meeting was of Miss Crossen and himself dashing to catch the later train back to Liverpool, accompanied by a very young and very attentive Arthur C. Clarke. Describing Miss Crossen as a 'Martyr to Science', Clarke was so kind and considerate that it almost became embarrassing. This was especially so, as it was known that in*



Prof. Low's story first appeared in *Scoops* in 1934 and was ridiculously unscientific even for the time! It was published in book form by Blackie in 1937.

seeing them to Euston Station, he was going in totally the wrong direction, and he seemed completely unconcerned as to how he was going to make his own way back to his lodgings. The two travellers arrived back in Liverpool at 4.45 am, while Clarke reached his bed at 2.00 am, no doubt pondering the fact that at the Meeting he had been confirmed as Hon. Treasurer at the London end of the BIS."

If matters were progressing satisfactorily with the BIS, developments were less satisfactory on the SF front, as Johnson records: "In the meantime, the news from London was that Messrs. Newnes had abandoned their proposal to publish a British science fiction magazine, and the manuscript of 'Seeker of Tomorrow' had been returned with thanks to Eric Frank Russell. However, three other publishers had been in communication with Walter Gillings, with a view to the publication of a British science fiction magazine, and he would be discussing the matter with them. In the meantime he was determined to bring out his science fiction fan magazine Scientifiction as soon as possible.

"Eric Frank Russell had some consolation for the return of the MS of 'Seeker of Tomorrow', inasmuch as his first story to be granted acceptance, 'The Saga of Pelican West', had been taken by Astounding Stories, and he had been paid eighteen dollars 'on the nail' and before publication."

The transfer of power to London required the Society to draw up a new Constitution – something that appears to have been a perpetual problem with the early BIS. A Special General Meeting was called for 6<sup>th</sup> December 1936, which was held at Johnson's home in Liverpool, which prepared for the Annual General Meeting on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 1937 at the 'Mason's Arms' in London.

"The hiatus that would otherwise have existed between the time of the Special General Meeting ... and the Annual General Meeting ... was to be a period to be gainfully employed by some of the BIS members in Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool and London who also professed an interest in the field of science fiction.

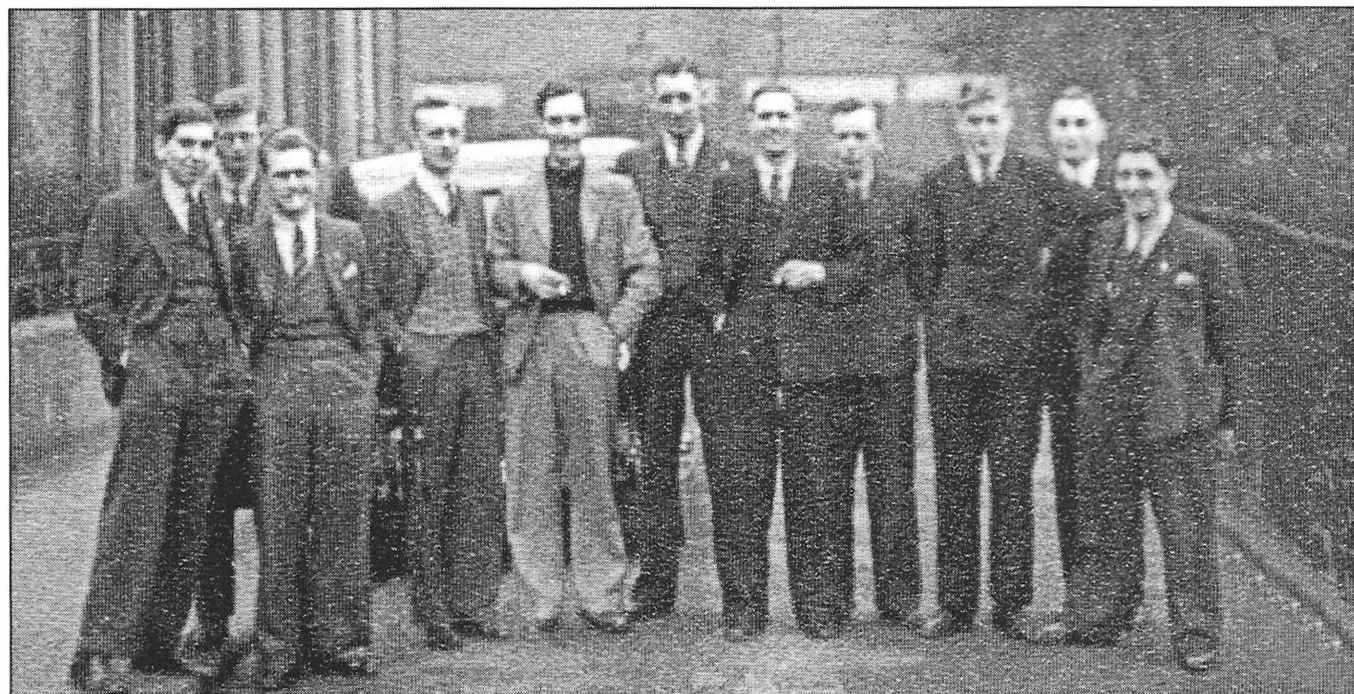
"The first-ever British Science Fiction Convention had been arranged by the Leeds Chapter of the Science Fiction League, to be held in Leeds on Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1937. Other chapters of the Science Fiction League also existed at that time in Nuneaton (Leicester), Glasgow, Belfast and Burnley. Enthusiasts from all parts of the British Isles were cordially invited to attend. The Convention, which in many ways could hardly have been labelled as a great success, was nevertheless notable on two points –

1. It was the first British Science Fiction Convention ever to be held;
2. In spite of the fact that only six enthusiasts from outside the Leeds area attended, the Convention resulted in the formation of the pre-War **Science Fiction Association**.

"The six 'outsiders' who were able to be present at the Leeds Convention were Carnell, Clarke and Gillings from London, Johnson and Russell from Liverpool, and Maurice K. Hanson from Leicester. They were all destined to become closely associated ... in the years to come."

After the Annual General Meeting Johnson gave up his position as Hon Secretary to the Society, and that position was taken over by Miss Elizabeth Huggett. Johnson describes Miss Huggett as Jack Edwards' 'fiancee'. This is not actually true – actually she was his mistress. Jack Happian Edwards was one of the stranger characters in the pre-War BIS. His dynamism was responsible for energising much of the Society's pre-War activities. Carnell thought him a 'mutant genius' – Val Cleaver's opinion was 'completely in the lunatic fringe. Perhaps fortunately, with the outbreak of War he disappears from the annals of the BIS. Read the book if you want to know more. [also see Page 21 – PW]

Ted Carnell became 'Publicity Director', editing the Society's Bulletin until May 1938 when it was taken over, first by Maurice Hanson and then by Arthur Clarke, by this time residing at 88 Grays Inn Road, London.



Some members of the first convention, Leeds 1937. From left: Maurice Hanson, Arthur Clarke, Walter Gillings, Les Johnson, E.J. Carnell, Eric Frank Russell, Harry Warnes(?), Fred Fairless, D.W.F. Mayer (?), Doug Airey (?), J. Michael Rosenblum. Photo from Ted Carnell's album, scanned by his grand-daughter, Susannah Belsey.



"To the names of the three Londoners (Carnell, Clarke and Gillings) who had attended the Science Fiction Convention at Leeds, must be added the name of William F. Temple, as one who managed to reconcile the twin worlds of Science Fiction and Interplanetary Travel. Born in 1914, he had read most of the science fiction magazines since he had picked up a copy of Amazing Stories in 1927; he was a somewhat unenthusiastic employee of the Stock Exchange and confessed that he was not qualified in any particular branch of Science, but was anxious to do any general work that he could on behalf of the Society.

"W. F. Temple had contributed an exhilarating series of articles to Novae Terrae commencing with the April 1938 issue, entitled 'The British Fan in his natural haunt,' his first subject having been Eric C. Williams, at one time a Council Member of the Science Fiction Association.

"Following the second British Science Fiction Convention held in London on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1938 (and much better attended than the Leeds Convention), it was typical of the close association that existed between science fiction and Interplanetary Travel that the man elected as President of the SFA was none other than the ubiquitous and genial Professor A. M. Low. And it was not remarkable that at the Annual General Meeting of the SFA at the Convention that the members agreed to transfer the headquarters of the Science Fiction Association from Leeds to London – in the wake of the BIS.

"Others to be honoured by W. F. Temple's attention in his series of articles in Novae Terrae were Edward John Carnell, Arthur C. Clarke, Maurice K. Hanson, K. G. Chapman and Walter H. Gillings. In a Supplement to the last issue of Novae Terra dated January 1939 (after which Edward John Carnell took over the fanzine as New Worlds) Arthur C. Clarke retaliated by adding a seventh name to the series by featuring William F. Temple himself – in his natural haunt.

"And Clarke was well able to indulge in a verbal caricature of Temple, because in June 1938, Clarke had decided to move in with Temple and to share the flat at 88 Grays Inn Road, WC1. In September 1938, Maurice Hanson, who had previously shared a bed-sitter in Bernard Street (having 'wangled' a Civil Service appointment in the metropolis) moved in with Clarke and Temple, who by that time had thrown open The Flat to SFA Members on Thursday evenings."

"It was not particularly surprising, therefore, to find that 88 Grays Inn Road became Combined Headquarters of both science fiction and of Interplanetary Travel. From this address was issued not only Novae Terrae but also The Bulletin of the BIS. Indeed, William F. Temple was to go on to become Publicity Director of the Society in succession to Edward John Carnell (who had become Hon. Treasurer of the SFA), and to succeed Carnell as Editor of the Journal of the BIS.

"Carnell had resigned as Publicity Director of the BIS in order to become the Editor of New Worlds, which was to feature science fiction stories rather than science fiction 'fan' activities that had been the highlight of Maurice Hanson's Novae Terrae.

"The transfer of the headquarters of the BIS having taken place, Mr. L. J. Johnson arranged for a combined meeting of science fiction enthusiasts and BIS members to take place in Liverpool on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937, but despite having sent out invitations to thirty individuals only six turned up, including Eric Frank Russell and Johnson himself. An appeal was made in Novae Terrae for any fans in the Liverpool area to contact Mr. Johnson with a view to enlivening (and re-populating) future meetings in the city."

Johnson had a little more luck later in the year. On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1937 he invited local fans to a meeting, and "over eighteen persons attended, including Mr. P. E. Cleator and his wife, as well as Walter Gillings, who was on holiday with the Russells. Gillings' visit was particularly opportune, as he had just realised his great ambition to edit a British science fiction magazine; Messrs. World's Work (1919) Ltd had agreed to the production of a trial issue of such a magazine, to be called Tales of Wonder and Super-Science. Following the relative success of the first issue, 16 issues in all were to appear between summer 1937 and spring 1942.

"When E. J. Carnell visited L. J. Johnson in Liverpool in August 1937, the two decided to form a partnership in a part-time mail-order science fiction book and magazine business, to be called 'Science-Fiction Service', with branches in Liverpool and London. In September 1938, the Service opened in an office in the centre of Liverpool at Room 7, at 15 Houghton Street, at a cost of 7s.6d. per week.

"In June 1938, a Liverpool Branch was formed of the Science Fiction Association. Early meetings were held at the old BIS rendezvous, 'The Hamilton Café', then at a famous Liverpool lunch-time eating house, Messrs. G. Petty's Café in Hackins Hay. Then, just as 'The Flat' had become the centre for BIS/SF fans in London, so 'The Office' became the focal point until the outbreak of War for fans in Liverpool and elsewhere.

"No. 15 Houghton Street has long since been demolished; but it is perhaps significant that the former site of 'The Office' is now clearly visible for miles around Liverpool, and even out to sea. For rising right through the centre of what had been No. 15 is The Radio City Tower, thrusting its umbrella-like shape 450 feet into space above the remains of Houghton Street, and looking for all the world like a giant H.G. Wells-type spaceship about to blast-off from the Earth."

The outbreak of War brought an end to BIS activities, and in October 1939 its operation was formally suspended for the duration. A new Society would be reformed after the War as a joint merger between the old BIS and 'The Combined British Astronautical Society'. Johnson finishes his memoir by recording various members' activities in the War;

"Amongst the first to go was James A. Free Jr., who as a Sergeant in the Territorial Army was away even before War broke out. Clarke became a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF, working on the Ground Controlled Radar system. To the RAF also went L. J. Johnson and Eric Frank Russell, as Wireless Mechanics, with Norman Weedall as a Bomb Armourer. W. H. Gillings experienced but a brief Army career because of health considerations, but E. J. Carnell and W. F. Temple found themselves eventually with the Army in the Mediterranean Zone. Also to the Army went Professor A. M. Low to undertake 'experimental work'." //

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Bill Temple wrote a fictionalised account of life at The Flat, which was published in 2000 by George Locke's 'Sansato Press' under the title, '88 Grays Inn Road – A Living Space Odyssey'. It is available at £25.00 from George at: [george\\_locke@hotmail.com](mailto:george_locke@hotmail.com)

William F. Temple was one of Britain's very first fans, there at the beginnings of both the Science Fiction Association and the British Interplanetary Society. He quickly started to sell short stories to the pre-war magazines and resumed after hostilities ended with his novel, *FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE* in 1948. For me personally his three 'Martin Magnus' juveniles in the early fifties were trail-blazers which helped me discover adult science fiction, and he subsequently wrote several letters for my early *Zenith*. Bill was active in the London Circle for many years and it also turns out that he was a great diarist; when he died in 1989 he left thirty-six volumes of his journals – each of between 150 & 200 pages – which cover most of his adult life. When Joe Patrizio told me about them (he is Bill Temple's son-in-law, having married his daughter Anne) I was immediately struck by their likely interest to fandom. At my request Joe has compiled the following extracts, along with an accompanying narrative. They present a fascinatingly different perspective on the events described by Les Johnson. [PW]

## Extracts from Bill Temple's Diaries, 1935-42

By Joe Patrizio

The young Bill  
Temple, around 1935.  
Taken from a family  
grouping by Joe  
Patrizio.



Bill Temple started his journal in September 1935 when he was twenty-one, and continued until August 1985. From September 1939, when they married, he and Joan kept what they called a marriage journal in addition to Bill's personal record.

References to SF and fandom comprise a very small part of Bill's journals; there's a lot of self-analysis, philosophising, in later years cuttings from newspapers and magazines, and quotes from books he was reading and which touched his mood of the time. In the early years there is a lot about the war to come and a sense of frustration of not being able to do anything about it. However, all of this personal reflection has no place here; the interest lies in what he writes about people we know (at least it does for me and, I hope, you). Over the years some of the extracts have appeared in fanzines (somewhat fictionalised in some cases) but here I include them as they were written in the journal.

Although it starts on Friday, 6 September 1935 (belatedly, he says) there is no mention of science fiction (other than Wells) until Wed. 3 October 1935, when looking in a book shop, he writes:

*"Dante's books still there, but decided I couldn't afford them & bought Wonder Stories instead."*

By November he'd had a story accepted by *Wonder Stories* (but not yet published) and was "*Planning new scientification story*". But at this time Bill wasn't thinking of himself as a science fiction writer; if there was such an animal, he hadn't heard of it.

Throughout the pre-war journals there is the belief that science and scientists could (in fact would) solve all

the world's problems, given the chance. Scientists and a World Government, that is. From the beginning there's an underlying theme of war about to start. It wouldn't, for another four years, but all the time there was talk of it.

H.G. Wells was Bill's hero, and remained so throughout his life. He wrote to Wells asking for an autograph, getting a reply from a Marjorie Wells (a secretary but no relation, he thought) telling him that:

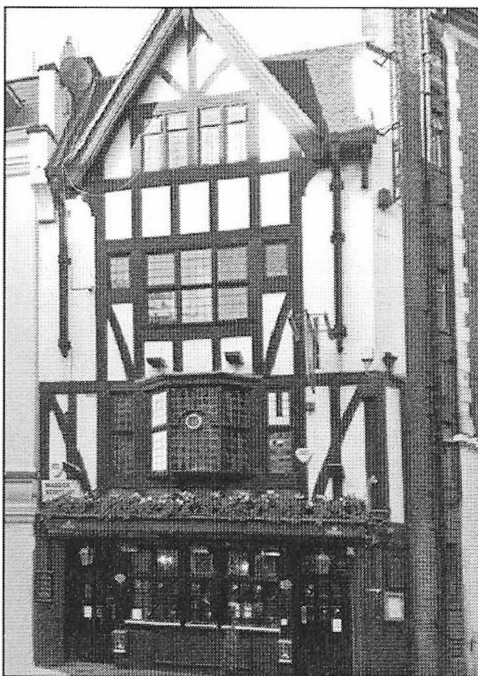
*"H.G. is greatly obliged for my 'salutary letter' and sends his thanks but not his autograph 'for he thinks that sort of thing should not be encouraged'".*

An article in *The Herald* newspaper of 25 February 1936 by Ritchie Calder mentions the BIS: "*Apparently there is a British Interplanetary Society & the president, Mr Cleator, has a book out today 'Rockets Through Space'. Would like to learn more about this society.*"

Then on 13 August 1936 we get: "*Noticed an advert in Exchange & Mart: 'Science Fiction Fans! Apply to Gillings, 15 Mere Rd., Ilford, for details of proposed magazine'. Have applied, stating doubts as to the success of such a mag. Wonder what the idea is? It may prove a little adventure.*"

On 19 August 1936: "*Papers from British Interplanetary Society arrived. Some clever and intelligent scientists are connected with it – Prof. A. M. Low is a Vice-President, though I have no great opinion of his reasoning and critical ability. They would be considered a lot of impracticable dreaming cranks by the average person of today. But what they dream will one day come – if war doesn't flatten civilisation right out first.*"





The Masons Arms, 2009.  
Photo by Joe Patrizio.

Having sent off a half-yearly subscription of 5/3d. (just over 26p) to the BIS on 24 August, two days later Bill receives; "...old copies of the journal, Prof. Low's mag *Armchair Science* and Ralph Stranger's *Science Review*."

A letter from Wally Gillings on 14 September asked Bill if he had any SF stories on file, as he (Wally) was trying to start a British SF magazine. Despite a lack of excitement Bill sent Wally three stories, but had two of them returned a few days later. Then followed:

"Yesterday [6 November] received an invitation from the mysterious 'London Branch' of the British Interplanetary Society to an 'informal' meeting at The Mason's Arms, Maddox St., W1 on Tuesday next."

Looking on Google Maps it seems that the pub is still there, even though much of the street has been rebuilt. Bill describes his first BIS meeting (10 November 1936):

"I found that the BIS was supposed to be meeting in the restaurant upstairs. I went up with another straying member, who, however, knew more about the Society than I, & was almost rudely uncommunicative. There were four others there who ignored us. Then I discovered that W. H. Gillings was present, went over to him, introduced myself, & he explained that the World's Work project was now shelved, & he was trying Newnes again. I borrowed a 'Fantasy mag' from him & wandered away to find my previous seat was now occupied, and the uncommunicative fellow was chatting away to his new neighbour.

"Eventually, Mr. Edwards nervously blurted out some form of address. He got more confident later, and voiced ridiculous suspicions about people stealing the results of our work ...after that, things woke up a bit, but was still all a farce, hard to describe. There was no leader, no organisation, no programme had been arranged, everything was pointless; & most of us were strangers, ill at ease. Most of the talk was visionary and unscientific. People spoke as if it were but a matter of 2 or 3 yrs. before we had a space-ship in action.

"A middle-aged foreigner, Mr. Janser, a research chemist (who said he'd spent a lifetime in the study of atoms) was smiling to himself most of the time, occasionally making dry comments, superiorly on his pinnacle of knowledge of the slow, lengthy, laborious & patient research necessary even to project a rocket into the stratosphere, while Edwards and others rather lacking a

sense of proportion were talking about 'keeping our secrets' in case it should result in special warfare.

"...All these people trying to run before they can walk, & in actuality not even moving one muscle in an attempt to crawl..... There was a vague attempt to get a vote on the proposal to alter the name of the Soc. from 'Interplanetary' to something less flamboyant, such as 'British Space Research Soc.' The only real resolution of the evening was to make the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in every month the regular meeting day. Gillings kept getting up & trying to get something definite done, a committee & a constitution framed, but the others were inclined to procrastinate. The President, Johnson, is coming from Liverpool on Sunday, & I & about 10 others volunteered to meet him in the evening. The meeting broke up at 10.15pm.....I can't see the Society ever accomplishing anything of use without more money, a better organisation, & a collaboration of the all-too-few 'technical' members."

As agreed, on the following Sunday (15 November) he goes back to the Mason's Arms; "...to find a meeting of 12 going on at a T-shaped table, with Johnson at the head. Gillings was there; later I spoke a few words to him, & he said this BIS business was just a sideline with him; he was mainly interested in scientification.

"What a queer society this is! Johnson spent about 2½ hours giving a minutely detailed account of the Liverpool Society, read completely through a long Minutes Book & another Special Minutes Book. It might be called 'The Dictatorship of Mr. P. E. Cleator'.

"This Cleator appears to be a regular character. ...He didn't seem to care a damn about the rest of the members so long as he had his way with everything. He banned any criticism against himself. Let the Society down in many ways. Kept them in the dark about everything, ignored them until the membership fell away rapidly. Insisted on writing and editing the 'Journal' all himself, & expressing his own views through it, which were violently & sarcastically atheistic & anti-religious. Invited prominent rocketeers to lecture to the Society & didn't tell Johnson until the last minute, so that only 11 turned up to hear Willy Ley, the German expert. Johnson said this Cleator was 'strong minded'. To me (judging from these reports) a callous, selfish, thoughtless, spoilt, mean, eccentric. ...But he resigned the Presidency when Johnson insisted on the London Branch taking control.

"An amazing story, this, in full. Being left with all the responsibilities of the Journal, etc., & probably as an aftermath of the battle with Cleator, Johnson had a nervous breakdown.

"I'm afraid the society will soon be extinct. We've hardly a penny among us. Anyway, I slipped out first, disappointed with this thoroughly impractical bunch. A Mr. Bin(?) was there, who seems to know all about the foreign experts in rocketry. And Mr. Janser. Apart from this strange and silent pair, the members are hopeless. Including myself."

In The Baker's Arms, near Leicester Square, on 1<sup>st</sup> December he got into conversation with "A somewhat assertive scientfiction author by the name of Hugi... Another well-known scientfiction author, John Beynon Harris (apart from the Yankee mags he's had serials running in 'The Passing Show'), understood Wells' sociological purpose a bit better, but hardly seemed a disciple. I got into conversation with him, & he told me Hugo Gernsback owed him about £120 for stories, & he couldn't get it though he'd put a debt-collecting agency after the man. He said Gernsback was little more than a

racketeer. I was surprised at this – I'd thought the fellow straightest of the lot. Gillings showed me a letter from Newnes, explaining that they'd decided not to publish a scientification mag. However, Gillings said he would be glad to receive anything I had in the way of MSS. As I left I mentioned that 'I hate writing'."

Having missed the January 1937 BIS meeting to go to see *Things to Come* (as always, Wells before everything else) Bill goes to the meeting on 7 February at The Baker's Arms; "where Prof. A. M. Low was having an argument with Edwards & Janser about moon voyages when I entered. I listened until we settled down to the meeting with Johnson, who'd again come from Leeds, in the chair. Including Low there were 16 of us there. More arguments over the Constitution, in which Low took an interest. .... But when they began to go through the damn Constitution again, Low said he must be going."

"Before he went he mentioned that a certain Grindell Matthews [there's an interesting piece about him in Wikipedia] had taken 35,000 (?) acres somewhere in Wales, had the place policed & was conducting expts. ('As I did in the War' said Low) concerning the Air Defence of London. Something to do with rocketry, it seems. Anyway, Matthews wanted to consult the 'technical staff' of the BIS. ...Through Gillings I was against my wish chosen (by lottery) to be one of the Members Committee, which means I've got to drag right out to Chingford on Tuesday."

At this meeting (9 February 1937) Bill mentions a Clark (sic) being there; this could be Arthur Clarke, but unless the BIS have minutes of this meeting, we may never know. At the BIS meeting of 2 March 1937:

"Only 12 of us turned up at the Baker's Arms. I volunteered to be 'Scientification Librarian', which, if it comes off, will entail a lot of work & many difficulties."

But the meeting of 7 April 1937 was "...the most interesting meeting of the BIS at the Baker's Arms yet. Edwards gave a lecture on the rocket. Janser suggested certain improvements & a new (& dangerous) ozone compound fuel of his own. At last we faced practical difficulties."

Contacts outside the BIS are rare, but on 9 April we get: "Seeing in *SF Gazette* about a chap at Catford trying to write science fiction [note the new term], I wrote to him (name of Eric C. Williams) suggesting we join forces."

Then on 18 April: "Eric Williams is older than I thought – about 21, I guess. .... A Wells fan, too – though not quite so bad as me."

Back to the BIS on 4 May 1937:

"Interesting evening at the Baker's Arms; but only 11 of us there. Clarke gave a lecture on the moon. Janser told me it's possible we may get a grant of £200 to help Grindell Matthews with his 'Defence' research work. Janser said the German military men already had an explosive rocket which could be fired about 5 or 6 kilometres with more accuracy than a shell, & were developing it rapidly. I said we may expect them one day to be coming over the channel." [In a marginal comment, Bill writes, "And they did!"]

At the BIS meeting on 1 June 1937 Janser delivers a lecture on 'Some Biological Aspects of Space Travel', and talks to Bill about Freud and Adler, both of whom Janser seemed to know.

July 1937: "Meeting of BIS. Met Gillings there. ... A dull lecture on spectro-analysis was going on. Gillings was bored, wanted me to leave with him. I compromised by

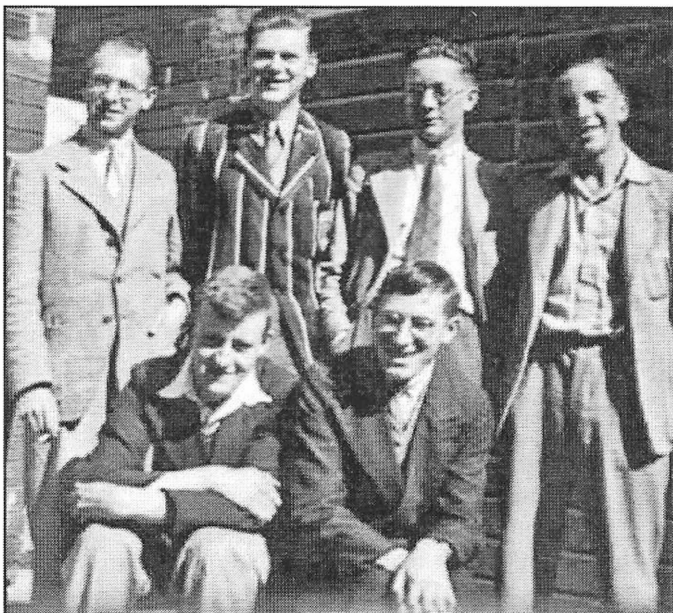
going downstairs with him for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr for a drink & smoke. We sat on little backless chairs by the door, & discussed his *Tales of Wonder*, & British SF authors. .... Then he, me, Smith, Edwards, Clarke & Janser strolled along to Oxford Circus..... Clarke held me in discussion on books of astronomy."

The others went off to a Soho restaurant while Bill and Wally "...stood in Oxford Circus Und. Str. Talking away for another  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr, mainly about his SF efforts (he said he practically lived for SF) & his job as reporter on Ilford Recorder".

The first mention of a fannish sort of organisation is on 11 September 1937: "I'm deep in work for *Cosmopolis*, the BIS & the SFA".

Then on 4 October: "Arrived  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr late at the SFA, & found them in session in Eric Williams' top front bedroom. No less than 16 already seated around the wall." [But we don't know who they all were.] Bill gave a talk at this meeting (subject unknown) as did others: "After more talks, esp. a long one from Gillings, we broke up. I had been appointed Movie Director & SF-story organiser. More work! Chapman, Williams, Gillings, Clarke, Carnell, Drummond, Hanson, & myself went into the nearest pub..."

The last SFA meeting of 1937 mentioned is on 7 November: "A meeting of the SFA at the Ancient Order of Druids place in Lamb's Conduit, off Theobald's Rd. .... Mayer, Warnes, Airey & Gillard came down from Leeds. There were almost 25 people present altogether." After the meeting: "Then 8 of us (Mayer, Warnes, Airey, Gillings, Clarke, Hanson, Drummond and me) took a table in the Holborn Lyons & had a good pow-wow."



Leeds SFA, from left; Vic Gillard, Doug Mayer, Harry Warnes and Doug Airey. In front, Eric Needham & George Ellis, who were visiting from Manchester with Harry Turner (not shown here). Photo from Philip Turner's web-site (see below).

On 27 January 1938 there was a gathering of some SFA members at a Lyons in New Oxford Street. In attendance: Williams, Birchby, Chapman, Hanson, Clarke & Carnell.

The 1 March 1938 BIS meeting "...was an interesting evening. Discussion as to what experiments to spend our £15 research fund on:- new principle altimeter & speedometer, an observation instrument, new design primary battery or expts. in rotary launching & cellular construction". The 5 April meeting discussed 'Would Space Travel Pay?'

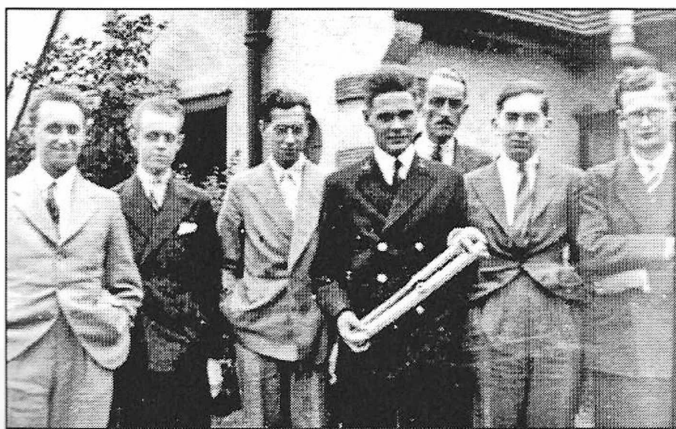


On 9 April 1938, tea with Ted Carnell and family, Les Johnson there, too. Later Williams, Clarke, Hanson, Chapman & Gillings turn up.

On 10 April Bill attended his first convention, reacting as most young fans do to their first con: *"The SFA convention in the David Temple at the AOD. Crowds down from Leeds, & all over the country. Fine speeches by all, Prof. Low's being esp. good. Afterwards I had long intimate talks with authors John Beynon Harris, John Russell Fearn & Benson Herbert. This week-end has been one of the most enjoyable in my life."*

The euphoria lasted at least until 16 April 1938, albeit with an eye to a future still seventeen months away:

*"I think the happiest moments of my life now are when in the company of my SFA friends – Arthur Clarke, Maurice, Eric, Sid. How I value such friends! I hate to think that one day we may have to split up & part. Could we weather the coming war?"*



Sunday 17 July 1938: BIS meeting at the home of R.A. Smith, in Chingford, N.E. London. Left to right: J.H. Edwards; Eric Burgess; Harry Turner; Guest of Honour Midshipman Robert C. Truax, USN; R.A. Smith; Maurice Hanson & Arthur C. Clarke. Bill Temple apparently missed this meeting. Smith would go on to illustrate many of the BIS design studies featured in Clarke's *EXPLORATION OF SPACE*. Turner and Burgess had come from Manchester where they were already launching rockets. Photo from Philip Turner's site; <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/farrago2/rafsite/het/hetobit.htm>

Then on 26 July 1938, the news that would have significance for future generations (of fans, at least): *"I'm sharing a maisonette with Arthur Clarke (perhaps Maurice Hanson later) at 88 Grays Inn Road, Holborn WC1. It's had (and has) many difficulties, & I've been rushed off my feet. And there are certain anxieties – bugs is one of them (one has just bitten me)."*

The next entry is exactly a year later (26 July 1939) when he reviews the previous year, in which Maurice Hanson did, in fact, join Bill and Arthur in the flat, and in which: *"I have become quite a leading light in both the BIS & the SFA. I am Publicity Director of the former, also Editor of the BIS Journal – I have edited the last two, & made something of a publicity splash in the papers with them, though Arthur Clarke has perhaps (almost certainly) done most of the work! We have had some really fine BIS & SFA meetings in our flat, & entertained scores & scores of interesting people"*.

Arthur was also BIS Treasurer, and Joe Patrizio sends the BIS accounts, to 31 December 1938, which shows a total income of £52.10s.10d. The 'Research Fund' amounted to £28.11s.5d., of which £2.19s.9d had been spent during the year on 'research expenses'. Printing costs for the year were £18.18s.0d.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 1939 Bill Temple married Joan Streeton; the next day Russia invaded Poland. From here, Bill and Joan start their joint journal (with Bill, later, continuing his personal journal in parallel). As entries are not always daily but sometimes cover a few days or even a week or more, it is sometimes a bit difficult to decide which day an event happened. (Incidentally, this first volume of their joint journal contains some fascinating stuff about day-to-day life in the early days of the war.)

On 11 Oct 1939 there was a meeting at the flat *"...to decide upon the policy (so far as possible) of the BIS during the war. ....The BIS was to be put into a kind of cold storage, in a position to be taken out and warmed up again after the war, if any of us were left alive to do it, & in a position to do so"*.

However, BIS meetings did continue for some time after this. In fact, as soon as 22 October: *"Mr. Janser comes round ....& [Bill & Joan] & Ted & Arthur & a BIS member named Fears sit & jabber with him. He indicates that he is working on a new sort of 'death ray' & Grindell Matthews is also aiding and abetting him. Bill remembers that Prof. Low told him that: "'death ray' inventions were coming to him at the rate of three a month."*

There were also regular SFA 'meets', as Bill calls them, presumably to note their unofficial nature. Certainly, if any business of the organisation was conducted, it wasn't recorded here; in fact the main activities seem to have been Lexicon and table tennis. On 28 October: *"Wally Gillings unexpectedly came to tea & stayed for the SFA 'meet' of Ted, Rene, & Sid. He was very pacifist & anti-war & anti-capitalist..."*

17 November 1939 saw; *"Rather a rowdy SFA meeting tonight. Ken & Joan Chapman arrived for tea at 4.30pm, & the others trickled in at intervals – Sid, Arthur, Ted, Rene, Frank, & Harry Kay. Tea went on for hours. Then the 3 married couples & Frank went down into the pub & expended over 10/- [50p] on drink....Came back to flat & were rather hilarious. ...Ted pushed a kitchen chair off the landing, & it bumped steadily down the whole top flight. Bill & Sid laid Harry on the table for 'dissection'. (Incidentally, the table had been previously used by Arthur, Sid & Harry as a barricade, piled with chairs, across the kitchen doorway to keep out we 'pub-crawlers' when we returned. We had to storm the barricade to gain admittance)." Yes, the neighbours did complain.*

An intriguing little snippet on 18 November 1939; *"Arthur was at the flat with a young work-mate we had never seen before – a clever young fellow, well up in music & maths, & a wizard at table tennis – he had given even Arthur (of the Ego) an inferiority complex."* You can't help wondering who it was!

24 November 1939; *"Ted, Rene & Sid came & we had Lexicon yet again. Sid had just been to Romford to have his examination for calling up. He wanted to be put in the Air Force; but they rejected him & put him in the Army."*

28 November 1939 *"A BIS meeting. Smith, Fears, Ross, Abel, Cleaver, Janser & Russell with we three [Arthur, Bill and Joan] made an enjoyable little party, in which Arthur rehearsed his lecture to the Archimedean's of Cambridge (which he is giving tomorrow)."*

9 December 1939 *"Ted, Rene, Ken & Joan [Chapman] turned up yesterday, but had to leave early: Ted felt sick & Ken had to go on night duty. Harry Kay & Frank also came, they & Bill, Joan & Arthur had a long discussion on morality, Greek civilisation, & royalty, in the midst of which Sid & his girl-friend, Grace (whom we met*

for the first time) arrived. ....Sid...has now been called up (the RAPC, apparently) & must go next Tuesday."

Then on 15 December Sid unexpectedly turns up at the regular SFA gathering: "Sid has got a comparatively soft job in the RAPC for the duration, has regular business hours & goes home to sleep".

12 December 1939: "We had what was almost certainly the last BIS meeting at this flat. Abel, Cleaver, Smith & Janser turned up – also, surprising, Frank Day, who was in khaki and had arrived from his depot in Wales."

19 December 1939: "We packed up Maurice's divan bed with layers of Weird Tales (with exotic covers) & other magazines between the box & the mattress, & tied smooth brown paper over it all so that it looked like a great plinth..."

22 December 1939: "We had the last SFA 'meet' in the flat. Ken & Joan had to leave fairly early, but Ted & Rene, Frank, & Sid came down with us into the pub & had a last pin-table & booze.....Frank, Sid, Harry Kay, Medhurst, Arthur & us sat up late playing Lexicon (which Joan, the unbeatable, won)."

28 December 1939: "We all spent the evening packing, for we are leaving No. 88 Grays Inn Road tomorrow for ever – we hope." Bill and Joan duly moved to 7 Elm Road in Wembley, and their first SFA visitor (on 11 January 40) was 'George' Medhurst [the quote marks are Bill's].

And BIS meetings continued. On 16 January 40, Bill "...went to a BIS meeting at Mr Janser's, in thick snow, & had an enjoyable evening with that gent, Arthur, Abel, Cleaver & Fears."

The regular Friday SFA meetings carried on, now at the Red Bull in Grays Inn Road. On 19 January 1940; "At 6 we arrived at the Red Bull & soon Frank Arnold, Arthur, Harry Kay, Ted, Rene & Sid arrived. Ted had just been made editor of a new British monthly science-fiction mag. To be called New Worlds." <sup>2</sup>

On 16 February; "Thence to the Red Bull in Grays Inn Rd, where Harold Chibbett was already waiting. Arthur, Frank, Ted, Rene, & Sid & Harold Kay turned up, followed later by Russell, who had just got the sack from Janser, because that gentlemen had run out of money. We talked largely about Ted's magazine, and drank largely also: especially Russell who was trying to drown his sorrows".

6 March 1940: "...we walked on to the Red Bull, bumping into Arthur just outside the door to our old flat. ....John Beynon Harris was in the Red Bull alone, waiting for us. 'Ah!' said Harris, eying us, 'I'd heard you'd both gone and done it.' Enter Harold Chibbett. We gravitate to our usual corner. Enter Frank, followed later by Ted, Rene, & Sid & his girl-friend Denise, whom we met for the first time. ....Ken & Joan Chapman, for whom the meeting has specially been arranged on Wednesday, surprised us by not turning up."

21 March 1940: (Thursday). "We had about the most crowded Red Bull meeting so far: we two, Ken, Joan, Ted, Rene, Sid, Denise, Harold Chibbett, Harold Kay, Wally, Arthur, Frank Arnold, Mike Rosenblum, 'George' Medhurst, Frank Fears & a newcomer – an LCC architect

named Craig. ....Mike had just had his CO tribunal & gave us the shameful low-down on these affairs. Ted's mag. seems to be folding up before it gets started."

5 April 1940: "...met Maurice, home on leave from France (he is stationed at Le Havre & issues food). ...Then along to the Red Bull & Arthur, Fears, Chibbett, Mrs Chibbett, John Beynon Harris, Ted, Rene, Ken, Joan, Sid, Denise, Frank Arnold, George Medhurst, & Craig. Fun & drinks & endless talk." When things broke up, and everybody went their own ways, Joan, Bill and Maurice head for Wembley and on the way "...got Maurice's kit out of pawn from St. Pancras".

29 April 1940; "Then we trammed it to the Red Bull for a SFA gathering:– Arthur, Harris, Craig, Ted, Rene, Ken, Joan II, Sid, Denise, Frank Arnold, Frank Fears, & Russell Bowie – who had been exempted from military service because of poor health. ....Then Harold Chibbett turned up with a hypnotist who had got in the news lately for having one of his clients having a tooth out under hypnosis without an anaesthetic." And there follows a story of his trying to hypnotise Bill – unsuccessfully, of course.

On 19 May 1940 Bill records that there was an SFA meeting and mentions research Harold Chibbett is conducting into the subconscious mind, hunting for memories of past people. This is the last recorded SFA meeting in the Journals.

Then Bill and Joan's daughter Anne is born on 9 August 1940; the Germans find out and six days later start to bomb London. On 5 September 40, Bill gets his call-up papers, greatly upsetting Joan; he is to go to the 36<sup>th</sup> Signal Training Regiment, RA, in one week. However, a year later, Bill gets 7 days leave and has a trip to London; the entry for 23 October 1941 includes:

"Back up Grays Inn Rd., rather shaken to see a great segment of Grays Inn had been removed permitting us to peep into that hitherto secluded interior. But the ruins just below the flat were terrible & of the Red Bull, that much-frequented pub of the SFA where we were to meet again after the war, only a pitiful column & a crosspiece remained, with THE RED BULL inscribed upon it – it looked like the remains of a Grecian temple. The flat seemed untenanted & we mounted the shaky stairs & found it was so. ...All the rooms, including the flat, were full of broken glass & plaster & splintered wood. We used to boast that if you stood on a chair in the bathroom you could see St. Pauls. You didn't need a chair now. You had a fine view of it through the glassless windows – all the intervening buildings seemed to have been knocked down & you gazed at it rising out of a waste of ruins."



Morning after; remains of the Red Bull, "like the remains of a Grecian Temple". Photo provided by R. Gawarger

2. Ted Carnell's wife Irene – Rene – was at the first London meeting of the BIS in October 1936. She and Ted were married shortly before, on 17<sup>th</sup> June of that year.



Things didn't stop entirely, however, and throughout 1941-42 there were gatherings of a few fans at a cafe or often Frank Arnold's flat in London, and a fairly constant stream of visitors to Elm Road. Bill was in a transit camp in Watford for some time and quite often managed to get home to Wembley for a few hours. The following extracts give a flavour of the visits:

3 January 1942: *"Suddenly there was a ring at the door & Eric Frank Russell came out of the night. For the next 3 or 4 hours after that no-one could get a word in edgeways – Russell held the floor with accounts of his childhood in Egypt, his experiences in blitzes in Liverpool his adventures at the New York World's Fair & with the New York SF authors, Charles Fort, the Marie Celeste, the Maine, Wally Gillings in Liverpool & Blackpool and Lord knows what."*

30 July 1942: *"...waited for the arrival of Douglas Webster, an SFA-ite from Aberdeen. He arrived 7.30-ish with Sid & announced that Joyce Fairbairn & another chap would be here shortly."*

6 September 1942: Eric Needham arrives unexpectedly. *"Eric was just on sick leave from the RAF & we had to make a bed on the floor for him as he'd nowhere to go for the night."*



Bill Temple in Rome, 1946. Photo from Bill's album by Joe Patrizio.

2 December 1942: *"Maurice Hanson called in, on leave from the Orkneys & we spent a few cheerful hours talking, listening to records & hearing Army yarns."*

9 December 1942: *"We had a card from Frank Arnold today announcing Ted Carnell's safe return from Algiers & celebrations for same on Saturday night. Will we get there?" They did: "Then on to Frank Arnold's at Baker St where we met Ted & Rene as planned. Ted, all bronzed & very fit, was full of his recent trip to Algiers. Later Ken & Joan Chapman arrived as well & made quite an old-time party."*

Bill's unit shipped out the next day to exciting places like the North Atlantic, Tunisia, Sicily, Salerno and then much of Italy – but that's another (and very different) story.

## More about 'The Flat'

By Rob Hansen

Arthur C. Clarke described The Flat in his memoir, *ASTOUNDING DAYS*: "Why everyone called it 'the Flat' I don't know: it extended vertically over several floors, and getting around required a considerable expenditure of energy. (I had the attic, which commanded a fine view of St. Paul's Cathedral). The only other time in my career when I lived in comparable circumstances was when I resided in a 100-foot-high lighthouse six miles off the south coast of Ceylon."

In his own diary, Sid Birchby wrote (as quoted in *THEN*): "On the lower floors there is a foot clinic, some kind of Socialist press, and the International Writers' Club, which appears to be a kind of literary hugger-mugger. Finally, on the top two floors, is their flat."



'The Flat' in 2010, presently unoccupied (front door at centre). Next step is to get inside; can we apply for a blue plaque for this historic site? Photo by Rob Hansen.

"The previous occupant was 'Grid Leak', the radio expert of the *Daily Sketch*. At present everything is still upside down. There are piles of gramophone records and stacks of books all around, and Arthur's collection has not yet arrived! The place is very snug, though, and should be a good spot for us all to congregate of an evening!"

So what happened to The Flat? I've always believed that it was destroyed along with the Red Bull in a bombing raid on 16th April 1941, and I suggested that had the Flat's famous residents not vacated it before their three-year lease was due to expire in June, then they too would have been lost in the raid. I had this information from the records of bombing kept at Holborn Library.

But in his preface to George Locke's '88 Grays Inn Road', Arthur Clarke comments "Less than twenty years ago I drove past The Flat and it seemed completely unchanged." And Bill Temple's quote here [Page 16] seems pretty unequivocal that The Flat *did* survive. He had gone inside and looked around after the bombing.

Looking at the building now, it's obvious it's been standing a long time and I'm embarrassed that I hadn't noticed it was still there, particularly since I've walked by it hundreds of times (literally) since I wrote *THEN*. What I think happened is that No. 88 sustained damage in the April 1941 raid that destroyed the Red Bull, it was recorded as damaged in the bombing records, and I somehow misread this as it having been destroyed. Expecting to see this, and knowing 88 to have been next door to and above the Red Bull, I assumed it was part of the rebuilt block now standing on the site of the pub, and so I've been responsible for perpetuating a falsehood for two decades, which is really annoying! That's something which will need to be corrected in the forthcoming update of *THEN*. //

Harry Turner wrote (on his web-site<sup>1</sup>): "I have a couple of sheets of official SFA notepaper, brown with age, held together with a rusting paper clip, from the 'Executive Headquarters & Council Offices'. An expert could detect Arthur Clarke's smudged fingerprints on them somewhere. It was brought up by Arthur and Maurice for the official opening of the branch in the attic clubroom at my home. A very select gathering, only eight or nine of us. Arthur complimented my mother on the meal she dished up, and she never ceased to remind me of that fact, years after, every time Arthur was mentioned on radio or TV. (I also had the benefit of my grandmother's memories of Arthur Clarke. - P.H.T) I think that letter was influential in directing my later fannish activities. War broke out, the SFA folded. And such is fan's ingratitude to fan, that when efforts were made a year or so later to impose another organisation on fandom, I found myself ganging up with Doug Webster in a fan-archist revolt against the organisation men. We lost out, of course, but that's another story..." [the letter is abridged for space reasons - PW]

# THE SCIENCE-FICTION ASSOCIATION

(EXECUTIVE HEADQUARTERS AND COUNCIL OFFICES.)

Devoted to the stimulation of interest  
in science-fiction and scientific progress

SFA, TREMAINE ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W. 20.

MEMBERS' CORRESPONDENCE

May 1948, 1948.

## TO OUR FRIENDS OF THE NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH:-

It is with much pride and pleasure that we extend to you all today our Best Wishes, Warmest Greetings and Heartiest Congratulations upon the occasion of your Inaugural Meeting.

Whilst we send this message by the hand of two Officials from the Association's Headquarters, we wish to initially take the opportunity of expressing our disappointment that we cannot all be with you. That has proved impossible, for numerous reasons, but, if we are not present in person, be assured that each and every one here is with you in the spirit. We rejoice with you from afar upon this auspicious event in the annals of the Science-Fiction Association.

We would be serving no useful purpose here if we were to discuss the merits of our favourite form of literature, or the enjoyment derived from the perusal of it, but we do think that you will find, now you have an Association Branch in your fair City, that your science-fiction will mean a lot more to you. You will no longer be an individual who reads a queer kind of magazine and has strange notions and ideas, alien to the ordinary layman. No, now you will be in the company of others with coincidental tastes and who think along similar lines to you, yourself.

We are already aware that you have a distinguished and enthusiastic group of members, and you should have no difficulty in making your Branch a phenomenal success. It is to that phenomenal, and, we sincerely trust, early success, that this message is dedicated, together with the felicitations and good wishes of:-

G. KENNETH CHAPMAN.

(General Executive Secretary and Chairman of the S.F.A. Council).

EDWARD J. CARNELL.

(Honorary Treasurer).

MAURICE R. HANSON.

(Editor of "Novae Terrae", etc.)

ERIC C. WILLIAMS.

(Assistant Executive Secretary and Librarian).

SIDNEY L. BIRCHBY.

(Assistant Executive Secretary).

ARTHUR C. CLARKE.

(Associate Editor of "Novae Terrae").

WALTER H. GILLINGS, WILLIAM F. TEMPLE, JOHN. C. H. DRUMMOND.

Etc.,

Etc.,

Etc.,

<sup>1</sup> Web-site at: <http://homepage.nl/world.com/farrago2/rafsite/het/hetobit.htm>

I'd like to say that Harry Turner and I had a lot in common but it's not true; I can't draw and above all else he was a superb artist. But I followed in his footsteps in two respects; twenty years after his 1936 experience I, too, built home-made rockets and got into trouble with the authorities, and a little later I chose 'Zenith' for the name of my first fanzine, not realising that Harry had already immortalised that title. Fortunately for me he was forgiving and kind and helped me with artwork in the first few issues, but only when I began to read his reminiscences on his son Philip's excellent web-site did I realise he was also such an engaging writer. Harry wrote these relatively recently but sadly a stroke affecting both his hand and memory prevented him from contributing to *Relapse*. I want to make up for that omission by printing this fascinating piece from his wartime years. He died last year at age 89. [PW]

## They called him 'Spaceship' Clarke

### Or, 'My time as a radar man'

By Harry Turner

Harry in RAF  
uniform, 1942-3.  
Photo from Philip  
Turner



After completing a lengthy radio course at Birmingham College of Technology and enjoying the comfort of civic billets, I was among those posted at the end of February 1943 to Yatesbury Radio School, in deepest Wiltshire, to continue working on more hush-hush developments. Months before, while training at Redcar, I'd had a postcard from Arthur Clarke who was then stationed at Yatesbury. I wondered if he was still here. I had a fleeting glimpse of a corporal who was his double, in charge of a squad that marched past me while I was being pushed around in those first few days, but adjusting to camp routines, familiarising myself with the geography of the place, and then being put on a night-shift, meant that several days passed before I was able to track him down.

He was billeted in a block of huts not far from my quarters and when we did meet, all our spare time that morning was spent exchanging news. Enquiring after Marion and the demise of the Junior Astronomical Association, he announced that he was giving a talk on rocket propulsion at a camp meeting at the end of the month. He seemed well-organised, had his typewriter with him and, looking to the future, kept a file of all potential British Interplanetary Society members he met. Taking me into the store room of the hut, he thrust a small telescope through the drawn blackout curtain to project an image of the sun on the opposite wall. There was a large sunspot group visible which we studied with interest until the sun disappeared behind a drainpipe.

That afternoon he gave a gramophone concert – Elgar, Walton, Dvorak, Borodin – in the camp recreation room, and roped me in to help with the records. We had two turntables so that we were able to fade-in the 78 discs, avoiding the usual pause for the turning-over of record sides, and giving a welcome continuity to the music. We carried on playing records long after the audience had departed. After the rich musical life of Birmingham I thought that it would be dead here, but the officer in charge of the camp was musically-minded so we had record concerts every Tuesday and Sunday evening.

Our later meetings were sporadic owing to the vagaries of changing duty shifts. But in the weeks that passed, music provided a welcome break in routine between technical training and the inevitable grind of admin 'bull' and fatigues. I became aware that a significant proportion of the instructors happened to be performing musicians, discreetly retained from the stream of trainees passing through the school in order to become mainstays of the resident station orchestra. I commented on this when writing home to Marion:

"Last night I went down to the music circle with Arthur... as well as the gramophone concerts, there's a station orchestra (with several ex-members of the BBC Symphony) which plays occasionally. When we got back to the huts Arthur left me with his telescope while he went for a shower. I had to balance the tube against the doorpost and crane my neck to get a peek at Jupiter before searching for the comet, which I picked up eventually... Evidently Arthur is a familiar



Harry & Marion, Christmas 1940 (they married in 1942). Photo from Philip Turner's web-site.



figure hereabouts, since several passers-by in the darkness made cracks like 'old Rocket Clarke up to his tricks again'. Which reminds me to ask if you'll bring along any new copies of the *Scientific American* when we get together. Arthur would like to see 'em as he's not been able to get hold of any copies for ages."

Marion's reply included mention of a steady stream of *Astonishing Stories* that had been arriving at home from an anonymous source; she didn't rate the contents very highly. We suspected that they were a tongue-in-cheek contribution from Doug Webster. When I mentioned this to Arthur it turned out he'd been starved of current SF also. I hastily wrote to Marion to say that I'd found a way of disposing of the pulp-mags, and to send them on before Arthur changed his mind.

Arthur was a keen member of the current affairs discussion group run at the camp under the watchful eye of the welfare officer. Around the time I arrived a series of talks on the post-war world was planned, with speakers including Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour politician, Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, and Winant, a US diplomat. I was also introduced to an independent discussion group - held in the neutral territory of the YMCA hut to evade the control of the welfare officer - run by an ardent Marxist who was also planning a wall newspaper. Arthur had been inveigled into writing a series of science articles for this and, as he'd given me a glowing testimonial as an artist, I soon found myself designing headings and doing cartoons for the page displays. But time for these diversions was restricted by the demands of working on the night-shift.

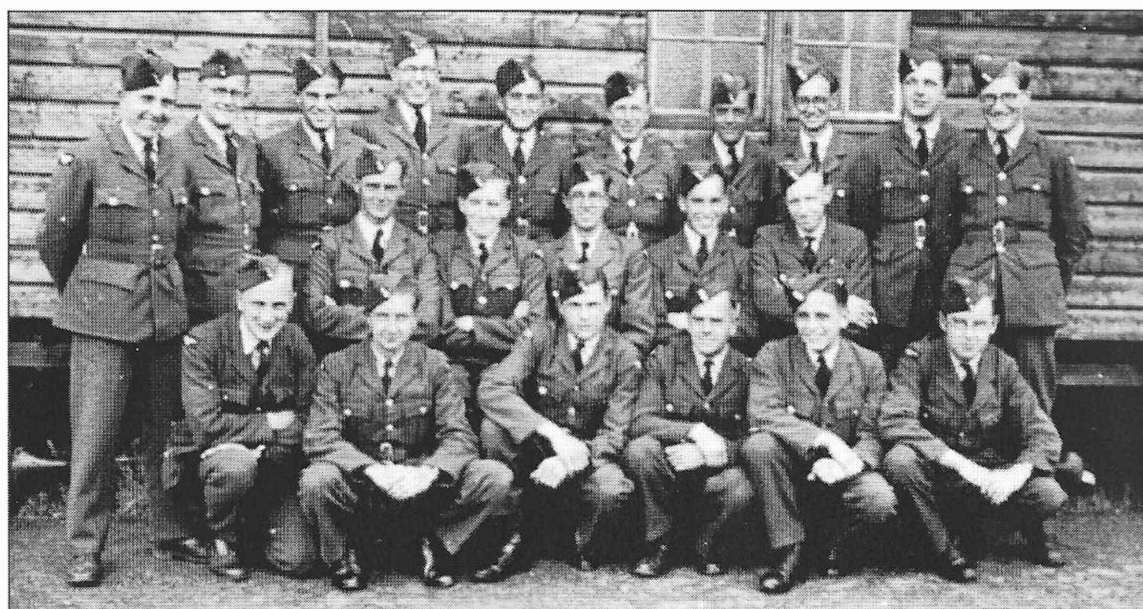
When eventually I switched on to a day-shift things didn't improve. The big advantage of night working was that you dodged daytime routine fatigues; now my name started appearing on duty lists. One boring chore was lighting the heating stoves in the instruction huts on the tech site early in the mornings... I doubt if any chimney pipes had been cleaned-out since the huts were first built; the fires never drew, and smoke billowed out of every crack and crevice until the stoves began to glow. It didn't help that we had to collect the wood for kindling the day before, from an old chalet nearby, wood that was absolutely green and damp as a wet blanket, so that initial efforts at fire-raising merely carbonised the surface layer before the wood went out... We needed lots of paper to dry out the wood and start it burning before there was any hope of starting combustion of the near fire-proof coke provided as fuel.

Scrounging around for the thin wartime dailies that were our main source of reading matter conflicted with the urgent need to hoard copies to cover newly-polished floors prior to weekly hut inspections. Fortunately two Canadians billeted in our hut received papers regularly from home, big 100-page weekend issues with umpteen pages of comics. Slow progress in coaxing recalcitrant stoves to working temperatures was eased by being able to catch up with the adventures of 'Little Orphan Annie', 'the Gumps', 'Bringing Up Father', 'the Katzenjammer Kids', and other familiar friends of younger days. But fatigues tended to expand to fill the time available, as I complained in a letter at the month end:

"Not only were we fire-lighting on Monday but had to go on parade early for a session slinging rifles about, and then a PT period heaving heavy logs around. By the time I got to the Radio School for instruction I was worn out. Most of the class were yawning and dozing off during the lectures. After all that, on my return to the main camp, I was put on guard duty that night. So I was glad to get to the music circle for a change and a rest last evening. Arthur was in charge again, so I gave him a lift with the records though unfortunately one of the pick-ups had been damaged and we had to manage with a single turntable, so it was a bit more stop-and-go than usual without the fading-in of sides. After all my recent exertions I tended to doze off now and again. However, Arthur has a habit of turning up the volume until the sound waves almost knock you over... which kept me alert enough to cope with record changes. Needless to say all requests from the front rows to turn down the volume were ignored..."

It was a welcome break to be excused fatigues after a series of inoculations for something-or-other, but I promptly lost interest in life with a throbbing arm and the sight of fellow-sufferers agonising around me. The music circle was cancelled as concert pianist Marjorie Few, who had been playing with the London Philharmonic at nearby Marlborough, was persuaded to give a recital at the station theatre before returning to London. I decided not to go, still feeling groggy from the inoculations, but Arthur came in, panting, all enthusiasm, to collect me. So I went, enjoyed Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Chopin, and Liszt and felt all the better for it...

Arthur's talk on rocket propulsion was due the following Wednesday, and I was invited to write an unbiased report for the wall-newspaper - by Arthur himself. He drew a big audience, mainly technical people, and spent most of the time answering questions from the floor. There were arguments raging all over the camp for weeks after the event, with 'Spaceship' Clarke being regarded as either a genius or a complete nut-case!



Harry Turner  
[back row, 3rd  
from right] and  
his class at  
Yatesbury  
Radio School,  
Wiltshire, 1943.  
Photo from  
Philip's web-site.

Shortly after, around mid-April, Arthur was told he'd be sent on an officer training course in a matter of a week or so. We were both kept busy trying to catch up with each other's reading material before parting. I described the frantic activity to Marion:

"Spent most of this evening waiting for a haircut, and reading 'The Glass Giant of Palomar' in a hurry before Arthur departs. When I called on him, I found him lying on his bed with SF mags on one side, the book on Lowell propped up in front of him, and the *Scientific Americans* buried under some laundry at the other side. He picked up an *Astonishing*, flicked through the pages briefly and then heaved it into his locker, seized the Lowell book and started to career through it at the rate of sixty pages a minute.

"Then with an impatient snort he dug out one of the *Scientific Americans* from under the pile of clothes and started to skim through Russell's article. Inadvertently he knocked over a pile of letters, cursed, leaned over to stop the avalanche, caught sight of me at the door, beamed heartily and explained that he'd just finished Russell's article and thought it particularly good! He tickles me; he's so impetuous, always in a devil of a rush to do innumerable things. Strangely enough he does seem to get a lot done – or at least leaves that impression."

I called on him one evening a short time later, to be treated to the spectacle of him packing. He had three large suitcases and his kitbag spread over the floor, kept whipping things out of one and into another, only to change his mind and reverse the process a few seconds later. The whole process was slowed-down by the discovery of forgotten things at the bottom of the cases. We carried on a conversation separated by a mounting pile of Arthur's possessions. Eventually he disappeared behind it altogether, though I could hear him cussing mildly in-between exchanges of opinion. I left him to it and crept back to my hut. When I met up with him in the canteen at supper, he was immersed in a book of war verse; apparently packing had been suspended after he unearthed this treasure.

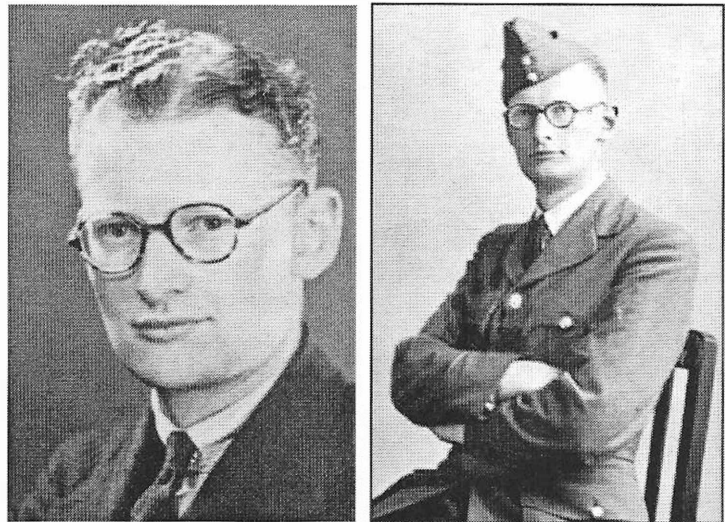
I began to wonder if he would ever get away, but was able to report to Marion towards the end of the month:

"I managed to skip through the rest of 'The Glass Giant of Palomar' in time to pass it back – sad that the war has held up further progress after most of the difficulties had been surmounted. The money spent on experiments with fused quartz for the mirror was enough to have bought the 60" Yerke telescope and equipment, yet the experiments weren't successful. Hale's efforts at getting money to back the 60", 100" and 200" telescopes certainly would sound well-nigh incredible in a novel. The BIS could do with engaging the services of someone with Hale's persuasiveness... Arthur has departed. He came dashing in just as I was breakfasting in bed this morning – he's going to Cosford, near Wolverhampton, for the next six weeks, but has no idea where he'll go from there. He did have hopes of returning here when he'd got his commission but apparently the prospect is remote..."

As a parting gift Arthur returned all the copies of *Astonishing*. Fortunately an orderly corporal spotted them on a duty visit, eagerly asked to be put on the 'waiting list' and eventually carted them all away. At least they found a good home!

Leisure activities seemed to fall apart after Arthur's departure. The music circle went into decline when all musical forces were mobilised by the commanding officer for a production of a Gilbert & Sullivan opera; the guiding genius behind the wall newspaper was posted and couldn't find a replacement editor; a new welfare officer resolutely cracked down on the more extreme political elements of the discussion group... But I had my head down, coping with the last few weeks of my technical course.

When I came up for air I was a qualified ground-radar mechanic. I expected a prompt posting to one of the coastal radar sites, but instead was switched to the permanent staff at Yatesbury, to spend the rest of that year carrying out maintenance on equipment at the technical site. //



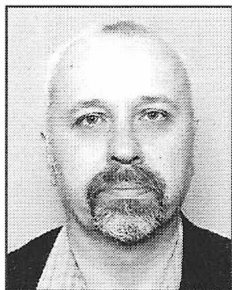
Left, Arthur in 1940 just before he enlisted. Right, in uniform, 1942. Photos from Bill Temple's album courtesy of Joe Patrizio.

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I'd like to quote this passage by Arthur C. Clarke from his book, *BY SPACE POSSESSED*, (Gollancz, 1993), as a little extra insight into the activities of Jack Happian Edwards, that 'mutant genius' of the BIS mentioned earlier in this issue:

"The first project we tackled was a spaceship speedometer which had been invented by Jack Edwards, the eccentric genius who headed our research effort. Edwards was a short, bearded and excitable Welshman – and the nearest thing to a mad scientist I have ever met outside fiction. He was the director of a very small electronics firm which soon afterwards expired thanks to his assistance, but he had an altogether uncanny grasp of the principles of astronautics. He had invented, way back in 1938, what is now called inertial guidance – the technique which allows a rocket to know just where it is and how fast it is going, by continually keeping track of the accelerations acting upon it.

"Edwards' space speedometer consisted of a large aluminium disc, pivoted on ball-bearings and with sundry gears, weights and springs attached to it. As the device was moved up or down, the weights would 'sense' the forces acting upon them, and the rotation of the disc would record the distance moved. We had planned to test the gadget on one of the deeper lifts of the London Underground but you will not be surprised to learn, it never got as far as that. The theory of the device was perfectly sound, and something similar steers every satellite into orbit today. But the engineering precision demanded was utterly beyond our means, and Mrs Edwards put her foot down on hearing of our intention to cast lead weights in her best saucepan."



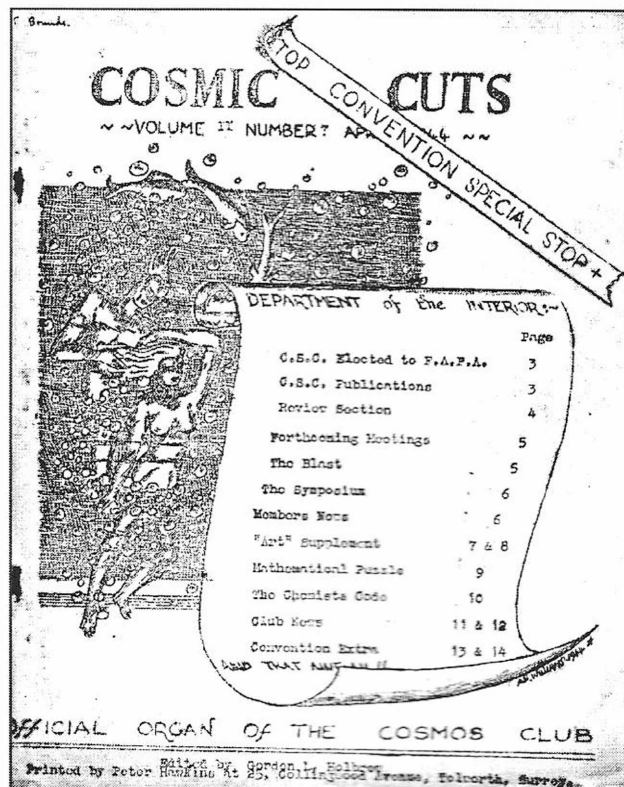
As we've seen, the SFA & BIS closed-down for the duration of hostilities, fans were drafted into the Services and you would have thought that the general disruption and difficulties of everyday life would have put a stop to organised SF-nal activities. But fans kept in touch – largely through Mike Rosenblum's *Futurian War Digest* – and somehow a few resourceful individuals managed to get together.

Photo from Rob

## The 'Cosmos Club' & the 1944 Eastercon

By Rob Hansen

The April 1944 issue of *Cosmic Cuts* announcing the Easter convention.  
Image from Greg Pickersgill



Despite the country being at war, British fans of the 1940s managed to organise four conventions during World War II. As was usual at the time, none involved hotels, so fans attending any lasting more than a day needed to make what overnight arrangements they could. An informal gathering of fans in London in September 1941 is sometimes listed as a convention – *Bombcon* – in old convention programme books, but I've never considered this a true con (nor did those involved, judging by the report in *Futurian War Digest* #13) so it's not included in my numbering.

The *NECONs*, organised in Leeds by J. Michael Rosenblum in Decembers 1943 and 1944, were basically small relaxacons. The *Midvention*, organised by the 16-year-old Roy Johnson and sponsored by the wartime British Fantasy Society (no relation to the present day organisation of the same name), was a little more ambitious. Held between 23rd and 26th April 1943 it attracted fourteen attendees, and Johnson ran it with the help of Rosenblum, Don Houston, Arthur Williams, Ralph E. Orme, and A. W. Gardner, and with further assistance from a Birmingham based sub-committee of Tom Hughes and Arthur Busby – all of which seems a bit excessive for such a small convention. Which brings us to the 1944 *Eastercon*. But first, a little background on those who organised it.

The Teddington group known as the Paint Research Station Science Fiction Library had started life in 1940 when fan E. Frank Parker had donated his library of SF books and magazines to help members of the National Fire Service to pass the time when 'standing by', and had grown from there. Initially there had been some hostility, followed by interest, and then enthusiasm.

A monthly news-sheet (called *Memo-Sheet*) was issued and in 1942 the full-size, single-copy fanzine *Beyond* began to appear quarterly. This featured the work of upwards of two dozen different writers during its life and

that of almost as many artists. The writing was primarily amateur fiction but this sometimes meant novelettes of 30,000 words or so. *Beyond* was at first edited (and typed and bound) by Parker and John Aiken but Parker had to 'retire into pseudonymity.' when certain authorities at the Paint Research Station decided that SF was good for neither science nor morals. As a result of such pressure the club was at times almost an underground movement and, as a natural consequence, thrived. However, the group did not come to the attention of British fandom in general until October 1942 when Parker announced its existence in *Futurian War Digest* #23.

On March 16th, 1943 the group decided to sever their connection with the Paint Research Station and to rename themselves the Cosmos Club (CSC). This was duly reported in *FWD* #27.

On April 13th, the CSC held their first meeting at Shirley's Cafe on Teddington's Park Road, the permanent venue for their wartime meetings thereafter, and welcomed new member Bruce Gaffron into the fold. With the change in name, the club also decided to discontinue *Memo-Sheet* and start a new clubzine. This was *Cosmic Cuts*<sup>1</sup>. The first issue appeared in May and was edited by Gordon Holbrow. (Dennis Tucker would take over as editor with the August 1945 issue.) Being both the largest fan group in the country during this period and very active, the CSC became one of the three pillars of wartime British fandom, alongside *Futurian War Digest* and the British Fantasy Society.

In December 1943, the Cosmos Club revealed their plans for a convention the following year, with the single-sheet *Convention Extra* in both in *Cosmic Cuts* #5 and in Parker's *Lamppost* #1, one of the 'litter' of accompanying small fanzines that rode out with *FWD* #32 that same month.

<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly a play on *Comic Cuts*, then a popular boys' comic!



The relevant pages in *Lamppost* were also pages 9 & 10 of *Cosmic Cuts* #5 and so presumably were a deliberate print overrun. It announced:

'BRITAIN'S GREATEST FAN GET-TOGETHER!!,  
'EASTER CONFERENCE AT COSMOPOLIS!'

Here it is! This is big news, and this is a potential conventionee reading it! Mark it now and mark it well, for you'll hate yourself if later on you find you haven't.

There is to be a Science Fiction Convention in this country next year, a real, honest-to-goodness Convention, in the acknowledged style of the best Conventions. A sure and certain Convention – a Convention that will live in your memory long after the recollection of lesser fan events has faded.

#### COSMOS CLUB AS HOST

Make no mistake. These are not 'tentative plans', subject to drastic alteration at the last moment. Teddington's Cosmos Club is assuming the task of organising this Convention, and it will positively take place, when and where advance notices have said it will.

Easter 1944 is the date to remember. London and its environs is the locale. And the Convention will be spread over three days, Easter Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

The rest of that first side was taken up with hyperbole, but on the reverse was the projected programme for the Eastercon, which was as follows:

#### SATURDAY –

2.00 p.m. Assembly, roll-call, introductions -- Waterloo Station, London: News Theatre, Platform 1, the Charing Cross Road. 'Nuff said.

5.00 p.m. Tea (ready arranged) – at London teashop. Visit to News Theatre (Disney week) or informal Convention conferences.

7.30 p.m. Chinese dinner (ready arranged) at a London restaurant. Eminent guests will speak.

#### SUNDAY – 'A Day in Cosmopolis'

All Sunday's events will take place at Teddington (35 mins by train from Waterloo, or about 1 hr. from Marylebone or Paddington on 27A bus). The Convention Hall is at Shirley's Cafe, Teddington, close to Teddington Station and next to Clarence Hotel Bus stop.

10.30 a.m. Assembly, Convention address – the President

Followed by :-

Film Show (including the amateur CSC film and silent fantasy films)

Musical recital (Bach, Mozart, Sibelius and Beethoven)

Auction

Debate

Speeches

Lunch and tea arranged.

#### MONDAY –

Informal events

Farewell party.

#### AND THE COST:

All meals and entertainment mentioned in the Programme are included in the Convention Fees. Fans will entail no extra cost other than travelling expenses and (if necessary) bed and breakfast charges.

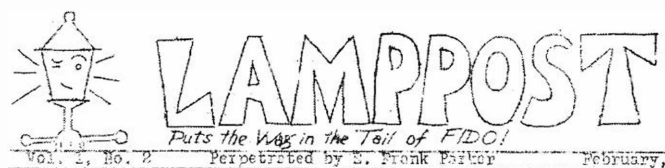
Full Programme, Saturday to Monday; 15/-

Saturday only; 7/6

Sunday only; 7/6

REMEMBER THE DATES: SATURDAY, APRIL 8<sup>th</sup>;  
SUNDAY APRIL 9<sup>th</sup>; MONDAY, APRIL 10<sup>th</sup>.

The pampered fans of today complain when the con programme is split between adjacent hotels rather than all under one roof. One can only imagine how they would react at the prospect of a thirty-five minute train ride between venues!



The second *Convention Extra* rode out with *Lampost* #2 in *FWD* #33 (Feb 1944). This reported that Arthur Williams would be producing a con booklet and that there would be a Fantasy Museum at the convention, display items for which would be gratefully received. However, the big news concerned the 'eminent speakers':

"Mr Walter Gillings, ex-Editor of *Tales of Wonder*' and Director of Utopian Publications Ltd., has agreed to act as Convention President, and will open the Sunday morning session with a Presidential Address. And, circumstances permitting, the Guest Speaker at the Convention dinner will be none other than the distinguished Professor A. M. Low."

The third and final issue of *Lampost* went out with *FWD* #34 (April 1944), its front page consisting of a map of how to get to the convention. This appears to have been sized for American quarto paper. Sadly, it was printed on UK quarto and so ran off the bottom of the page. Not that this seems to have deterred anyone.

On Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, E. Frank Parker and the con's Organising Secretary Dr John K. Aiken set off from Teddington by train to meet fans at the agreed meeting place on Waterloo's platform 1. Unfortunately they encountered a problem. As Aiken related in his report in *FWD* #35:

"Aiken and Frank Parker arrive at Waterloo without tickets and are detained by officials. In the distance they see hordes of conventioners, tho' avoid their gaze. Eventually they are permitted to leave the platform. Gathering of the fans: Syd Bounds (Kingston), Hal Chibbett (Bowes Park N.11), George Ellis (Manchester), Bruce Gaffron, Fred Goodier, Gordon Holbrow (Teddington), Ron Lane (Manchester), Arthur Hillman (Newport. Mon.), Peter Hawkins (Surbiton), Don Houston (Letchworth), John Millard (RCAF, Jackson, Michigan), Dennis Tucker (High Wycombe) and Arthur Williams (Camberwell) have accumulated. Attempts are made to read the Con booklet, which Hawkins has spent the whole previous day in duplicating, but although the cover is fine the paper inside too bad and the attempts are swiftly abandoned. (The quiz which was particularly illegible is to be reprinted.) Everyone worries because Gus does not appear (it is later learned that all leave is cancelled in his area)."

The Gus referred to here is American fan Norman (Gus) Willmorth, who was an ex-director of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. When America entered the war after Pearl Harbour and Americans began being posted to Britain, it was inevitable that some of these would be fans and that they would seek out their British counterparts. Willmorth arrived on these shores in August 1943 as a corporal assigned to an American ordnance supply depot 'somewhere in Britain'. In the October 1943 *FWD*, editor J. Michael Rosenblum had reported:

"Contact betwixt the respective fandoms of USA and England in person has at last been effected. By a short head, Norman 'Gus' Willmorth beat John Millard in saying hello to Anglofandom. The noble Angeleno made a visit to

Teddington and the Cosmos Club in August and met some nine of the members who thought highly of the American ambassador, a feeling which appeared to be duplicated. Shortly afterward Johnnie Millard of Jackson, Michigan dropped a line to JMR saying that at last he could spend a weekend in Leeds."

So ubiquitous was Willmorth to become at British fan gatherings up and down the land in the following months that the absence of this friendly figure in his American uniform was keenly felt. While those at the convention would not have known why Gus could not be there we certainly do. This was April 1944, and all leave in his area had been cancelled in preparation for the D-Day invasion. Rosenblum himself was another notable by his absence, but he had travelled down to London in February to visit the Cosmos Club and meet other London-area fans.

From his account of this meeting (which can be found in *FWD* #34) it's clear that while the Blitz was long over, occasional bombing raids on the capital were still a hazard the con attendees would have been aware of. Fortunately, the V2 had yet to start hitting Britain. The first of these would not arrive until 8th September 1944, when it would land on Staveley Road in Chiswick, some miles from both Teddington and Central London.

Having gathered at Waterloo, the group listed above then made their way to Charing Cross Road to scour the many bookshops it then contained (here in the present, it's now down to its last few). No great finds were reported, the shops presumably having already been well picked-over by local fans. At 4.30 pm everyone moved to the Coventry Street Corner House, the London tearoom first announced as having been booked for the purpose in the original programme.

The Corner Houses were a chain of tearooms run by J. Lyons & Co., and the Coventry Street outlet had been the first. This was located on the junction of Coventry Street (north side) and Rupert Street and opened in 1909, eventually closing in 1970. (The building now houses 'Planet Hollywood'.) Corner Houses offered reliable meals in clean and attractive surroundings. Their waitresses, known as 'nippies', became London icons in their smart black and white uniforms. The Corner Houses were rather more impressive than the term 'tearoom' might suggest. Here's a description from their web-site:

'The Corner Houses were huge restaurants on four or five levels and each Corner House employed something like 400 staff. Each floor had its own restaurant style and all had orchestras playing to the diners almost continuously throughout the day and evening. At one time they were open 24 hours. The ground floor was usually taken up by a large Food Hall where many speciality products from the Corner House kitchens could be bought, items such as hams, cakes, pastries, hand-made chocolates, fruit from the Empire, wines, cheeses, flowers and much more. There were hair-dressing salons, telephone booths, theatre booking agencies and a food delivery service to any address in London, twice a day. Meals and snacks were priced to meet most pockets. There were three Corner Houses in London, situated at Coventry Street, Strand and Tottenham Court Road.' (<http://www.kzwp.com/lyons/cornerhouses.htm>)

Though the Eastercon attendees were probably unaware of it, the Coventry Street Corner House was famous in gay circles throughout Britain as a welcoming venue where male homosexuals could meet socially at a time when their behaviour was criminalised. Also, of course a J. Lyons teashop (not a full-size Corner House) at 36/38 New Oxford Street was where the tradition of London



The Coventry Street Corner House, now home to 'Planet Hollywood' Photo from web-site.

fans meeting in town on Thursdays first got started (that continues today in the first-Thursdays pub meetings).

At the Coventry Street Corner House, the others were joined by new arrivals Michael Lord ("looking magnificent enough to be his namesake of the Admiralty"), Tommy Bullet, and the Ouseleys of the Stoke-on-Trent group, which was believed to be the only active fan group in the country before the Cosmos Club made themselves known to wider fandom. Some were unimpressed by the food on offer, however, Manchester fans expressing surprise that Londoners could keep alive on such fare and retiring to recuperate in a nearby park. Ah, that old North-South sniping! Not everyone was seated in one session, as CSC member Gordon Holbrow discovered after spending too long in Charing Cross Road and missing the main assembly for tea:

"This teaches me because, when I do report to a fan wearing a red rosette in his buttonhole at the Coventry Street Corner House I get put in charge of the second party. It seemed really wonderful how the whole of London had converged on that Corner House. I charge my little party into the throng and almost at once lose it. I feed myself and report back to the fan with the rosette wearing a sheepish grin on my face and say 'I've lost my party'. He forgives me and gives me another batch and hopes I do better next time. This party is bound for a Disney show and it is not to my credit that we get there. A French ATS causes a little diversionary marching but, as I've already said, we get to the News Theatre."

The Disney programme at the Cameo News Theatre at 307 Regent Street was the next item on the agenda and this started at 5.30pm. The Disney film 'Fantasia' had been a big hit with fans of the day and seen multiple times by many of them, but in this instance the programme on offer was Disney Short Subjects.

As the name implies, News Theatres had been established primarily for the showing of newsreels such as those by British Pathe over here and the 'March of Time' series in the U.S., though these were also shown before the main feature in other cinemas up through the 1960s. The Cameo itself underwent various changes of name over the years, finally ceasing to be a cinema in April 1980. It was taken back into use by the Polytechnic of Central London (today known as the University of Westminster) for use as a lecture hall and performance space, and the canopy over the former cinema entrance removed.

Following their cinema visit, the fans decamped to a pub in Greek Street. As for the party Holbrow was in charge of:

"Again it is not through my efforts that we arrive here safely. For one thing a couple of WAACS happen to pass the cinema on our exit. Then Johnny Millard knows the way to Greek Street. I decided that Johnny Millard was a fine guy, mainly because he told me to avoid a drink known as a black-and-tan."

The pub was the Pillars of Hercules, right next door to the restaurant at 8 Greek Street where the evening meal had been booked. As John Millard wrote:

"About 6 or 7 of us - Art Williams, Ron Lane, Dennis Tucker, Gordon Holbrow, Fred Goodier - spent the rest of the time to dinner at the pub next to the Shanghai Restaurant drinking a few glasses of beer. Finally, at about 7pm and three pints later we retired to the sidewalk (pavement) outside where the rest of the party had congregated - Wally Gillings and wife had joined the party by now. Wally was editor of *Tales of Wonder* and one of the first fans I met here in England at the time of my first visit to the home of JMR. So up the stairs of the Shanghai Restaurant, where a Chinese dinner was served to us. Us being about 23 or 24. A very good meal too; I'll leave it to you who know about Chinese meals."

The restaurant is no longer there and if it still survives has presumably long since moved south to Gerrard Street, now designated London's Chinatown - and doubtless changed its name several times, too. Here's Holbrow on the meal:

"The dinner is a three-cornered match between Tommy Bullet, Mike Lord and myself. The end - an enormous pile of empty plates."

And here's Aiken:

"Some participants perform prodigies of eating, despite the theory that the soup is nothing but an aquarium. They become completely surrounded by piles of empty dishes. Others hang back delicately, valuing their stomachs. Scotch Ale is brought in an enormous Jug, and is imbibed. Professor Low, unable to be present under military exigencies, sends the gathering his love. Names are signed in wax (stencil). Deveraux, Gillings & Aiken decide that everyone must take everything much more seriously."



Wally Gillings produced sixteen issues of *Tales of Wonder*. This is the August 1939 issue, with an article from the ubiquitous Prof. A.M. Low. Image from the *Visco* web-site.

Walter Gillings was famously concerned that fans should be serious and present a responsible face to the world, a view which would form part of his address in Teddington the following day. With Professor A. M. Low unable to attend no one gave an after-dinner speech. According to Millard, the stencil signing alluded to by Aiken was the final act of the evening:

"One of the last things we did before the days activity came to an end was to sign a stencil which Peter Hawkins, I believe it was, started around the dinner table. The days activities ended about 9.45 p.m. (D.B.S.T.). Things finish early over here you know and tomorrow the Convention is to continue at Teddington."

D.B.S.T. was of course Double British Summer Time. During the Second World War, double summer time (two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time) was introduced and replaced ordinary summer time. During the winter, clocks were kept one hour ahead of GMT.

Looking at a map, it's clear the organisers had deliberately chosen venues for Saturday's activities that were close together. Clustered in a small area bounded by Regent Street to the West, Charing Cross Road to the East, Oxford Street to the North, and Coventry Street/Leicester Square to the South, the distance between those venues could be quickly and easily covered on foot.

The following day in Teddington started at 10 a.m., much as it still does for anyone running a convention, as Aiken records:

"Prodigious fetching and carrying by one and all. Shirley's (Teddington café housing Sunday's sessions) disappears beneath a wave of auction items and electrical apparatus. This latter turns out to be useless, doing nothing but emit loud indelicate noises, and keeping a mobile fuse-mending squad constantly in action."

While all this preparation was going on, fans were already converging on them. As Millard relates, with what may be the most exact timings ever to appear in a con report: "I was up by 8.00 a.m., had breakfast by 8.45 a.m. and was at Waterloo station by 9.35 a.m. for a train that was due to leave at 10.22 a.m. About 9.55 a.m. A. F. Hillman arrived, at about 10.21 a.m. Wally Gillings showed up, so we climbed aboard the train and landed at Teddington, which is south-west of London, about 10.50. We made our way to Shirley's Cafe, just about a block from the Railroad Station, in the door and up the stairs where most of the gang was ahead of us. We gab for a while on this and that..."

Aiken again: "Gascoigne, Gatland, Gomberg and Sandfield (wearing a tie of a totally new primary colour) are newcomers. Swing discussions rage. Hawkins appears with duplicated dinner-signatures. Ellis reads *Captain Future*, undisturbed."

From which it would appear this was Lawrence Sandfield's first convention. As well as all this conversation those present also admired the display area designated the 'Fantasy Museum'. Original artwork by Harry Turner and by Morey; the manuscript of William F. Temple's *THE SMILE OF THE SPHINX* ("It's the cat's whiskers," says Hawkins) and other *Tales of Wonder* contributions; first issues; old books and the complete files of *Beyond* and *Cosmic Cuts* were on view.

At noon the programme proper begins with an item described by Millard thus: "First on the program was a 'Brains Trust' (sort of an 'Information Please'). Those taking part were Dr J. K. Aiken, Wally Gillings and Peter Hawkins - as the brains, and E. Frank Parker as the Chief Custodian of questions."



What those questions were has gone unrecorded, but of the item Aiken writes: "the questioners maintain a high intellectual level except for typographical trouble leading to moon-struck fans and ribaldry about Millard's socks." I have no idea what this might mean and an editorial aside in the report in *FWD* ("A peculiarity of American servicemen is their rolled-down gents natty half-hose – can someone tell us the reason?") has left me none the wiser. Incidentally, when reading these old accounts it seems odd at first that Millard is consistently referred to as being American when he was in fact Canadian and serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force at the time. Here's Taral Wayne's later profile of him in *TORONTO THE GHOD*:

"November 1917 brought with it an advance Christmas present for the Millards of Toronto, in the form of one John L. Millard, now a six-foot, blue-eyed 'old time' fan. The family moved to Michigan in 1919, so that when young John turned to science fiction in the late thirties he naturally gravitated to the circle of acolytes about Doc Smith. "Becoming active at the *Chicon* in 1940, he helped organise the Galactic Roamers in January of the following year. The GR's later became famous as the group that helped Doc Smith with his 'Lensman' series. After attending the *Denvention* in '42 John joined the RCAF, serving with distinction in both Canada and England."



John Millard in 1940.  
Photo from *JoM*, scan  
by Greg Pickersgill

Tony Keen has pointed out: "Actually, it's not that unreasonable to describe as American someone who had lived 22 of their 26 years in the United States. And it is entirely accurate for someone writing in 1944 to describe Millard as part of US fandom, as at that point all of his fanac appears to have been in the US, and it seems that he made no contact with Canadian fandom before 1947."

As the final question was put to the Brains Trust so the sound of cutlery was heard from downstairs. This led to it being answered by the panellists in what Aiken refers to as 'monosyllabic unison' and everyone then immediately trooping downstairs for lunch. "Proper Food?" asks someone anxiously. At this point in the war when food was rationed this was a reasonable concern, but it seems the CSC had somehow managed to arrange a real meal.

Here's Millard: "After the meal had been successfully done away with and several cups of tea had been drunk by everyone we sat and listened to a speech by Wally Gillings. In the Programme it was listed as a Presidential Address, but as to what he was President of I don't know."

According to Aiken: "Gillings performs the prodigious feat of keeping large numbers of fans silent and attentive for half an hour while he discusses the possible future and functions of fandom and fan writings, emphasising the need for an attitude at once more serious and more broadminded. He outlines the kind of professional magazine he hopes will appear in Britain after the war, and suggests the *Beyonds* as training-grounds for its authors. It is up to fans, he says, to show that stf is worth while and can really foster achievement. (The high-spot of the con)."

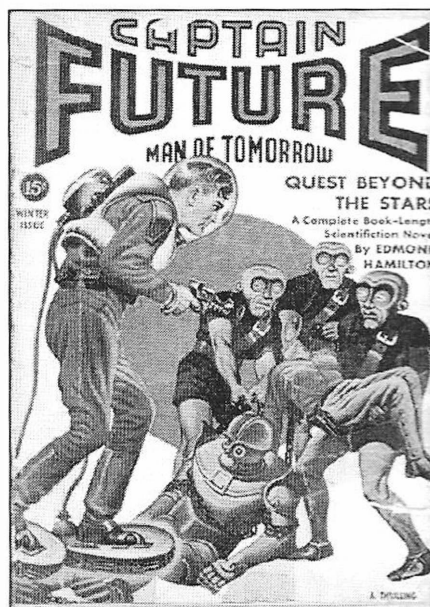
After Gillings' speech had concluded people sat around talking for another hour or so. At 3.30 p.m. everyone

trooped back upstairs for the first session of the auction. Frank Parker was the auctioneer and things initially got off to a slow start, though bidding picked up as the session progressed.

What was on offer consisted mostly of American prozines, a few BRE *Astoundings*, and some original illustrations by Harry Turner. The magazines all fetched good prices, particularly copies of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, but Aiken reports a "surprising lack of enthusiasm for original drawings and manuscripts as against magazines". This is a pattern that would hold true for future cons and it would be some years before British fans started to show a proper interest in original artwork.



Harry Turner's striking cover for the April 1942 issue of the fanzine *FANTAST*, edited by Sam Youd & Doug Webster. Image from Philip Turner.



Breeding-ground of the BEMs as it was, few in Britain would have seen any of the 16 issues of *Captain Future*, so George Ellis would have been well-pleased with his purchase.

Image from the *Collectors' Showcase* web-site.

There was a half-hour tea-break from 5 p.m. – mainly, it appears, to allow Parker's throat to recover – and then the auction resumed. Of this session Aiken writes: "More auction – top price (10/-) paid for complete file of *Scoops*; the *FFM* of 10/6 fame does well again (8/6). Only a half-dozen items turned in. Ellis gets his *Captain Futures*. Curiously no British Reprint Editions are left. A spare *Beyond* does well."

The film programme started at 6.30 p.m. with an item much loved by the Teddington fans: "The Cosmos Club film, now patched and scratched almost beyond belief, plays all its tricks: it breaks, the reel falls off, the sprockets go haywire and finally the projector lamp blows. But Millard is a match for it, there is a spare lamp and after he has whirled it through in well under bogey the remaining films are almost hitch-free. The shorts (*Pioneer Mickey*, the Puppet film, and the *Popeye*) are tops, *Monster of the Loch* being a little cryptic and dated."

This was the final formal part of the convention. As most of the conventioners prepared to move to a nearby pub, 'The King's Arms' they were joined by Gordon Holbrow who had finally managed to make it to the con after having had two bicycles fall apart beneath him during the day. Those that needed to get home headed for the train station, Mike Lord and Dennis Tucker leading the way. The 'informal events' and 'farewell party' that were originally announced for Monday do not appear to have happened, the convention ending on Sunday.

John Millard sums up: "So everything wound up at 8.30 p.m., but a social gathering was to continue at 'The Kings Arms' and was to include some elbow bending. But as a few of us had to catch a train we didn't go (shame!) and returned to London or our various abodes. Personally, [I thought] the Convention was a great success. It was not easy to put on such an event and still get away with it the way things are over here, especially in regard to food and transport. The committee did a real good job. They should be congratulated."

In *Futurian War Digest* #35, Aiken said: "In conclusion, the Committee would like to thank the participants (and in particular the President, for his generous sacrifice of a placid weekend) and the donors of auction items, for all they did to make the Convention a success. They announce that they propose to issue a souvenir booklet of higher quality than the illegible Programme: as to the proceeds (not so large as they would have been if that lamp hadn't blown!), a proportion will go to a Future Convention Fund. One further announcement: the Debate ('Man is not a free-agent') postponed for lack of time, will have been held at Shirley's on May 13."

In November the CSC did publish that souvenir booklet, EASTERCON 1944, a 14-page commemoration of the convention edited by Bruce Gaffron, that has been the primary source for this article.

After the war, John Millard became a significant figure in Canadian fandom, going on to chair the 1973 Worldcon, *Torcon 2*. Almost thirty years afterwards he reminisced about the 1944 Eastercon in *Checkpoint* #45.

Looking back on the convention from 2010, the thing that most impresses me about it is that it happened at all. The other wartime cons were small affairs, but the 1944 Eastercon was as full and complete a convention as any that had been seen in Britain to that point. Organising and running it under wartime conditions was a magnificent achievement. Both it and those responsible for it, the Cosmos Club, deserve to be better remembered and more celebrated than they have been.

...Rob Hansen, January 2010.

Those known to have attended the con were:

John K. Aiken, Syd Bounds, Tommy Bullet, Hal Chibbett, W. A. Deveraux, George Ellis, Bruce Gaffron, Alan Gasgoigne, K. W. Gatland\*, Walter Gillings, Mr Gomborg, Fred Goodier, Peter Hawkins, Arthur Hillman, Gordon Holbrow, Don Houston, Ron Lane, Michael Lord, John Millard, Ouseleys (Mr & Mrs?), Frank Parker, Lawrence Sandfield, Dennis Tucker, Arthur Williams.

\*The name of Kenneth Gatland stands out because like Clarke he went on to become President of the BIS and a recognised authority on spaceflight. At the time of the 1944 Eastercon he had already started on his career:

"In 1941 K. W. Gatland & H. N. Pantlin formed the Astronautical Development Society. This was an outgrowth of the Hawker Model Flying Club, and the two founder-members worked at that time as junior draughtsmen at Hawker Aircraft in Kingston-upon-Thames. Soon, Gatland and Pantlin...had built a small rocket test-stand and for the next two years developed tiny solid-propellant motors for model aircraft and developed a ducted motor which used ingested air to supplement the exhaust gases'- from 'THE ROCKET - the history and development of rocket & missile technology' by David Baker, 1978. [PW]

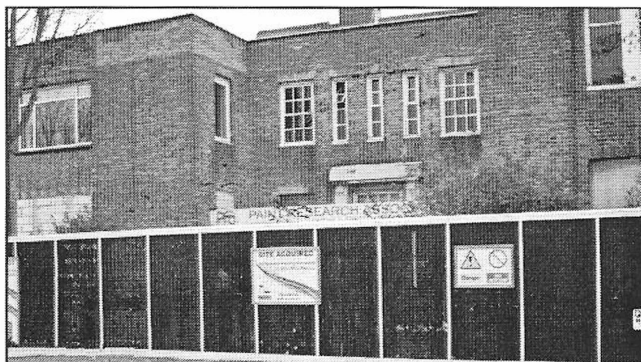
Here's a bonus feature; a glimpse into the activities of a hard-working *Relapse* researcher consultant! [PW]

## Hunting the Past

By Rob Hansen

During the day on New Year's Eve 2008, when more sensible folk were already starting to get merry, I made a field trip to Teddington, armed with the map that E. Frank Parker had sketched for *Lamppost* #3. A bit of googling a few weeks back had revealed, to my surprise, that the Paint Research Station was still where it had been since the 1930s so I figured I'd take some photos of that and see what else on Frank's little map still survived.

To my great disappointment, the premises of the Paint Research Station - or the Paint Research Association as it became - were derelict and boarded up. I was several years too late (I later learned it had moved to a new site in 2005)! I snapped some pics anyway, but what a disappointment. An even closer near-miss came with the King's Arms, where the Cosmos Club would repair for alcoholic refreshment. There was a King's Head on the road



Top, The Kings Arms as-was; Bottom, the derelict site of the old Paint Research Station. Photo by Rob Hansen.

indicated on Parker's map, but it was a bit too far along. Closer to where the pub should've been was one called 'The Clock House' but of the King's Arms there was no sign.

Of course, when going through those local history books I came across a photo of the King's Arms and discovered it was indeed the pub now called the Clock House, but too late to call in for a quick pint, alas. Googling it later, I learned it had reopened as The Clock House on December 1st, a mere four weeks before my visit.

Still, these disappointments were more than offset by the discovery that the building where the Cosmos Club actually held their regular meetings, and where the 1944 Eastercon was held, still exists. It's not called 'Shirley's Cafe' anymore of course – it's now 'Spivack Chemist' – but it's clearly the same building. Parker's map instructs people to go right on upstairs when they get there because that's where the convention is. I hadn't been able to visualise this, but when you see it, it's obvious how this worked. The stairs are still visible in the front of the shop and they lead up to a hall – presumably extra dining space at the time – that would easily accommodate 40 or so people.

Those currently running it had no idea what the building had been used for in the 1940s, so I did some checking in local history books at a local library just to be sure it was the right building. My recent tribulations in locating the site of the Globe (see *Prolapse #13*) had given me reason to be wary in this regard.

A photo from the early twentieth century in one book showed the Clarence Hotel – now called the Park – and that section of Park Road looking pretty much as it does now. There were no buildings demolished between then and now that could have been alternate candidates for Shirley's Cafe. I found another photo that shows how the front of the shop had looked before it became Spivack, but it wasn't until I phoned the Local History section at Richmond Old Town Hall that I got confirmation the building had definitely been a cafe in the 1940s – run by a Mrs Eleanor Anderson in 1940, apparently – but no actual confirmation of name, alas. Still, I don't think there's any doubt this was the building, which makes it the oldest venue at which a con was held in the south that's still standing!

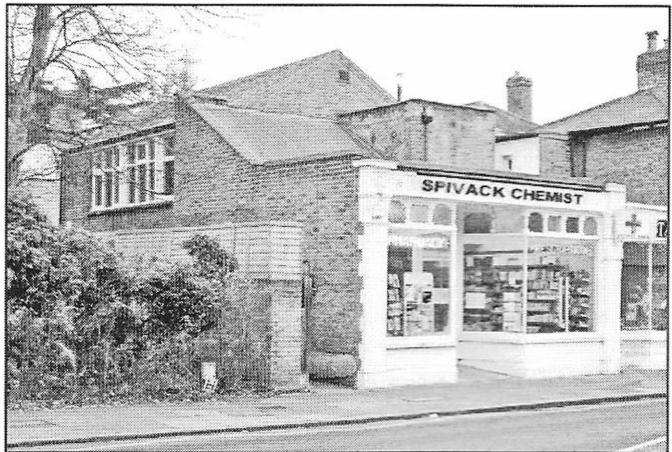
One year and two days later it's Saturday 2nd January 2010, and I'm once again making a field trip in connection with the 1944 Eastercon. Odd to think of a visit to Central London as a field trip but that's precisely what it is. I exit the Underground at Piccadilly Circus and walk along Coventry Street until I come to the junction with Rupert Street. The building on one of those two facing corners was once the Coventry Street Corner House. I'm not sure which so I take pictures of both. Above street level they look much the same as they would've through most of the twentieth century so a web-search should turn up an image to let me figure out which one it is, which it does.

Then it's over to Greek Street to seek out the pub mentioned in the con reports. Gordon Holbrow describes this as being on the corner of Greek Street. There are three pubs on the street, two of them on corners. The candidates are The Three Greyhounds and The Coach & Horses. This latter pub would later be the favoured watering hole of actors, writers and musicians such as Jeffrey Bernard, George Melly, Lucien Freud, and Doctor Who actor Tom Baker, and is currently where the fortnightly editorial lunch of *Private Eye* is held. Naturally, I hope this will turn out to be the pub, but I take photos of both for if/when I uncover which it was.

Next, since I'm in town anyway, I amble over to Lincoln's Inn Fields and take several pictures of the bandstand in the park there. This was where the 1941

gathering of fans later dubbed *Bombcon* took place so I want these for my archive. Trouble is, there are sawn off stumps of an earlier structure visible in the floor so this may not be the original bandstand but a replacement. While I'm pondering this, it suddenly occurs to me that as I'm no more than a ten minute walk away from Holborn Library it might be worth seeing if they're open and checking out Greek Street in their local history archives.

They are, and a few minutes with a microfilm reader scrolling through old directories gives me an address for the Shanghai Restaurant – 8 Greek Street – that puts it next door to the third pub on the street, The Pillars of Hercules. Since that pub is not on a corner, this puzzles me.



**Above;** This was Shirley's Cafe, with the upstairs room presumably now used for storage. **Below:** The Pillars of Hercules pub, where fans drank the night away in 1944! Photos by Rob Hansen.



Nevertheless I trudge back over to Greek Street to take more photos, and it turns out The Pillars of Hercules is kind-of on a corner. The upper storeys are built over what I had taken to be an alley running down the side of the pub at ground level but which turns out to be designated a street despite being barely wide enough to allow a single car to squeeze past it. What had been the Shanghai restaurant in 1944 is now a shop imaginatively named 'SHOP'. (Perhaps it sells generic products.)

Photos taken, I head home where a web-search I really should have done before setting out gives me an address on Regent Street for the Cameo News Theatre. I may not have a photo of this as it is today, but it doesn't matter. With the addresses of all the venues to hand I can now study a map and see for the first time just why the Eastercon's organisers chose them. That's the cool thing about this sort of research; it gives you a glimpse into what those guys were thinking, all those years ago.

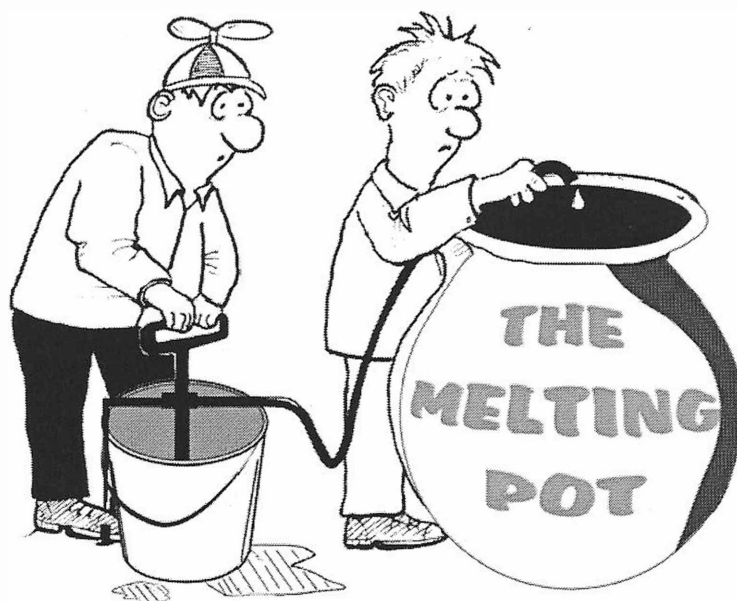
Rob Hansen, January 2010



# The Melting Pot

After last issue's disaster, concerned fans rally round to re-fill the Pot....

It was Dan Steffan's fault for knocking it over, but messages of support have poured in, so to speak! Irresistible editorial interjections in *italics* and [brackets] in the usual way.



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

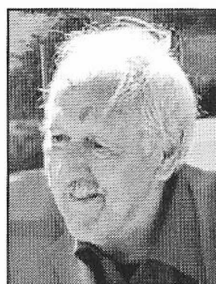
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"It's amazing how interesting you and your contributors can make the lives of people I've never met." – Fred Lerner, LoC

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**Brian Aldiss**  
Oxford

Dear Pete,



Brian, in 2005.  
Photo by PW.

Your latest *Relapse* absorbed with interest. I can match one of Tom Shippey's revelations. Long ago, before you were born, I was on a troop train run by American forces, travelling between Calcutta and Burma. I climbed into an empty carriage and there on the table lay an edition of *Astounding*, with Hal Clement's 'Cold Front' illustrated on the cover! [July 1946] Wonderful! Until then, I had had to make do with the abridged British edition, printed on grey paper. It was only just after the war, when I got to Hong Kong, that I found a bookstore where I could buy a two-year sub to the American edition, which arrived safely home each month.

The first magazine I ever set eyes on was in Gorleston's Woolies. A large hanging placard announced '3d - YANK MAGS - 6d'. I bought an *Amazing* but found the storylines absurd and the writing abysmal. 'Moon of Mad Avercism' – or something like that – where the atmosphere was so bad that space travellers reverted to dinosaurs. Fortunately I also bought an *Astounding* – an issue in the middle of one of those endless Doc Smith sagas. I was hooked, thinking it was all highly intellectual, simply because I could not make head nor tail of it. I've always liked the idea of SF being hard to understand – disorienting.

Blimey, *SF Horizons*! Sorry, mind's a complete blank. Nothing unusual there, but I seem not to have a copy of either issue anywhere, not even in my index. My agent was then, for a brief while, good old Tom Boardman. He had found a second-hand copy of WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, read it, loved it, and set up a publishing house to publish SF and Boardman Bloodhounds. His loo was decorated all over with their lurid jackets. I fancy that Tom Boardman got those two issues published for Harry and me.

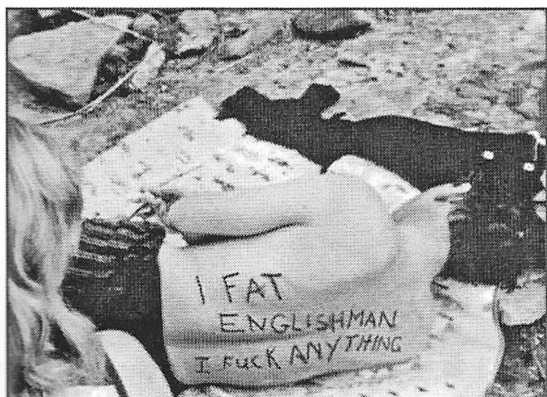
Tom Shippey was a touch grumpy, I thought. Initially *SFH* was Harry's idea. We felt that British fans were too content with the status quo, even with the most whinge-making of stories, and so we hung them out to dry – getting much satisfaction from the process. We had fun doing it but it proved too expensive to continue.

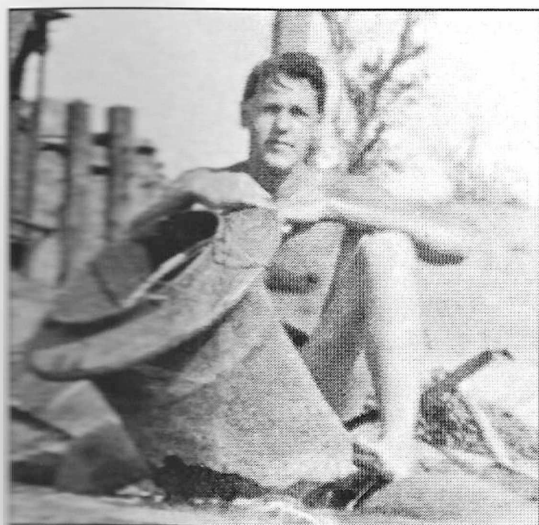
I'm extremely pleased to see that photo of Amis taking a rest on a Yugoslav beach. You know it was his wife, Hilly, who was responsible for the decoration? Harry and I were with them at the Trieste SF Film Festival. Kingsley wanted to break up the marriage. They travelled by train and I was told later that the row between them grew so bitter that Hilly tried to (?) threatened to (?) jump out of the carriage. Harry would know more about that than I.

Kingsley wrote two SF novels: *THE ALTERATION* (much of it set in Oxford) and *RUSSIAN HIDE-AND-SEEK* (where for a century or more the Russians have invaded and settled down here – very enjoyable). Then there's his weirdie, *THE GREEN MAN*, absolutely stunning! The pub, a central figure, is so well drawn you could find your way round it in the dark. On first day of publication, anyone going into any pub called 'The Green Man' could get a free pint. How Jonathan Cape arranged that I have never understood!

Oh the Brunners were nobs all right. That's why he was such a bloody little snob. His Mama lived in Henley-on-Thames. I know a relation of John's, Hugo, a nice man who became Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. [Son of Sir Felix, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet, and our JB's second cousin]. I asked him once about John. "Never met him," said Hugo.

Below: the picture described last time by Jim Linwood, tracked-down by our intrepid researchers. Photo provided by R. Gawarger.





Wrote in 1945, by the River Mu, Germany. Photo from NEMESIS with his permission.

John Hall  
john.hall@virgin.net



John at Orbital. Photo by Rob Jackson

David Redd  
dave\_redd@hotmail.com



David in 2009. His photo.

The family probably despised our man because he wrote SF. If he'd written thrillers he might have been okay – although then the family would have had to put up with Mrs John Brunner...

You commented upon my appearance in Max Hastings' recent book NEMESIS. Yes, Max was good news for me. I gave him some miniscule information for ARMAGEDDON, and was so taken with the book that I went to a favourite hotel in Greece for a week just to read it without interruption. So then we got talking, as they say. I was able to be more helpful regarding the war against Japan, so much so that he has included a photo of me in the nude (as you evidently saw and were too modest to comment on).

Two nights ago, Alison and I were back at Castle Kubrick for a party. Grand launch by Thames & Hudson and Warner Bros for an extravagantly expensive (£35) volume entitled A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. Brilliant illustrations, and my old story included.

It's extraordinary how these things linger on. Words for my gravestone: 'HE WROTE THE STORY'.

*[I've seen the book, Brian; Chris Baker came over on Boxing Day and presented a copy to my Alison (daughter). As you probably know Chris is a local artist ('Fangorn') who was recruited by Kubrick to produce story-boards and production designs for the film. After Kubrick died Chris assumed the project was cancelled until someone telephoned to say that Steven Spielberg in Los Angeles wanted to talk to him. Well, pull the other one! Chris put the phone down but it really was Spielberg and a week later he was in L.A. You'll have seen that Chris has his name on the cover and the book features many of his visuals together with images showing how they were carried over into the film itself.]*

Dear Peter,

Another great issue. Tom Shippey on *SF Horizons* was absolutely on the money. I never read it but what Tom says about SF criticism at the time is still relevant now. Too much criticism from both inside and outside the genre focuses on the awful, and never goes the extra distance to highlight what is really good. The perception of SF as a home for the weak-minded continues today and so we find that books which are plainly SF but written by mainstream authors like Margaret Atwood cannot be described as such, on pain of snits and writs.

Even fans (no names, no pack drill) who work in publishing, hate for any of their fan stuff to be widely available on the net in case someone from their work environment should find it while Googling for info about them, and that thereby they should be revealed as an enthusiast for the genre. There's more respect for writing porn than there is for SF. Yet, SF is everywhere in the media – huge viewing figures on the TV, big box office at the cinema.

When *SF Horizons* was published, SF wasn't anywhere like as popular and had just barely spread beyond its original pulp ghetto. Despite, or even perhaps because of, its popularity, the 'literary establishment' are still locked into their snobbish mindset, and we do ourselves no favours simply by decrying the awfulness of the Lionel Fanthorpe's of the parish, without glorying in the marvellous work done by the Al Reynolds's. We have to have the courage of our convictions if things are ever to change.

*[Sorry John but I believe the battle is irretrievably lost. That popularity has caused everyone to pile-in, so much so that the occasional 'good' or worthwhile book is swamped by media spin-offs and escapist fantasy. And when even con-committees and fan-eds call it 'sci-fi' then the barbarians are truly within the gates. No wonder the public and literati think the genre is rubbish – most of it is.]*

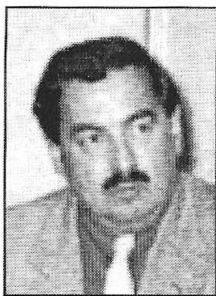
Dear Peter,

I've had so much pleasure from *Relapse 15* (oh, those missing hours today when I should have been doing VAT returns) that I've taken notes while reading Tom Shippey's piece on *SF Horizons*. Even you admit *SFH* wasn't a fanzine but it is at least Old *Relapse*-era News and did get a few fans excited at the time – including me. But you didn't include the Varley-Aldiss exchange of views or other contemporary insights? An odd and rare omission. Without your famous add-ons the article feels almost like a *Speculation* piece quietly tipped in...

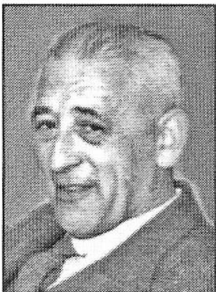
*[David, I wanted to include the Varley-Aldiss letters from Scottische, and a picture of Geoff Doherty – but I ran out of pages. The trouble with the printed format is that I have to work in multiples of four, and on the first run-through I ended-up with 37. Nothing for it but to trim something down, and poor old Tom's piece took the hit. I regret it now, seeing those three solid pages of text – but otherwise I'd have had to have found another three pages of something, and the issue was late enough already!]*

Tom Shippey asks, "Is that what it was like back then?" and as one who was a would-be SF writer in 1964-5 I have to say yes, *SFH* to me was a major trail-blazer, countering the sad image of BRE *Astoundings*, establishing a baseline for improvement parallel to Mike Moorcock's efforts in *New Worlds*. It contributed greatly to a climate of opinion that SF should and could improve. I can't disagree with the entertaining overview of the Aldiss-Harrison-Boardman ambitions and achievements, other than in a few minor details, but I do feel a need to fill a few gaps.

The main reason *SFH* didn't "catch on" wasn't contributors or finances or disdaining the "charm of SF" (good point!) but simply that unlike *New Worlds* it didn't have a positive agenda for change. (And even *NW*, which did, was only kept afloat by the Compact package-distribution system and by



Above; John Boland, Below; EFR, both at the 1957 Loncon. Photos from Frank Arnold's album



Only known picture of Brian's pal Geoff Doherty, with Eric Jones at the 1961 LXI con. Photo by Keith Freeman.



Mike's pot-boilers – which seem to have lasted better than many *NW* stories by others, but let's leave that issue for Rob Latham.) *SFH* with its near-identical formula for issues 1 and 2 did make an excellent start, but would have needed a new constructive agenda to grow and survive.

Be that as it may, my forty-years-ago self has some nit-picking comments on the article:

- 'Cabinet of Curiosities' was fine for what it was, just as "Thog's Masterclass" is today. No need to knock it.
- Not enough contributors? Well, as Tom Shippey says, they were a decade too soon, but maybe they could have found others. Imagine a young M. John Harrison writing criticism for them of the standard of his *New Worlds Quarterly* articles...
- Was C.S. Lewis' trilogy science fiction? Absolutely. Just not pro-science SF.
- WHITE AUGUST was by John Boland, like Lymington (John Newton Chance) a thriller writer whose ventures into SF got noticed but were not his best work. (Chance had a genuine feeling for dingy industrial/townscape backgrounds; a pity these scenes were indeed only background within routine murder-mystery adventures.)
- William S. Burroughs was interviewed by James Blish, I believe, and knew enough about SF to speak approvingly of Eric Frank Russell (to Blish's evident incredulity). I can't find Blish credited but the tone and personal details seem right. Perhaps Blish mentioned it during a Milford conference chat, like the breakfast when he told me almost straight-faced that he regarded his *Star Trek* novelisations as valuable 'bridge' material.

I'm sure C. C. Shackleton was one of Brian Aldiss' several minor pseudonyms, so Shackleton's history of SF called BEOWULF, WOLF MAN AND DOG STAR probably got re-titled BILLION YEAR SPREE. And the second Shackleton parody couldn't have been looking forward to the *New Wave*; it was all around him by then, and he was simply poking fun at current trends from Ray Bradbury to Cordwainer Smith. Far too early for SOLARIS, but definitely sniffing the zeitgeist which Lem caught. Not fair to castigate him for inaccuracy when he was simply exaggerating for comic effect.

*[Tom and I must have been the only people in fandom not to have known about that pen-name. In retrospect Brian was having a laugh with that 'Beowulf' comment; 'D.Phil. on rotifers' indeed!]*

Major insight from Tom about Wyndham's professor-mouthpieces being his most important characters; my favourite example is A. Bocker in KRAKEN advising on how to survive a world of rising sea levels. You see the same mouthpiece effect in Terry Pratchett although better written; in say HAT FULL OF SKY the really vital words on being a fully grown-up human come not from the nominal heroine but from Granny Weatherwax.

*SFH* said that "believable characters" were required in SF, but the Shippey cavils are justified. Nobody mentioned Amis' point about "the idea as hero" or adduced Jack London (in 'To Build a Fire' the protagonist is as anonymous as a Murray Leinster hero, and for the same reason). And those long Aldiss articles may seem "rather irrelevant" now, but in the mid-Sixties I thought they were proof that SF could be discussed in depth to some purpose. A pity the demolitions didn't lead to positive prescriptions – a weakness most evident in the one-note section on Donald Malcolm, where there was no clue as to the "charm of SF" many found in Don's stories.

*[I remember at the time being disappointed that Brian hadn't tackled something more modern than poor old Jack Williamson's LEGIONS OF TIME, already ancient in 1964 and a bit of a sitting-duck. If he'd gone for one of the then-recent Heinlein books, say, (TROOPERS, or STRANGER maybe), or whatever else was considered a major novel in those days (DUNE? THREE STIGMATA?), then I'd have found it a lot more interesting and worthwhile.]*

Er, John Brunner at the height of his powers did almost exactly that, with an excellent article in *New Worlds* basically re-introducing Dick to British readers and explaining how utterly brilliant Dick was. But JB's piece didn't go into one novel in depth the way 'Jonbar' did, so Aldiss and Brunner were giving us two different but complementary and equally necessary views of the field. All part of the rich ferment of change you caught in *Speculation*, of course.

The final musings on *SFH* (just before the delightful Bonfiglioli postscript) essentially say this criticism stuff they started is still unfinished business, and a new toolkit is needed. So I'll point out the obvious: Tom Shippey himself is the ideal man to develop the first working SF charm detector. Go to it!

Forgive me for not continuing to LoC the rest of the issue, but the time and energy are beyond me. (How you can actually pull the whole zine together and produce it I still don't know.) But it's all Good Stuff. Letters! Donald Malcolm! (I hope he got paid for everything by Uwe – I didn't, but that's life.) And you and Brunner and Doddering and a lovely strap line from Andrew Stephenson...

*[David, two years ago at my urging Tom assembled together his various critical articles on SF and prepared new introductions, which I had – somewhat vaingloriously – hoped to publish in book form. That's not going to be possible now... maybe someone else can do it?]*



David Bratman  
bratman@earth  
link.net



David in 2008.  
His photo.

Dear Peter,

Of the articles in issue 15, I was unsurprisingly most taken with Tom Shippey's review of the two issues of *SF Horizons*. It is known to me mostly as the original source for that 'interview' with C.S. Lewis, which is really better described as a bluff, hearty, self-consciously Literary Conversation among the three of them (Lewis, Kingsley Amis, and Brian Aldiss), subsequently reprinted in collections of Lewis's literary essays. The one moment that jumps out at me in the course of it is where Lewis asks, apropos of nothing in particular, whether any SF writer has invented a third sex, and Amis replies that Clifford Simak once invented a set-up with seven sexes. Um, I think that was William Tenn, actually.

I can't blame Amis for misremembering an author in a casual conversation, though this does remind me of a peculiar tick he displays in *NEW MAPS OF HELL*, of describing a few issues of SF magazines in great detail, including recounting the plots of the stories, but without bothering to inform the reader as to the titles or authors of the stories. Nor was Amis the only outside critic of SF to do this: I've found this strange phenomenon in a number of mainstream general-magazine articles on SF from between the 1930s and 50s. It can be greatly amusing when you know what story they're referring to. I'm thinking of one case where the critic quoted a small chunk of an unnamed novel to prove that it was incoherent trash. I recognised the quote immediately, and to my intense and chortling pleasure it was from ... no, I'm not going to tell you, but I do still have the rather scholarly paper I once wrote about this and other vagaries of early SF criticism, and some day I will put it out for publication, just you wait.

Meantime I'm sure I will get into great trouble trying to modify Tom's description of Lewis's dislike of 'scientism'. True enough that Lewis didn't think that technological advances were going to make us any happier or improve the moral basis of human life, even if they did improve us materially, and this is because Lewis didn't care much about material things, except for the ones he was used to, of course, and considered the advance of human civilisation to be beside the point. He once wrote an amazingly dim article saying there was no point in worrying about nuclear holocaust because our whole civilisation would eventually be wrapped-up anyway. Even ignoring the fact that the more expansionist SF looks towards the survival of humanity, or at least its descendants, long past the demise of the Earth – a prospect which filled Lewis with horror – the logic of his argument is the same as saying that you should have no objection to being murdered, because you're bound to die sooner or later anyway.

But what Lewis was most deeply concerned with in his complaints about scientism was a sort of gaseous fatalistic optimism that he parodies – quite wittily, I thought – in Weston's speech at the end of *OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET*. The moral mistake is that of the Social Darwinists, who, having observed that nature is red in tooth and claw, leaped to the conclusion that this was somehow desirable, and that humans were morally obliged to emulate it. True science says there's nothing good nor bad about nature, it just *is*, but that impression does not always come across. I wonder if the frantic rear-guard defence by the 'Intelligent Design' crew and other creationists against evolution is less because they fear that if one word of the Bible is shown to be false, the whole edifice will crumble, than because they're afraid of the morality they see promoted by people who seem to admire 'survival of the fittest' as some kind of life path or career plan. Which brings me to libertarianism, but no, let's not go there.

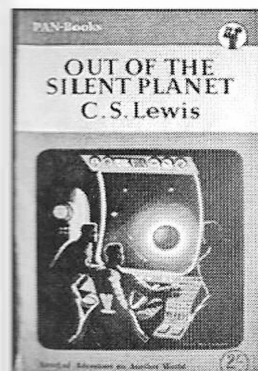
Instead, one last dip into criticism, with the shocking (to me) realisation that you ought to have been credited as the original editor and publisher of some of James Blish's critical essays when he collected them into *MORE ISSUES AT HAND*, and why weren't you? I didn't know Blish personally, but I wonder if the simplest explanation is that he just forgot, rather than holding some animus against you. Though why he should have forgotten, who knows. Twice now I've received apologetic communications from people who meant to include me in the acknowledgments pages of their books, but somehow didn't. Well, it's nice to know they were thinking of me, even if a little late

*[Ah yes, the Evil Weston; I suspect I'd have had more stick about that if a greater number of fans had ever read Lewis' less-than-thrilling trilogy. As for my omission from the Blish credits, I'm quite sure it was deliberate and the only explanation I've come up with involves the infamous incident at Sci-con in 1970. I must confess to having laughed (as we all did) on first hearing that someone had thrown a richly-deserved projectile at Brunner; only later did I discover that it was a glass, that it wounded him, and that it wasn't funny. I suspect Blish disapproved of my reaction and consequently wrote me out of his book before I could explain the circumstances in the following issue of *Speculation*.]*

Dear Pete,

Charles Platt came to visit about a month ago. We always enjoy seeing him. He's such a lot of fun, and full of interesting ideas. He told us about Peter White (with whom he had stayed the night before). I never liked Peter White. Charles came out of St Christopher's, that weird school in Hertfordshire, with a number of equally insane friends and I think White was one of them. He was a supercilious bugger who sneered at SF and constantly showed off about all the real novels he was reading. I'm amazed he found the time even to speak to me or you ... but, as you say, he was often hanging around Charles in those days, so I did see quite a bit of him.

I never, *ever* liked him. Graham Hall, your enemy, once said that Peter White only became an airline pilot because it let him look down on *everyone at once*. I often quote that, since it made me laugh for hours. Peter became a pilot for BOAC, which made me seriously fearful for the lives of others. I think Charles told me he ended up working for one of the Far East airlines, which didn't change the general worry. I can't think of many worse combinations than an airline pilot who never stops talking and is a literary snob!



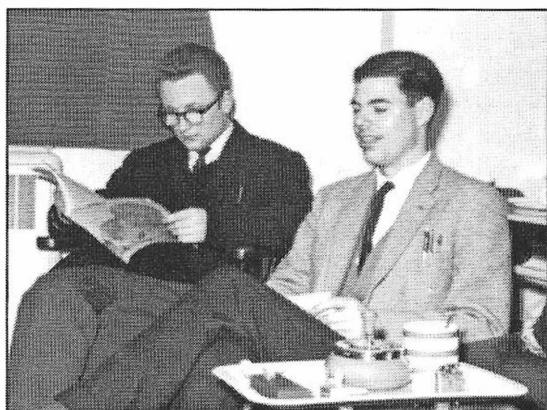
The original PAN  
edition from 1952

Chris Priest  
christopherpriest  
@gmx.com



Chris in 2009.  
Photo by Leigh  
Kennedy.

Anyway, last month Charles told me that Peter White has now become totally materialistic and only talks about shopping, and indeed never stops talking about it. I see this as wonderful news, a vindication of my years of loathing him for being a snooty little bastard back in 1964.



Above; Dick Howett (left) with Dave Busby in Ella's flat, 1964. Photo by Wally Weber.

Dave Busby was another acquaintance from those days. I don't know what happened to him. He was a pal of Terry Pratchett's. He and I used to correspond during the days of the *Carnell New Worlds* (to which he sold a story), and I was seriously impressed until I read the story! I think with hindsight he must have been dyslexic, as his letters were the worst-typed I ever saw. I met him only once, and that was an evening at Judy Merrill's when he and Terry turned up and did a sort of Ant-and-Dec double act, feeding lines to each other.

I did get a weird phone call from Dave Busby about twenty years ago. He wouldn't tell me his name at first, but told me I knew him through Terry (which meant I spotted him straight away, since I hardly know Terry at all), and set up a kind of guessing game about who he was. It was almost as if Dec was missing his Ant! That was the last I ever heard from him.

You asked me about Bonfiglioli and how he managed to get the editorship of *Science Fantasy*. Well, I know a fair bit about Bon. He was quite a friend. But the answers to some of your questions are contained in a *wonderful* book called *THE MORTDECAI ABC*, by Margaret Bonfiglioli, which was published by Penguin/Viking in 2001. It's a rather sought-after collector's item. There's a copy going on *abebooks.com* at the moment. Cheap at £27, mate. And a rare book, too, sure to retain its value. It's almost as invaluable as an eccentric history as is your own *WITH STARS IN MY EYES*.

It's a sort of biography written by his long-suffering wife, with many outside contributors. It includes a set of letters Bon wrote to me in the 1970s, a couple of his short stories and lots of awful reminiscences by various hands. I found the whole book a delight. It's an absolute *MUST* for someone like you. It's full of information about the period, and terrible scandals about people we both know.

I've had a quick look at my copy this evening (didn't have time to go through the whole thing), but I couldn't see the exact reference to how he got the *Science Fantasy* job. But from memory I don't think Brian's role was that great, although they were certainly friends at the time. The book does clear up several myths about Bon ... one of which I confess I used to believe, that he had fenced for England in the Olympics Team. No, he didn't ... but he was Scottish Command Sabre Champion for 1954/5. There's also a nice story about Harry Harrison being 'pinked' by Bon when brandishing a sabre, and another about Aldiss being pinked by his own sword-stick, after Bon found out he was having it off with one of his girlfriends. There are some great jokes too: the *umbawa* one in particular. On the whole, one might suggest that Tom Shippey got off pretty lightly after his horrendous sartorial solecism.

I too was fascinated by the Brunner family tree. A scion indeed. I imagine he was cast asunder from the wealthy family, told ne'er darken the door of the manse again. A little bit more about John falls into place. Meanwhile, have you ever read his non-SF novel *THE CRUTCH OF MEMORY*? It's been many years, but as I recall it's an autobiographical novel (first-person) about a young man who takes his sports car to Greece, worried about impotence, meets an older woman who reminds him of his mother and who thereby restores his manliness ... and he falls in love.

[That's fascinating, Chris, and it reminds me all over again of Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson! As for Bonfiglioli, I bought the book on your recommendation and will report back. Meanwhile here's Mike, who also has some stories about people we both know. But first, the 'literary' bit....]

Mike Moorcock, Texas.



Mike at Corflu, 2007. Photo by PW.

Dear Pete,

I can't believe I said I'd read no SF at the British Library event (cf Jim Linwood). I think I meant to say I'd read no 'classic' (*Astounding*) SF. And very little contemporary stuff. I always preferred *Planet Stories*, *Weird Tales*, etc – everything Amis, Brian and others hated. Still do. I liked the romantic rather than the rationalised tradition and really found Heinlein & Co. dull in comparison to Bradbury and Brackett. Maybe that's what I disliked about Amis's views. That 1961 convention must have been the last time he was the pleasant guy everyone used to like before he became an obnoxious boozier. He once had Jim Dixon thinking a good sign would be *BEER MAKES YOU DRUNK*. It should have been *BOOZE MAKES YOU BORING*.

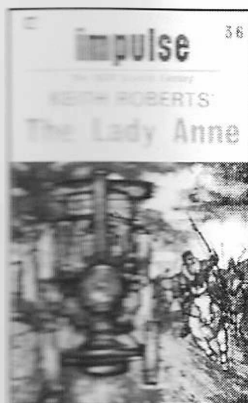
I wouldn't have minded a few questions from fans at the BL who hadn't liked what I was doing, but I would have pointed out that 'New Wave' was never a term we used. I've always found it a bit daft. I was always supportive of the writers I enjoyed, most of whom tended to be ambitious writers like Bester, Bradbury, Hammett and Chandler. I've also come to appreciate most of the *Galaxy* writers like Pohl and Kornbluth. Sheckley, and so on. Leiber, too, remains a great favourite. I had a huge re-reading fest while I was making so many medical visits that it became impossible to work. Wodehouse, ERB, Sprague de Camp, Leiber, Brackett and others were no disappointment, though ERB ran out of steam for me pretty early on.

What I was doing (and I will only speak for me) was trying to find new ways of telling a story. It was all about narrative. And if people think me, JGB and Barry Bayley, etc. couldn't tell stories they clearly haven't read us. That we didn't use the *same* bloody story over and over seems to be the root of the complaint. Though, to be fair, Ballard was inclined to tell the same bloody story over and over, from *DROWNED WORLD* onwards, I guess... But at least it was *HIS* story.



Top: Hilary Bailey,  
Bottom: Mike with Barry Bayley.  
Both photos taken in 1963 by Bruce Burn

Below: the first issue of *Impulse* (*Science Fantasy* #83). Cover by Keith Roberts – he was an excellent artist!



Amis went off Ballard after the 'condensed novels' started appearing. He didn't understand what we were up to, either. He hated *everything* I did... I always recommended new writers study work they admired and try to replicate it before they started trying to experiment. For one thing, you need to win authority, as it were, by proving to the reader that you can write conventionally.

That certainly looks like Amis's back, though I wouldn't call him that fat. Looks a bit weedy to me. Reminds me that my own Hilary once took some chalk or paint, I forget which, and wrote in large letters MICHAEL MOORCOCK, EXPLOITER OF WOMEN, LIVES HERE outside our front door. Not long before our eventual break up as I recall... I couldn't altogether argue with her findings. My main reason for disliking Amis, aside from an arrogance which sadly seems to have been inherited by his son, was his horrible attitude towards women (again, my Hilary might have said the same about me). I don't think he started off as arrogant (defensive?) as he became. I know Martin didn't.

*SF Horizons* seemed too eager for respectability for my taste. The *New Worlds* crew were as opposed to the literary world of the day as they were to the world of Campbellian science fiction. While Ballard, Disch and the rest of us saw huge potential in SF we had no particular interest in posh-up the existing stuff. For me the more vulgar pulps had techniques and angles of attack which appealed. I was genuinely astonished at what I perceived as the leaden quality of most SF. But what else could you expect of a Burroughs fan?

Still, I enjoyed revisiting the controversies of the day but wouldn't want to do it too often. I felt old battles were revisited a bit too much in this issue when I was enjoying the more fanciful romances. I prefer to recall the days when friendships weren't messed-up by disagreement over what had to be nothing more than reading preferences.

Tom Shippey's memory of Bonfiglioli, another serious drunk, was far more the best part of his piece. Bon had charm and I enjoyed his company but he could be aggressive and obnoxious. I remember staying with him overnight one November 5th when he got out his big .45 revolver and loaded it up. He spent a good part of the evening trying to manoeuvre me around his garden so he could let the thing off behind me, hoping to give me a scare. He used to drink milk and whiskey ("For my ulcer, dear boy"). The whiskey he carried in a case in the back of his Rolls Royce but he generally begged the milk from whoever he was visiting.

His end was sad, rather pathetic. He was living on the Isle of Wight at the end but was sent to Manchester General, I think, during his last illness – a general collapse typical of many poor bastards who loved alcohol more than they liked life. You're sort of right about how he scored the editor's job. It went like this: Ted Camell recommended me as editor of both magazines. Brian Aldiss introduced Bon to David Warburton (Compact publisher) in an Oxford pub, recommending him, as I understand it, as the bloke for the job. Warburton compromised but gave me first choice of which I'd like to do. I chose *NW* because it had more potential as a title.

You asked if I'd have liked to have had both magazines, but I wonder if I'd have had time, even though they started off bi-monthly. I certainly suspect I would have used more conventional narrative in the majority of *Science Fantasy* stories and could probably have found more writers in the mainstream who might have liked to contribute – Burgess, Angus Wilson, Angela Carter etc. But there again it was that 'Science' which might have stumped me. I would have phased out the 'Science'. I wasn't against using science or scientific speculation in stories, but I'm not sure how I would have done it in a way that differentiated it from the kind of stories used in *NW*. Maybe I would have tried to find more American writers like Leiber, Sheckley, Dick and Bester to contribute? But could I have persuaded them to write for our rates? Or could we have run more reprints, serials of US books and so on?

Bon, disappointed, wanted to change the name of *Science Fantasy* but Compact wished to keep it, since it kept continuity with W.H. Smith. Circulation of *NW* went up. *SF* went down. So David agreed to the change to *Impulse* but it didn't do any better. That's why Bon bailed. *SF Impulse* was incorporated into *NW* in time-honoured manner. My guess is our work showed – illustrations, departments, etc. – and gave us a life *Impulse* lacked. Again, this is pulp and fanzine training essentially! I knew what I'd liked in *Planet & Startling*.

Our circulation was always good until our clash with WHS over Lang's story and BUG JACK BARRON. They were a vengeful company – or at least Mr Baron, their manager, was. They did later apologise but I remained unsatisfied, given what it cost me in printer's bills after Smith played that dirty trick of ordering boxes they never put on display. I never will forgive them for that.

Keith Roberts, who did all the real work on *Science Fantasy/Impulse*, remembered press day when Bon would wander helplessly between the piles of manuscripts he kept under his bed and on the floor, muttering "Oh, fuck, Oh, fuck" as he regarded the unread submissions, until Keith got down to business and managed to pull some pretty good issues out of the wreckage. I considered Bon a bit of an amateur, but he was irresistible at his best, even if all the credit for the best issues should have gone to Keith.





Keith Roberts  
from the  
Programme Book  
of the 1987  
Becon where he  
was GoH.

When he gave up, I proposed Ballard as editor but the chemistry between Jimmy and Keith was horrible. Coming round to my place for their first meeting they wound-up not speaking and addressing one another through me – “Tell him he doesn't know a damn thing about surrealism” and “If his policy is just to publish stories like his own, I can't see I can work with him”. I tried to reconcile them but nothing would work. Meanwhile the Ballard children, from what I could tell from distant cries, were trying to roast and eat my children (you think Ballard made up all that High Rise stuff, don't you). Harry then took over, but again Keith carried the burden of the work, though Harry was without doubt the best editor after Carnell.

Poor old Keith was naturally paranoid and would phone me almost daily to complain about Harry which was hard since my sympathies were generally with Harry. Keith used to say I was his 'last friend' which didn't cheer me up at all. One day I'll have to tell you how I managed to escape that particular burden. And Keith fell out with agents even faster than he fell out with editors.

That said, I feel a bit guilty about not writing to him after he began to write to me again. Even though he'd lost both legs. Another familiar story – he liked beer better than controlling his diabetes but nonetheless managed to blame his doctors for his fate. When he heard that some of his artwork was on the market (no doubt Compact's work) he immediately blamed the most straightforward man in fandom, Lang Jones, who was almost insanely honest, for doing it and I was so revolted I gave up on him. Oh yes, he also turned on those people (fans of his) who were re-publishing his books and accused them of profiting from his labour. Before that, when house hunting in Henley, I saw him as I was coming out of Boots and was astonished by how crazy he looked, so went straight past him and kept on going, about the only time I've ever done anything like that in my life. Ho hum. Not especially happy days.

Re Charles's piece, by the way, Charles knows I thought it a bit 'wrong' all round, but I wasn't against publishing it. He told me a while back that it only had a few hits on his site and thought you were right not to run it in *Real Prolapse Stories*. And I'm surprised Jim didn't know I played guitar for a brothel. Maybe he didn't recognise me...

*[Mike, I always thought that 'Science Fantasy' was a bit of an oxymoron; how can something simultaneously be about science in any meaningful respect and yet still be a fantasy? I think the idea must simply have been to apply the rules a bit less strictly than with New Worlds, allowing writers more latitude to tell a story without bothering so much about technical accuracy. Just up your street, really!]*

*Don't talk to me about Keith Roberts! When I was doing the final ANDROMEDA collection in 1976 I wrote to him advising that I was open for submissions. I heard nothing until well past the deadline, when he sent me a story. I didn't like it – all about ley lines and so on, but being diplomatic, I sent it back on the quite truthful grounds that the book was full. Keith's reaction was explosive. Back came a ranting letter of abuse accusing me of having 'commissioned' the story and threatening to sue. His agent, Giles Gordon, was even nastier, saying I would be 'blacklisted' throughout the industry, so I shot down to Futura and showed both letters to Anthony Cheetham. He thought it was very funny and told me to ignore them, because they were both 'barking mad'. The story subsequently took the cover spot in F&SF as 'The Big Fans' – they were less choosy than me! And now a few words from our Antipodean Wanderer on the miraculous survival of those images, opposite, and on other things:]*

Bruce Burn  
bburn@xtra.  
co.nz



Bruce in 2009.  
His photo

Hello Peter,

I'm glad you like the pictures I sent of Mike, Barry and Hilary. I remember we used to joke about Hilary and Barry's names sounding the same. I visited her mother's home somewhere in London (a grand separate mansion of a place, in a garden setting with large trees), and knew her pretty well. Lovely girl! The pix were taken at Mike's flat, but I can't remember where that was. It may have been before they married, but they were a couple by then. I had no idea Barry was to be the subtle and idiosyncratic author he became, but he was obviously a Deep Fellow.

The pix you have seen are scans of contact prints I've had sitting on my desk for many years: rolled up and neglected, and I was only reminded of them when reading a nice e-mail from Moorcock's Miscellany. So I went out to my 'office' and grabbed the roll, steamed it to give it a bit of flexibility so I could unroll it and cut the strip into individual frames which I then scanned individually and doctored a little. The prints were not in very good condition, and were all available-light shots like most of mine, so I really wasn't sure how well they might scan, but, well you have the result.

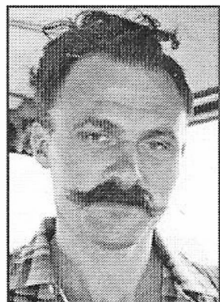
I don't know how you do it. Here's another issue of *Relapse*, and it's full of interest. From the titillating revelations of Alan Dodd photographing nekkid ladies, and the myopic inspection of the Brunner family tree, to the fabulous article by John Berry and the unending delights of The Melting Pot, you've served up a fascinating collection of reminiscence and nostalgia. For me, the pick of the issue has to be the Shaw article by Don Malcolm, and, of course, the Berry memoir.

I met Bob Shaw on only three occasions, many years apart, and I regret not making more of the last opportunity, when he was a Guest of Honour at a Wellington Convention and I just happened to be in town visiting family. I've no idea when it was, but I'm sure the Wellington SF crowd will have a record of the visit, mainly because he gave a speech at a local hotel and no doubt someone will have made a recording of it, or written it up for a fanzine somewhere. Come to think of it, I first met Bob on that occasion the night before the public speech, when I dropped in on Alan Robson's home in Miramar, I didn't know about the convention since I had even less to do with SF than I do now. Alan is a local fan with a respectably long history in fandom (and a webpage <http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/triffid/>), and one of the few people I'd kept in desultory contact with in those days (1980s I think).

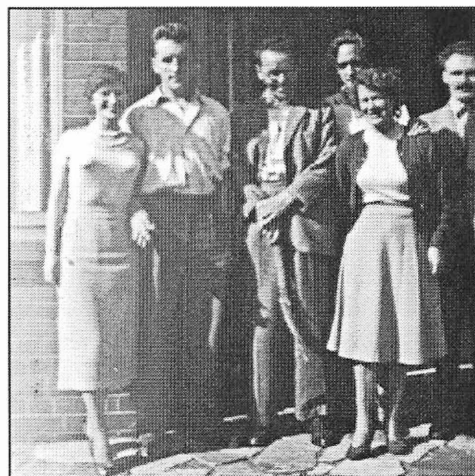


Above: Bob, probably around 1980. Photo from Ian Shaw.

Below: John Berry in 1959 on his Detention trip (source unknown)



An image from the early 60s; Sadie, Bob, George Charters, Walt, Madeleine and John outside Oblique House. Photo from Eric Bentcliffe's album.



It was a complete surprise to me that Bob was visiting him that night (or maybe he was staying there during his southern sojourn). It was even more of a surprise to Bob, too, mainly because in those days I apparently bore a striking resemblance to a good friend of his in London, an American actor who had become pivotal to efforts to rebuild the Shakespearean Globe Theatre, Sam Wanamaker. When I walked into the room, Bob's jaw dropped and he bore an astonished look until I spoke and the apparition dissolved around me. First time I'd been mistaken for someone famous, so it was a strange experience!

I'm not sure that Bob had much memory of the first time we met, back in the early sixties. I was doing my Wandering Ghu thing and about halfway through my first hitch-hiking tour of Britain. I'd hitched from London to parts of Scotland, then took the overnight ferry to Belfast, and while there I naturally visited the Willis household in Newtownards Road. Walt had kindly arranged to have a bit of a get-together with the Wheels of IF so I could meet those incredible people, and so they could examine this silly specimen from the other side of the galaxy.

Anyway, Bob Shaw was one of the Famous Fans present that evening, along with his wife Sadie, and Jim and Peggy White, John Berry, and Walt and Madelaine Willis. Talk about being in the Halls of Kings! But we had a great time, and they let me take pictures before we all joined in an early supper, and then the evening was over.

So, I was meeting Bob Shaw again, half a world away, and yet all I can remember of the conversation we had at Alan Robson's was a brief discussion of his 'Slow Glass' stories – or story, so far as I was concerned because I'd read only the first story at that time. He said his publisher wanted him to find another Slow Glass, because it had provided him with a good living, and obviously the publisher was keen on publishing successful books.

The following night Bob spoke with humour and charm in a Wellington hotel. As before, I was impressed by his warm personality, and the simple decency of the man. He had a modest and thoughtful nature, and a keen intellect with the ability to phrase private conversations and public speeches in a way that always seemed to delight his audiences.

A fellow member of the Wheels of IF, John Berry, provides another delight: a memoir called 'Retrospection'. The echo I hear in that title of his wonderful old fanzine, *Retribution*, set it off in such a way that I could do nothing to prevent a warm glow of appreciation growing in my mind as I read what he had to say. To describe John as an extraordinarily productive person is a wild understatement. He produces substantial work at an incredible rate. A veritable Asimov of fandom!

I met John on just two occasions, both in Belfast. The first meeting was at Oblique House, where I didn't get to see a Ghoddinton game, but did realise how modest John was and how he venerated WAW and the older members of IF. You must realise that although I was awed to be in the presence of Irish Fandom, I held John Berry in the highest esteem: *Hyphen* may have been a great fanzine, but I personally delighted in *Retribution*, to the extent of carrying a Goon Defective Agency ID card while hitching around GB! John was a fannish hero to me, and his modesty did nothing but reinforce his heroic standing in my eyes.

I counted myself doubly-blessed when he agreed to me visiting him at his home, an evening or so later. And I felt that visit was an outstanding experience, because believe it or not, during my visit I was able to verify that all the things John wrote about were based on truth. He really *did* have a manual typewriter with a broken carriage return spring, so he had indeed tied-on a can of beans with a piece of string so that the weight of the can kept the typewriter working!

And work is what that typewriter did. The first paragraph of his memoir underlines the extraordinary productivity of John Berry. A hundred fanzines produced during a half-century of fanatic! And a parallel publishing and writing career in the esoteric worlds of fingerprinting and stamp collecting, enabling John to find an outlet for his continued writing on diverse subjects from holiday stories to fiction based on his Goon Bleary character as an international spy. Genius! What a legacy!

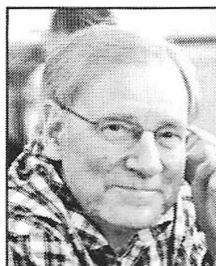
There's so much that sparks comment in *Relapse*, Peter, and I feel guilty to have commented only on the things I found personally outstanding. But I must close with mention of the letter from Don West. Clearly, the person he writes about is not the Ken Potter I knew in the early sixties in London, and I am saddened at the decline in Ken's fortunes in the years following his departure from the city.

I remember driving him in a rental truck from London to Liverpool on a bitterly cold day. Snow was falling and there was ice on the road. We got into a bad skid coming off the M1 at the Wimpy refreshment stop, but happily avoided all the parked traffic in the parking area. But the sunless sky and the cold lent a solemn mood to the whole long day until we reached some terraced suburb of Liverpool. There, we unloaded the truck into the home of Irene's mum, where the little family of three were to live until they could provide a home for themselves. Their great adventure in London was over, and although everyone was of good cheer it was obviously a step back in their plans for their lives.

As I drove back to London the next day, I wondered what the future would bring for Ken and Irene and baby Karen. In my ever-optimistic youth I imagined things might turn out all right in the end.

[Bruce, you little Beauty! Until your LoC came in I hadn't realised your travels had taken you as far as Northern Ireland. I know you're writing this up for the next instalment of 'The Wandering Ghu' and I'll look forward to seeing it – and to the pictures, of course!]

Jim Linwood  
JLinwood@  
aol.com

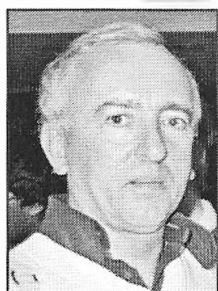


*Jim at Cynicon V.  
Photo by John  
Dalman*

*Below: Pat  
Kearney in 2004.  
His photo.*



Mervyn Barrett  
merjan@clear.  
net.nz



*Merv at  
Conspiracy  
1987. His photo.*

Hi Peter,

Don West's LoC presents a very negative picture of Ken Potter as someone permanently on the edge of insanity. I know that Ken was into wild, pseudo-scientific nonsense in the 80s and was a figure of fun at one convention at least, but the Ken Potter described by Don is a stranger to me. Sure he was an eccentric extrovert but not a loony back then.

I first met him at the 1960 London Con where he and Irene were in the company of Mal and Shelia Ashworth – all four seemed to have a close, friendly relationship. Ken had recently been discharged from the Army where he met fellow sergeant Don Geldart and introduced him to fandom. Ken was by then a BNF, editor of *Brennschluss*, founder member of the SFCoL and highly regarded by all, including Irish fandom. Being at least five years older than me placed him in the preceding fannish generation but Ken recognised no age boundaries and he was very popular with the Kingdon Road Youngfan set.

He was an entertaining conversationalist on modern jazz, the beat generation and the theatre – being a great fan of Samuel Beckett. When I moved to London in 1962 he had a lowly clerical job in the City and I occasionally met him at lunchtimes for a drink – halves were all we could afford. He was temporally separated from Irene and their daughter, Karen, due to Irene's conversion to the Jehovah's Witnesses – I gather that they paid her a visit in their caravan home in Roydon, Essex while she was suffering from postnatal depression. Ken had no 'inclination towards religion' when I knew him and his bible was the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which was a sure mark of sanity.

I last saw Ken at a party at Ella Parker's in 1969 – he was living in Brentford and involved in a teacher training course. It seems unlikely that he would have been accepted as a lecturer if he was heavily into drugs and booze. At parties and conventions he got drunk like many others and his friendship with Ivor Mayne would have ensured a steady supply of mary jane. Had he been a serious viper or drunk he would have been ostracised by the likes of Ella who would have warned us to stay away from him – but that never happened. Don (and Hazel) paint a sad portrait of the serious decline of someone who was a popular figure in 50/60s fandom. There but for fortune....

I asked Pat Kearney for his comments – he feels the same as Bruce and I.

"I read Don West's letter and don't agree with the comments on Ken Potter at all. It's amazing what he managed to deduce of Ken's character from two meetings. Ken certainly liked a pint, and did get drunk quite often, but he always seemed in control to me. I do recall once leaving The Globe with Ken & Ivor Mayne, and being mightily amused when Ken launched into a stirring rendition of 'The Recruiting Sergeant' and doing a splendid imitation of Brendan Behan. A policeman asked him to keep it down, but there was no unpleasantness. I did see Ken smoke marijuana a couple of times, once in The Globe. I suspect Ivor was the source.

"I personally enjoyed Ken's company a lot, and learned a lot from him, mostly about modern theatre. He wrote a play himself which I was planning to publish in a fanzine before being prevented by circumstances. It was quite good, too, about a brash American who attempts to interest a manufacturer of dustbins in ever-more bizarre advertising slogans and promotions."

In *Ansible 47* (Nov 1986) Dave L reports: '...we arrived in time [at the fannish *Rubicon*] to try not to hear resurrected fan Ken Potter bellowing about astrology, while fastidious Julian Headlong (suave founder of Club-Class Fandom) spoke tremulously of sharing a room with D.M. Sherwood ("I could cope with finding Ken Potter and bits of corned beef on the floor, and even the cold baked beans in the bath; but when I found beans in the tooth-glass I had to vomit....")'.

This is the only mention of Ken I can find after 1970 so he may only have attended *Rubicon* and it seems to suggest he was close to Don's description. This was the con I was thinking about him when I mentioned him being a "figure of fun" – none other. I was surprised by Don's assertion that Dave Wood gaffiated because of Ken. If there was anything odd about Ken back then everyone would have known. Don Geldart is the key to all this: he became a close friend of Ken in the army and may still be in touch. Incidentally, Don was in Military Intelligence not MI5 or MI6.

*[Thanks, Jim & Pat. Not much I can say, never having met Ken Potter. But important to point out that although Don West only met Ken twice he heard a lot about him from Mal & Hazel Ashworth. As for the other Don – Geldart – I've officially Given Up on trying to get him to join our gang!]*

Dear Peter,

There's a lot of stuff about Alan Dodd in #15 which I didn't know. In fact I knew hardly anything about Alan and never thought to ask him about himself although we corresponded for about 10 years. We most usually used Air Letter forms and I was always impressed by the number of newspaper cuttings and suchlike that he could secrete in the folds of these. I never tried to emulate Alan in this dodge but don't know now whether this was because there was nothing of enough interest in New Zealand newspapers or because I was scared that I might incur the wrath of the Post Office. (I'm sure there must have been a law against it – there was a law against everything, then.)

Apart from fannish things Alan and I mostly discussed movies. He told me about a cinema in Compton Street in Soho which showed uncensored movies that had lots of naked ladies in them and when I got to London I dutifully attended. Since I knew what to expect I wasn't disappointed and the main justification for my one and only visit was that it was the first commercial cinema I'd ever come across that used back projection.

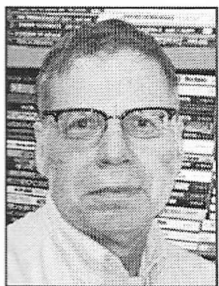
I must have written to Alan after I arrived in London (October '66) because somehow we made an appointment to meet outside Tottenham Court Road tube station. Because we'd never seen each other





Name's Dodd –  
Alan Dodd –  
I'm a cop!

Mike Deckinger,  
[mike2004@aol.com](mailto:mike2004@aol.com)



Mike in 2008.  
His photo

before, for recognition purpose I used the fannish equivalent of a white carnation – a fanzine. My first impression of him was that he looked kind of like the cops one saw in British TV programmes.

I don't know how the subject came up but he made it clear that he didn't like receiving visitors at Stanstead Road because this upset an aged relative who lived with him. I'm sure he said relative, not mother. Bruce Burn had trekked out to there uninvited and was not warmly welcomed and I was glad that a friend of mine to whom I had suggested she should drop in on him hadn't had time to do so, even though, I see now, a terrific-looking blonde, she would have been photographically acceptable.

We walked and talked and ended up at a place Alan thought I should see: a desolate area of rubble which was obviously a development that had gone bust. Still standing in an area labelled Tolmer Square was a cinema – The Tolmer. It showed a grab bag of re-run movies with about two or three changes a week and in the course of so doing sometimes showed things that wouldn't be likely to turn up again anywhere. I subsequently went there a couple of times. I'm not sure where we parted company but Alan had the ready excuse of a train to catch, so a beer or even a coffee was out of the question. That, I'm pretty sure was my one and only encounter with Alan and I don't think we even corresponded again.

Dear Peter:

The cache of glamour slides unearthed by the mysterious 'Andy' offers valuable insight towards Alan Dodd's enigmatic character. I was aware of his frequent camera-club jaunts and his understandable zeal in capturing nubile young women on film. 'Some folks have all the luck' I moaned, more than once. Had he needed a willing film-loader I would have been there in a shot, vaulting the Atlantic in record time. But I never had any inkling of Alan's proficiency, or lack of same. He might well have been a master photographer, rivalling the envied staff of *Playboy* or similarly-directed publications. I don't think it ever entered my mind that he could possibly be a mediocre practitioner, that his model shots could be any less than artful renditions, sure to rouse lust in the stoniest observers.

By a very rough and unsubstantiated estimate I would reckon his mother died at least two decades before him. That leaves him with twenty years of isolation, brooding about his worsening condition, life's irksome indignities, and fortifying his meagre diet with cheap wine, hardly conducive to prolonging the continued health or rosy attitude of anyone.

In his article, Tom Shippey writes: "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." Without too much prodding I can think of something even more distressing. That would be encountering a chap and having him instantly recognise you, without a millisecond of hesitation, signifying that after the formidable passage of nearly a half century you're still in the same indefinable rut you were in when last met.

I'm delighted and exhilarated to learn John Berry is still amongst us and has not departed to share company with his contemporaries. When I first ventured into fandom Berry's signature was everywhere. Nearly every single fanzine that crossed my door (this was well before digital publications had even been prophesied) carried an item by him, and often they outshone the surrounding content. When I opened *The New York Times*, to apprise myself of the latest headlines, *there* was John Berry arguing the merits of the ongoing Cold War and how best to deal with those recalcitrant Russkies. (You got me; I was just making that one up). John was even gracious enough to gift me with a fine piece for my fanzine: a faux book review on the life of New York fan Les Gerber, discussing in minute detail the time he subdued a raging Willy Ley with a fire extinguisher.

Your reference to fan films, calls to mind two projects filmed in the early 60's by Unicorn Productions, out of LASFS in Los Angeles. The initial feature was 'The Genie' a short shaggy dog story with Fritz Leiber, Bjo Trimble and Forry Ackerman. This was closely followed by the more ambitious 'The Mesquite Kid Rides Again', a fan-western starring most of the LASFS members of the time, including Terry and Miri Carr, and Charles Burbee. Here's the maddening part: after being shown at conventions they appear to have vanished. Most of the participants have died and it's unclear who ever gained control of the prints. I've mentioned these items to others, but no one has been able to unearth copies and I fear they may have been permanently lost through neglect and indifference.

Dear Peter,

As usual, once I picked the issue up I put it down only because I \*had\* to do other things. It's always amazing to see what's shown up since the last issue – such as Alan Dodd's photos (nice to see the colour version, do you have more...), and John Brunner's ancestry. And I think Don Malcolm's piece came out well, with quite a few photos I hadn't seen before.

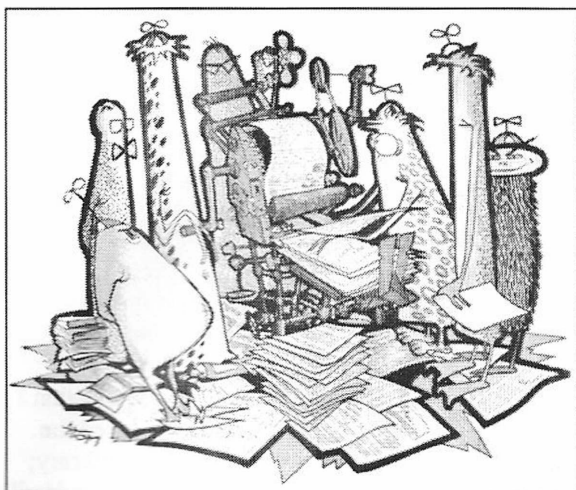
Good also to read more from you in the form of the random fanzines survey. I'm pretty sure I have a video cassette with some of the Delta films, although the quality is a bit rough. I don't know what happened to the originals, but probably the same as the LiG films which met a sad fate as you may well know already.

After Norman died Ina gave all his film material to Harry Nadler for safekeeping, and everything was still in his tiny office and film storage vault (the box-room at 5 South Mesnefield Road) when Harry died unexpectedly not all that long after Norman. From what I heard, Marie didn't let any of the Fantastic Films crowd do anything to help her with them, and eventually sold the lot to a dealer, no doubt for far less than they were worth (there must have been a hundred or more 16mm features, some of them quite scarce). The LiG and Delta material evidently went along with everything else, and was probably thrown away.

Bill Burns  
[billb@ftl.com](mailto:billb@ftl.com)



Bill at Corflu,  
2007. Photo by  
Rob Jackson



I liked John Berry's article on ATom (and learning more of John's activities and background). You'll remember the ATom colour piece that Billy Pettit brought to the Computer History Museum, which we fought valiantly to photograph in the wind and bright sun in the museum's parking lot. I had put my lightly cleaned up version on line, and Dan Steffan recently took it and did a digital restoration in Photoshop, getting rid of the cracks, creases, and shadows. To use this in *Relapse* I suppose you'd now need permission from Billy (owner), me (photographer) you (location artwork stabiliser), and Dan (restorer)! The link is;  
<http://fildesign.com/images/ATom/ATom-Billy-Pettit-Dan-Steffan.jpg>

*[Dan has certainly done a great job with the restoration – worth looking at in colour on the web-site. It's easy to recognise Ted Carnell (bow-tie) and Ella (specs). The one with the Belly is Jim Groves, the one with the big eyes might be George Locke. I don't think the two BTFs (Big Tall Fans) and the lurking furry one represent anyone in particular, they may just be general-purpose BEMs!]*

Dave Hodson

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@hotmail.com

Hi Pete,

Remember me? Did you ever master that trombone you picked up in New Orleans? *[No!]*

In #13 I noticed mention of the bookshop at the bottom of Charing Cross. At one point (1970s – mid-1980s) it was owned by the Gold Brothers who specialised in retailing pornography mostly but also happened to be the importers of Ace and Tor paperbacks for some years via Worldwide Media in NY, who were the export agents for same. Gamma and I both got involved there in the late 80s when it was owned by Ricky Waller and called 'The Book Inn/Fantasy Inn'; a general bookshop of sorts upstairs (mostly new releases and remainders with the obligatory porn thrown in) and SF/comics downstairs in the basement. Whilst there I helped co-ordinate the 'Whiz for Atom' auction which Ricky and Dick Jude at Forbidden Planet sponsored, and which took place upstairs at the Cafe Munchen behind New Oxford Street. I recall Mike Moorcock turning up for it, Rog Peyton came down to London to act as auctioneer, people seemed to have a good time remembering Arthur and raising money for his family who had been left in dire straits by funeral costs, etc.

I left there in 1990 or thereabouts and it was indeed gutted by a fire at some point later. The Fantasy Inn hosted quite a few signings and parties whilst Gamma and I were there; Kathy Acker, Rob Holdstock, Rachel Pollock, Chris Evans, Iain Banks and sundry others. It was a good time, lots of fun all around as I recall, except for the fact we were open until 10.30-ish every night of the week except Sundays (I recall the local takeaways and pubs earned a fortune from the shop staff alone).

The one hairy moment was during the London Poll Tax riot where we were busy trying to save the windows from being put in and allowing innocent passers-by, mostly tourists, to shelter in the basement. I still run into Richard Berry who was nominally shop manager at the time and had been there since the days it was owned by the Golds, so I'll interrogate for more information when next I see him. Really good to see that you appear active and happy. Hope our paths cross again someday...

*[Thanks Dave, nice of you to write. But you raise a worrying point; compared to the success of someone like Giles, for instance, poor old Arthur Thomson never made any money, lived in a council flat and worked in a factory all his life. Maybe he should have tried to use his talent commercially rather than spending all his time and energy on fanzines? I wonder what his wife, Olive, thought of fandom?]*

Tony Glynn

[tonyglynn1@](mailto:tonyglynn1@hotmail.co.uk)

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Dear Peter,

The latest *Relapse* was a good, meaty one, but I was startled by the number of people featured therein who are complete strangers to me. That, of course, indicates how long I have languished in Gafia. Startling, too, is the number of those whom I did know who – like Jim Cawthorn – are no longer in the land of the living but that, I suppose is an indication of long I have been inhabiting the planet.

I was interested to see a photo of Eric Needham, a fellow member of the old Manchester group. Not that I knew him well and he was always something of a mystery man. I remember that he lived in Greenheys, an inner-city suburb that was highly elegant in the eighteen fifties but, a century on, had slithered down the social scale. I was told that Eric had an unfurnished room in one of the crumbling mansions and he slept on the floor. I suppose ten years on from our nineteen-fifties heyday, we would call it a squat. All I knew about Eric was that he worked as a window cleaner and was in the RAF during the war, but I recall an amusing piece he wrote for a fanzine concerning the adventures of a rock bun that could be neither digested or destroyed; he claimed was served up in the cookhouse of his unit!

For some reason, Eric and a forgotten member of the Manchester gang, Alf Hinde, did not get on with each other. Alf was a struggling writer and he and I exchanged manuscripts for mutual criticism. He contributed some stories to the John Spencer mags and went on to sell to the *Vargo Staten Magazine*. At the *Supermancon* he encountered the editor of that publication, Alastair Patterson, in the bar and tackled him over non-payment for work published some time before and they had a furious row. My last contact with Alf was a letter from him saying he was off to Gafia in order to try his hand at what I remember he called 'proper writing'. I never learned how he fared.

*[Like John Ashcroft, another one of your pals who started well and vanished without trace, Tony. Or maybe he made a name for himself in Nursing Romances, or something? We shall never know!]*



'Fantasy Inn'  
 photo from Stan  
 Nicholls.

Alastair Patterson

at *Supermancon*.

Photo by Terry  
 Jeeves.



Sam Long  
gunputty@  
comcast.net



Sam in New  
York, 2009.  
His photo

Dear Peter,

I enjoy choral singing, so, not long after I came to England in autumn 1968, I joined a madrigal group based in Henley-on-Thames called the Yewden Singers. We were a very informal group; I was, at age 23, one of the younger members. The leader/director was a jolly old lady – who reminded me of Dame Margaret Rutherford as Miss Marple – named Winifred Palmer, a music teacher. She had connections all over that part of the Thames Valley and the Chilterns (having taught music in the area for decades), so we would get invited to visit and sing in – give informal concerts in – a number of the big houses in the area, one of which was Rotherfield Greys, then owned by Sir Felix and Lady Brunner. We sat at and sang around a large oak table in the house. The tabletop had an inlaid inscription, in a German dialect, saying something to the effect that “I belong to \*\*\* [where \*\*\* represents the name of the original owner, which I don't remember – but it may indeed have been Felix] Brunner” and a date from a couple of centuries ago when the table was made. I think it may have been from Switzerland. All this was before my first Glohe (January 1970) and before I met ‘our’ John Brunner. So it was that I met John's kinsman (1st cousin once removed) before I met John. After I met John I remembered the connection with Sir Felix, and looked up ‘Brunner’ in a copy of Burke's Peerage in the Henley library; and there they both were. So John was 2nd cousin to HRH the Duchess of Kent. Exalted circles indeed!

Who else among British fans/pros would be in Burke's? Well, there's Robin Johnson, who is in there as a grandson of Admiral Lord Keyes, of Zeebrugge Raid fame and a friend of Winston Churchill's. In a more recent Burke's – I think the latest edition was published in 2003 – you'd find Sir Arthur C. Clarke, Kt, in the Knightage section. There must be others that might appear in that or a similar publication, e.g., Roy Kettle, who holds the OBE (but not for services to fandom), and Brian Aldiss, OBE (for services to literature). I have to say that I'm pleased that John Berry holds the BEM; it seems so appropriate. BEMs are no longer being awarded in the UK: pity. Inquiring minds want to know: Why is Berry's fingerprint zine called *Strabismus*, which is medicalese for wall-eye or cross-eye?

But the word brings to my mind not optometry, but the *Daily Express*'s ‘Beachcomber’ column, now revived after a lapse of 20-some years from the late '70s to the '90s. The best known Beachcomber was J.B. Morton, who wrote the column for 51 years (1924-1975). One of his recurrent characters was the inventor – or mad scientist – ‘Dr Strabismus (whom God preserve) of Utrecht’. Do you remember the ‘Worlds of Beachcomber’ TV series with Spike Milligan, that was on BBC2 back in the late '60s?

[Well remembered, Sam. And so while one branch of the Brunner clan was living the high life in the Thames Valley with the Great & Good of England, we'll see in the next letter that the ‘black sheep’ of the family was moving in somewhat less exalted company....]

Doug Bell  
doug\_bell@  
tiscali.co.uk



Doug at  
Cytricon V.  
Photo by  
Steve Green.

Hi Peter,

Just finished reading the latest *Relapse*, and from it I see that the ghost of John Brunner is still haunting the pages. As such I thought it'd be a good time to highlight the little known ‘fannish’ writing of Marjorie Brunner. I warn you, don't get too excited; there ain't a lot of it, and it isn't that revealing. The pieces I've found are buried deep in an old seventies/eighties zine, *The Cidereal Times*.

In case you're unfamiliar with this publication, it was the club-zine of the Cidereal SF Group in Taunton and was edited by Allen Boyd-Newton. My fanzine collection contains an incomplete run, only six issues (2,3,5,6,7 and 11) of the ten published between Sept 1977 and February 1981. According to *TCT* #2, the first issue was named *The Liberated Frog* which, not being able to find a reference to it anywhere else, makes me suspect a) it didn't exist, or b) was only distributed within the Taunton Group. The production is grungy and frankly off-putting, although I put this down not to the copying (issues 2 and 3 state they were printed by the BSFA Fanzine Duplication Service) but to a depressingly haphazard approach to layout, poor editing and the editor's general slapdash attitude to the whole project.

So far I've discovered three pieces by Marjorie Brunner, but before I get to them I thought I'd give you a flavour of the other content. Like all club-zines *Cidereal Times* is a bit random; *Checkpoint* #93 described it as “a rather featureless local club-zine.” A standard issue is stuffed full of not-very-well written book reviews; a skilled editor would have thrown out most of them as dull and tedious and would have had the rest extensively re-written. You'll be pleased to note that your ANDROMEDA 3 collection gets the thumbs up in *TCT* #5. Fiction appears occasionally too, and towards the end of the run a poorly-written group-SF serial is introduced. Scattered throughout it are dull but worthy short non-fiction pieces such as ‘Women in SF’, written by the male editor of course.

Book by Brian Aldiss’ and although short and not very fact-filled, I have a soft spot for ‘The Fall and

There are the odd gems though. Issue #2 has a nice article by Brian Aldiss on ‘The Fireby Wireby Rise of Plymouth Fandom’ by Alison Lowe. While the letter column doesn't sparkle it does have some interest. Although I don't have it in my possession, D. West obviously ruffles the editor's feathers in #10 judging from the response in #11. Don writes again in that issue and although his letter is heavily cut, I think his suggestions for improving the zine are just sensible rather than nasty; for example don't cramp your layout, check your spelling (especially of names) and don't misrepresent letter writers' opinions by tampering with their LoCs.

So anyway, in amongst all this stuff we have three bits of fan-writing by Marjorie Brunner. The least interesting (in #11) is a review of Greg Benford's *TIMESCAPE* which differs from the rest of the reviews only in being well-written. The other two articles stand out by, well, just not fitting in. Both are con reports, short and to the point and although not the most engaging things ever written, at least make sense compared to most of the content of *Cidereal Times*.



Marjorie in 1970.  
Photo by Lars-  
Olov Strandberg.





John Brunner introduces Waldemar Kummig at the Eastercon/Euro con in 1984. Left is Martin Hoare, on right is probably Jan Huxley. Photo by Arnold Akien.

Issue 3 contains a report from Metz 1977, which according to Marjorie was a non-stop mix of hospitality, champagne, meeting other important authors, cocktail parties and champagne, although we do get a bit on Philip K. Dick's guest of honour speech. Apart from a brief mention of a book signing I can find no other mention of fans in this article. It is a short piece drawn to a close with a quick "It was a great weekend. Roll on the Italian convention in Ferrara next May!"

The third article (in #11) is another European con report, this time from Stresa in Italy in 1980. It differs slightly from the first by missing out most of the details of the official parties and champagne but dives straight into discussing which of the Brunner's many European friends were in attendance.

I have to admit that I hadn't heard of Waldemar Kummig or Patrice Duvic before reading this article, and although this may be a very wrong assumption I wonder if the folks in Taunton knew who they were either as it just seems so dissociated from the rest of zine's content. With this article though, we do get more of a flavour of the convention with details of some of the talks and events that occurred that weekend. The most interesting point is the invasion of Italian literary anarchists who turn up to disrupt the award ceremony. After the article is over Allen Boyd-Newton promises a con-report from Krakow in issue 12, although I'm fairly convinced this zine never appeared.

John Brunner himself is absent in person from the issues I have, but always seems to be there lurking in the background. The fanzine ran a short-story competition (response was disappointing) where "John Brunner will pick the top three stories. The top three stories will appear in this fanzine. (Just in case you don't know – John Brunner is a well known, Hugo Winning SF author)." Issue 2 gives minutes of two meetings (sadly this feature was dropped by #3) which includes Brunner donating a copy of STAND ON ZANZIBAR and THE SHEEP LOOK UP as raffle prizes to raise money for the SF Group. The second title is enthusiastically reviewed in the same issue.

One last thing; I am intrigued by the Taunton Group's convention, *South Pethercon II* (plugged in issue 11), which was due to be held at the Square House in Taunton over the August Bank Holiday in 1981. I don't know if this actually occurred, but I could make a stab at who the GOH might have been!

*[Lots of interest there, Doug, and first evidence I've seen that Marjorie actually did anything other than swan around as John's consort; must get the Chief Researcher to see if she had anything in the other issues. Waldemar Kummig is editor of Munich Round-Up (MRU) which he's been running since time began; he was my agent for Zenith in the mid-sixties! He was also one of the GOHs at the 1984 Eastercon at Brighton. A European Big Wheel, but probably unknown to Somerset fandom.]*

Randy Byers  
fringefaan@yahoo.com



Randy at Corflu 2007. Photo by Rob Jackson

Peter,

Well, I've just cleaned the last of this year's garden dirt from under my fingernails as well, so I guess I have time to write a LoC on *Relapse* now. I don't usually have much to contribute to your conversation on British fan-history, but I continue to find it fascinating reading. This time I noticed a couple of comment hooks that even an ignorant American can dangle on.

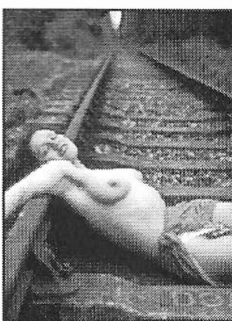
The tidbit (or is that titbit?) about Alan Dodd this time was very compelling to me for some reason. I suppose it's the sense of loneliness that you allude to, but also the window on the alien world of 'glamour models'. Are the people pictured at the dinner table with Dodd friends, or were the models required to have a meal with the camp followers? Well, it's no wonder that most decent people see sci-fi as a kissing cousin of pornography.

The stand-out piece of this issue for me was the one about your rummaging through boxes of old fanzines. This was a brilliant piece of writing, Peter, maybe the best thing I've ever read by you. Above all, I loved the view you gave me of the fandom and fanzines of an earlier era. You were doing something that I was, in my own half-assed way, calling for in my piece on fanzine reviewing in the most recent *Chunga*, except you were doing it with old zines rather than current ones, which gives you an extra dimension to work with. On top of the excellent historical view, however, were the bits of equally fascinating self-reflection, from the rueful realizations about your first TAFF race to the feisty acknowledgment of the impact that *Australian Science Fiction Review* had on you in the early days of your own fanzine career.

As if that weren't enough, it all serves as the basis for a meditation on – and example of – why we publish. I'm actually dubious that many of us are striving for immortality in this little backwater of the publishing world, but it's a theory worth pondering. The comparison to graffiti seems apt. Any immortality we achieve through fanzines is likely to be anonymous, or perhaps a footnote in an academic study of ancient communication methods. But who knows, maybe people will still be reading *Warhoon* 28 a century from now and making knowing references to 'The Enchanted Duplicator'.

In any meantime, *Relapse* is certainly worth reading now, and isn't that reason enough to keep publishing it? Pubbing your ish has got to be a more entertaining way to spend the winter than watching television at any rate. Thanks very much for continuing to send us the rare and valuable paper edition. Now I've got to figure out how to write something as good as 'In Pursuit of Immortality?' Can't be shown up by an old man!

*[Not so much of the 'old man', Randy! But I was lucky to find so much interesting material in that box, like Blish title. An expert tells me more about it on the next page;]*



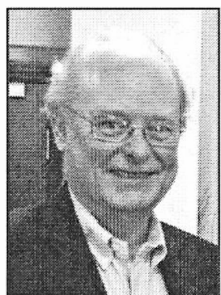
Below: another of Alan Dodd's 'glamour' pictures!

Kim Huett  
kim.huett@g  
mail.com

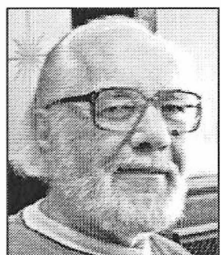


Devilish image  
from Kim!

Below; Alistair  
Durie in 2009.  
PW photo.



Bryn Fortey,  
Newport.



Bryn in 2008.  
Photo by Greg  
Pickersgill



G'day Pete,

Would you believe that there were two amateur publications called *Renascence*? Attached is an ad from *Spacewarp* V7 #3 (Whole #39), published in June 1950, promoting a fanzine of that name published by the Golden Gate Futurian Society. As it happens I have the first issue of that *Renascence* here and can tell you that the publisher and managing editor was Hans Rusch. Contributors such as George Ebey and D. Bruce Berry are well known to me. All in all a much more fannish effort even if the general feel of the magazine is more like *Rhodomagnetic Digest* than the general run of fifties fanzines.

The bookseller L. W. Currey has for sale a letter sent by James Blish to Damon Knight. The letter has to do with Blish's fanzine *Renascence*. The description is thus:

'Blish, James. TYPED LETTER SIGNED (TLS). 1 page, not dated, but written in Summer 1946 to Damon Knight. Undated letter, signed 'Jim' on stationery with 'The Usher Society' letterhead. Blish forwards Knight's assignment for cutting stencils for the August issue of *Renascence*, a fanzine edited by Blish (some issues with Robert A.W. Lowndes) which was originally published as part of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association mailings. We are not certain that the projected August issue was completed. The thirteen-line letter with two-line holograph postscript is accompanied by a copy of *Renascence*, volume 2 number 3 (June 1946), probably sent to Knight as a guide for formatting his share of the project. All issues are rare.'

In regards to the Blish *Renascence* being rare it's actually difficult to say for certain one way or the other. Being as I am a long way away from where the bulk of fandom did (and still does) live, opportunities to acquire old fanzines from other fans have come along but rarely. Not surprisingly then I've investigated the possibilities of dealers and the Internet rather extensively in my quest. One conclusion I've come to from all this nosing around is that there are many more old fanzines out there than are currently being offered for sale. Apparently many dealers, particularly those in the US, have boxes of fanzines tucked away that they're not sure what to do with. They don't want to throw this stuff away because it looks like it should be worth money but on the other hand they don't know if it's worth enough to justify the effort of sorting and listing, or where to find the sort of people willing to buy them. The end result is that there is a lot of paper is sitting in multiple back rooms or under counters for the time being, though small amounts of it are gradually appearing on *eBay*.

A number of people on *eBay* are really interested in collecting pre-1950 fanzines. Alistair Durie for example, or Drew Morse and Larry Bigman in the U.S. This is a small group though, which means buyers don't often enter into serious bidding wars, not when it's a pretty safe bet that another copy of whatever is being bid on will turn up if you're patient. The only exceptions to this in regards to fanzines of any era are those containing material by authors considered so collectible that their fans are keen to own ephemera as well as books. There aren't many science fiction authors who fall into this category however and indeed those that do have achieved such status because of working in Hollywood or making it to the bestseller lists. The four that come to mind most readily are Ray Bradbury (Hollywood), Dean Koontz (NY Times Bestseller List), Harlan Ellison (Hollywood), and Piers Anthony (NY Times Bestseller List), a very mixed bag I think you will agree. Authors such as James Blish aren't collectible to the same degree because science fiction fans seem to be quite content to just collect the fiction.

Dear Peter

In spite of being so long away from most things fannish – an on-going friendship with Greg Pickersgill being my only slight connection – I nevertheless found issues 14 and 15 of *Relapse* to be both interesting and enjoyable.

My passing mention in #15 was something of a red herring since I have no memory of having name-checked Greg's Brian Wegenheim character. I did use one of his poems as being by Child Gregory in *Supercrud* '69, my gentle one-off piss-take of sixties fanzines. Gentle, because I loved them really. I remember having a short story in Rob Holdstock's *Macrocosm* under another name. The plan was for me to attack the story in a LoC under my own name and to have an ongoing battle royal with myself in subsequent issues. Unfortunately (or maybe not) it folded, so the idea came to nothing. News of Holdstock's untimely death brought back happy memories of him during the sixties and seventies when we were young, silly, and there were good friendships to be enjoyed, even when some of them did not survive into pro-writing fame.

I personally found fandom through the BSFA (some of us did follow that route Mr West) in the mid-sixties, and my first contact was with the BaD group – Tony & Simone Walsh, Archie & Beryl Mercer, Peter Roberts, Gray Boak. Good times. My employer at that time sent me on a course in Birmingham and someone gave me your address, Peter. I wrote asking if there was any SF and/or fannish activity in or around Brum during the time I would be there. To be honest I was expecting an invitation to meet up for a pint or two at the very least, but all I got was a brief note telling me there was nothing happening. Ah yes, Peter, you were more of a serious fan in those days, mixing with the big boys and hoping *Speculation* would open doors, well that's how it seemed to me. I found you a little aloof then and now you're a real fan's fan.

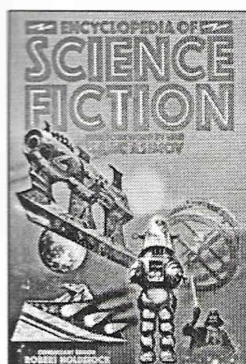
[Sorry, Bryn, that was probably around 1966-67 when nothing was happening, and since I was living with my parents in a little council house nine miles outside the city centre, it wouldn't have been too easy to meet-up. Still, I should have tried harder, and I apologise. But I never expected *Speculation* to ever be more than a hobby and the only thing I got out of it was a supply of review copies!]

Sandra Bond

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Sandra atop the  
Space Needle in  
Seattle, 2009.  
Photo by Rob  
Jackson.



Rob's  
*Encyclopedia* – by  
1978 the cover  
featured trashy  
media SF rather  
than trashy  
magazine covers!

Below; Lan  
Wright, surely a  
name to conjure  
\* with!  
Photo taken at the  
1957 Loncon,  
from Norman  
Shorrocks's  
album.



Peter,

Gardening? Gardening, forsooth! (No, not Ted Forsyth.) Don't you remember what Bob Shaw said? "I refuse to have an emotional attachment to a piece of ground. At one end of the scale it's called patriotism, at the other end it's called gardening." Does gardening garner you any egoboo? Do your potatoes and cauliflowers send you obscure letters talking about Ella Parker and John Brunner? Do your rhododendrons and forsythia (no, not Ted Forsythia) argue about Archie Mercer and the Inchmerry Mob? No – and that's why fanzines are better than gardening. Remember this, pray!

Brian Wegenheim! Well, I for one knew the source of Greg's email list-name, though not for a reason that Gregory himself alludes to in his piece on page 6. Let me take you back to my teenage years, when I'd not yet found fandom but had progressed through the stage of simply reading SF and was trying to a) ingest and assimilate everything there was to know about it and b) write it myself. This would have been the early- to mid-1980s, by which point, of course, there were a good many of what Greg calls Big Fat Books around concerning SF; Dave Kyle's PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SF, Brian Ash's VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF, and of course Peter Nicholls' ENCYCLOPEDIA, all were devoured. And there was a fourth too, one you don't see mentioned so often these days; Rob Holdstock's OCTOPUS ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF.

If you dig out the final *Wrinkled Shrew*, #8, Rob wrote a superb piece about how he created the Octopus book. As with all the other Big Fat Books, it mentioned fanzines in passing, largely hinting that they were a forum for young, promising authors to make a name for themselves before breaking through to become professionals (which we all know now, of course, is a whopping big lie; I don't know whether people just repeat this factoid without thinking about it, but one of the first things I learned when I actually found fandom was that amateur fiction in fanzines is *not* going to get you any kind of reputation you'd like, and such fans as did achieve prominence in fanzines before going on to turn pro largely did so by means of *not* writing amateur fiction... but anyway).

The Ash book had the most about fanzines, in a fantastic time-line; ('1973 – Fowler splits into *True Rat* and *Ritblat*... 1977 – Ian Maule becomes editor of *Checkpoint*', that kind of stuff) which fascinated me even before I knew anything about fanzines; but the Holdstock book at one point – and I can't quote exactly, for I no longer have a copy – actually made some attempt at explaining the difference between sercon and fannish fanzines, and even gave a list of some of the better examples of the latter. Several titles of the late 70s were included, as well as one which I can only speculate was Rob trying to slip through an in-joke – 'Brian Wegenheim's *The Pickersgill Papers*'.

Now as you will no doubt recall, *The Pickersgill Papers* was a genuine fanzine out of Birmingham, but apart from reprinting a long letter from Greg, 'Brian Wegenheim' had nothing to do with it, nor was it in any way a 'classic fannish fanzine'. So *was* it an in-joke? Was it, perhaps, Rob Holdstock putting-in a deliberate falsehood, in the same way that mapmakers will sometimes put a wrong road number or a non-existent village on their maps to prevent other people from copying them fraudulently? Well, now Rob is gone I suppose we'll never know. But it had me fooled for a while, and for my first couple of years in fandom, when I was hovering-up old fanzines by the pound, I was keeping a watch out for *The Pickersgill Papers*. And when I finally got a copy my surprise and disappointment were palpable.

I was under the impression that 'Penelope Fandergaste' was generally accepted to be Ron Bennett, and had been known as such for a good while. When Ron returned to activity in fanzines back in the 90s, he revived the Penelope pseudonym for several further columns of 'The Old Mill Stream' in Terry Jeeves' *ERG*. (Which probably means they were read by about six people. Shame. I don't suppose Ron realised the extent to which Terry had drifted out of the fannish main-mill-stream by then.) Norm Metcalf is still active in FAPA, though I confess that his publications are the most tedious in existence and readily skippable. He has the pompous and ridiculous habit of referring to any author by their full, given name whether or not it's the one that actually appeared on their stories (so he'll say 'Thank you for your interesting piece regarding E. Hamilton Waldo' and baffle the poor schmuck who thinks he reviewed something by Theodore Sturgeon...)

Passing on to the *SF Horizons* dissection... Lan Wright will of course feature in my *Nebula* write-up, as a fairly regular contributor; not a great writer, perhaps, but one of that block without whom British SF would never have reached critical mass in the 1950s as it did, and let him be remembered for that. Incidentally, I'm pretty sure that it was a novel by Lan Wright, not Arthur C. Clarke, which was the subject of Kingsley Amis's reading-aloud at the Gloucester con that Brian Aldiss mentions in his letter.\* You may also recall me speaking of Lan at *Cytricon*; just as Greg likes to keep the name of Robert Presslie alive, so I have an unaccountable soft spot for Lan Wright.

I was a little surprised to see Jim sententiously dismiss the Platt piece you didn't publish as 'dishonest'. Surely it was no more so than any piece of faanfiction, and the obvious use of non-existent names for the characters involved made it clear that it was never meant to be factual record? And good old D West can always be relied on to scatter a few dark threats and insults around in the best fannish way. I can't help but imagine D taking a leaf from Ken Potter's book and producing his own version of 'Three Big Words', run off on a home-made duplicator with a potato-print cover, and sold at 50p each (the three words in this case of course being GIVE WEST MONEY).

Do keep up the good work Unca Pete. I'd hate to think of fandom without you and *Relapse*; you've snuck back into the very heart of things in your unobtrusive Brum Group way, and now look at you...

[\*Sandra, you're bluffing, you can't possibly know that – or can you? Name your sources!]



## WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

**John Boston** who advised, "The famous photo of Kingsley Amis, sleeping on the beach with 'I Fat Englishman - I Fuck Anything' on his back appears in Zachary Leader's *THE LIFE OF KINGSLEY AMIS* (2007), opposite page 373 in the US edition, as I have just verified in the second-hand bookstore down the street." Then I heard from **John Burke**, who wrote, "Many thanks for the copy of *Relapse*, which shows that SF fandom is still alive and kicking. Most of the reports of jollifications all over the civilised world (well, anyway, over tracts of the United Kingdom) feature names quite unfamiliar to an ageing crock like myself, but I did get some nostalgic tremors at the sight of a very young Arthur Clarke, not to mention Wally Gillings, Mike Rosenblum, and a typically louche-looking Ted Camell. And all those cigarettes!" [*gasp, splutter!*]

**Chuck Connor** revealed, "I read the piece re. Pickersgill and the Great English Novel. That regenerated memories of visiting Bryn Forty back in either 1979 or 1980. I went from Anglesey to Newport by train, spent an excellent time with Bryn and family, then got back in the early hours of the following morning prior to sailing again. However, Bryn said he knew where D. West had written and had had published some LotR fantasy style pieces (sometime either mid 60s or early/mid 70s) but refused point-blank to tell me where or when. I have never found them, and suspect they may be in some BFS publication or the like. It would take a real old-school fanzine collector to wrinkle them out, if they existed. Perhaps the great fan himself could enlighten us?" And someone we must only identify as **MJE** pointed out, "I don't know if you've noticed in Greg's *SFN* archive, but Robert Conquest is listed as a member of the 1952 London convention. So maybe he did attend a con, back before even Brian was around..." [*Well spotted that man; if only we could prove it!*]

**Steve Green** said: "I was very surprised to see Kevin Cullen's name mentioned in relation to a 1973 issue of *Blunt*. Assuming it's the same chap he was still contributing art to fanzines and magazines more than 20 years later. You'll find his SF-themed fillos in many 1990s issues of *Critical Wave* and I'm pretty certain he appeared in *Interzone* back during David Pringle's reign." While **Steve Jeffrey** noted; "Despite your comments on sercon vs fannish leaving little doubt which aspect you think fanzines should favour, I do think there's enough room for all flavours, from the determinedly fannish to the sercon polish of titles like *SFC* and *Metaphysical Review*. Or maybe it's just because Bruce's fanzines, while discussing SF topics in a serious (i.e. non-trivial) manner, eschew quasi-academic pretensions and obfuscatory critspeak jargon, so that it comes across more as a discussion with a well-read, literate friend. Which I suspect is what sercon fandom ought to aspire to, rather than attempting to tug the coat-tails of academia." [*Yes Steve, agreed, but I already did that for ten years!*]

**Jerry Kaufman** mused; "I thought perhaps you were doing James Blish an injustice by saying that *Renascence* 'must be a weird American-variant spelling' of 'Renaissance'. I looked the work up in the OED, and as I thought, found it to be a weird *British*-variant spelling. I'm more in sympathy with what Blish was trying to do than either you or Eric Needham, as I am a fan of the Modernist movement in the arts, as Blish was." **Mike Meara** wrote, "Highlight of The Melting Pot is another fine letter from D West. Anyone with a suspicious mind (not me, Peter, not me) might suspect that you'd deliberately made mistakes with those Leeds photo-pages in order to prompt D to provide these informative revelations." [*Would I pull a sneaky trick like that, Mike? Surely not!*] And **Joe Patrizio** said: "I must mention Ken Potter. We saw quite a lot of him at Ella's and he was always interesting and fun to be around. The one thing I will always remember about him was that he said the two greatest books ever written were *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* and *THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR*; I believed he was serious and he may very well have been right." [*But what about the FOUNDATION TRILOGY, Joe?*]

**Howard Rosenblum** sheds light on earlier confusion; "Regarding Asimov's visit to London, we definitely met at the Globe - I have the photos to prove it. Where confusion might have arisen is because, as I recall, we had recently moved to the Tun, but when Asimov came, we had a special return to the Globe, possibly at Ike's request." [*Don't forget to send me the pics, Howard!*] But **Andy Sawyer** wrote, mysteriously, "Interesting to see the Brunner family tree - I've probably said this before but Liverpool University Library has ended up with two 'John Brunner' archives, which occasionally causes confusion." [*Well, I'm confused - care to explain, Andy?*] **Alison Scott** says she is looking for fannish stereo or 3-D photos of fans from the fifties, to borrow for a display at future conventions. Contact her if anyone can help. While **Steve Stiles** said he'd "got a chuckle" out of my note about his 'dark brown radio-announcer's voice'; "Very often customers of the book retailing company I work for have told me the same thing," he said, "Maybe I missed my calling."

**Tara Wayne** applauded; "Anyone who denounces the infinitely tedious Leland Sapiro does much to rehabilitate the principle of sercon fanzines. I wasted quite a lot of time in the early 70s trying to contribute artwork to *Riverside Quarterly*, and never managed to turn the trick. Eventually I figured out it was a hopeless cause and gave up on Sapiro. Somehow or other I ended up with a long, long run of *RQ*. It wasn't entirely a waste of paper and staples, but I doubt that anyone with common sense could justify one page in a hundred of *Riverside Quarterly*. The fatuity of most of the zine is obvious to anyone, I think." And finally, **Ian Williams** wrote; "I found Don Malcolm's piece interesting for the mentions of Bob and Sadie Shaw. Bob was a genius with quips and puns but I sometimes had a sneaky suspicion that he thought up many of one-liners at other times and stored them away in his mental arsenal until the appropriate moment came when he could drop them to devastatingly funny effect. Sadie, rest her soul, was a wonderful person: vivacious, charming, funny, and very kind. Bob was so lucky to have found her and anyone who knew them could understand how he felt at her loss."

**Other comments** were received from Brian Ameringen, Chris Garcia, Chris Holmes, Chris Miller, Stan Nicholls, Simone Restall & Tony Thorne. **Letters held-over** from Ted Forsyth, Fred Lerner, Ian Peters, Rosemary Pardoe & Keith Walker.

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- ☒ Your name is mentioned inside.... that ought to be worth a comment!
- ☐ This is a sample issue and I hope you like it, especially if you've picked it up at *Corflu Cobalt*.
- ☐ Doom and Woe, you're on the hit list unless I hear from you Real Soon Now.

*Relapse* is nothing at all without your *Response*, and I'm hoping you'll send me your memories, anecdotes and insights about fandom past. But if you prefer the easy way, just let me know and I'll e-mail the electronic version (with colour) as a pdf, my preferred option for overseas readers. The issue goes onto the *eFanzines* site four weeks after publication. - 26/01/2010