

# AUSTRALIAN FAN HISTORY

1953-1966 (I)

FANHISTORICON 9.5

Aussiecon

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## Dedication

This is for Harry Warner, Jr. and William D. Veney.

"In January 1939 we had our first contact with U.S. fandom. Harry Warner Jr., prominent fan at the time and editor of SPACEWAYS, noticed Bert's name in the reader's columns of one of the professional magazines and dropped him a letter. Shortly afterwards he sent a copy of SPACEWAYS. The impression it created when it arrived was terrific. We'd never imagined an amateur publication had such possibilities and our thoughts turned to how we could emulate it."  
(PREWAR FANZINES IN AUSTRALIA, W. D. Veney)

Over sixty years ago Harry Warner was an inspiration to the earliest generation of science fiction fans in Australia. He was also the inspiration for this publication when, early in 1999, he reviewed a history of science fiction fandom in East Germany.

Harry Warner's dedication to, and inspiration of, science fiction fandom around the world is incomparable. We all owe him a great debt.

Bill Veney, alas, died in 1998. He too was an inspiration to many science fiction fans in Australia.

Unless otherwise indicated, the text which follows is by John Foyster

John Foyster, August 1999

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# Australian Fan History 1953-1966

## **INTRODUCTION**

*This collection of documents is part of a longer work which is ultimately intended to complement and extend the history of science fiction fandom in Australia written by Vol Molesworth. Molesworth's history, while excellent in the areas which it covers, emphasises activities in Sydney a little more than is warranted, and effectively ceases to deal with much of the Australian fan activity from around the time this collection will start (reasons for this are given in the sections [not yet written] covering 1954 and 1955). The collection is, in general, organised on a year-by-year basis, and occasionally includes complete contemporary documents.*

*The period 1953-1966 will be dealt with in two methodologically distinct ways. For the period up to 1958 the collection relies upon published fan magazines (most specifically *ETHERLINE*) since the present author/editor was not active in Australian fandom before 1958. Some fans of the period have supplied information which adds to the printed record: Lee Harding's *I REMEMBER AFPA!* (with notes by Jenssen and Foyster) and Race Mathews's *HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE MSFC* (neither yet in electronic form) are extended pieces by the participants of the time.*

*The period 1958-1966, during which the author/editor was active (or semi-active) is based upon a greater range of documents and a greater number of contributors. The period ends with the April 1966 convention in Melbourne. Since the author/editor's fanzine collection was destroyed by fire shortly after the 1966 convention, the documentation is not as complete as it ought to be.*

*1958 also marked the effective end of *ETHERLINE* as the newsletter of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club (though*

*ETHERLINE* contained much information about the rest of Australian fandom). It should be noted here that this reference is to the first manifestation of *ETHERLINE*. In 1967-8 Leigh Edmonds produced several numbers of *ETHERLINE II*, and in 1971 Paul Stevens produced several numbers of *ETHERLINE '71*. I also have a copy of a later undated *ETHERLINE*, also from the MSFC.

The absence of a newsletter for most of the 1960s is no coincidence. Once the Melbourne Science Fiction Club moved into its premises in Somerset Place in late 1961/early 1962 there was, in a practical sense, no need for a newsletter. For the decade from then until 1971 the MSFC was at its peak and was self-sufficient in a way that only the largest SF clubs (usually in the USA) have achieved; it was also self-absorbed. While this collection will deal to some extent with this phase in the existence of the MSFC (the first few years), the later period would be better covered by others more closely involved in the MSFC at that time (e.g. Leigh Edmonds, John Bangsund, Bill Wright).

Between the 1958 convention and the move to Somerset Place the MSFC lacked a focus for its activities. This is discussed at greater length in documents covering those years.

The present collection of documents has been prepared for FanHistoricon 9.5, held in association with the 1999 World Science Fiction Convention in Melbourne, Australia, in September 1999.

## ***1955: FIRST DRAFT***

The description of Australian fandom in this period is perhaps begun with a convention report. The national convention was held in March 1955 in Sydney. The editor of *ETHERLINE*, Ian J. Crozier, was one of those attending, and his report, which originally appeared in *ETHERLINE* 47, follows. Endnotes are to be found at the end of the section, rather than the end of the chapter.

### **Convention Report by Ian J. Crozier**

As a prelude to the Convention, a very successful Fancy Dress Ball was held on Friday evening, March 18th at the Convention site, Dunbar House, Watson's Bay.

This had to be seen to be believed. Although the attendance of 40 could have been better, everyone present had a whale of a time. Some of the sights of the Ball were Bill Veney and partner as, Salome and the Wandering Jew, Arthur Haddon startlingly painted green as a Martian Grub, and, in my opinion, the best costume of them all Norma Hemming as the *DYNAMIC* cover, recently out as a *BRE*, a Venusian Swamp Girl. Fortunately, the colour Norma used was a vegetable dye and came off fairly easily but Arthur was still showing signs of the copper-based chemical he used on Sunday evening.

The report of his demise is expected

Bill Hubble turned up as the character out of Sprague de Camp's 'Stolen Doormouse', while Doug Nicholson was in character as a ghoul. Crozier went as himself. Gaaaaah!

As a contrast to other years, this show went off with a bang, and set the tempo for the rest of the Con. We only hope that the participants have recovered by now, though Bill Veney was still looking sick on it at the time of our leaving.

#### **SATURDAY MORNING**

Good publicity was obtained via the press and radio on the Saturday morning, and around 30 fans turned up for the morning session which was mainly a get-together-and-meet-your

neighbour do. Original artwork was displayed from NEW WORLDS and NEBULA, both of which lots were auctioned on Sunday evening. On behalf of the Convention Committee, I would like to go on record, and extend our sincere thanks to both these publishing companies for the support shown to the Convention.

#### SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The session opened around 2.30 PM with Dr. John Blatt being introduced by Convention Chairman Pat Burke.

The title of Dr. Blatt's address was SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION, and in contrast to previous conventions, this was interesting. My opposition to serious and technical addresses at a Science FICTION Convention is well-known, and I was prepared to criticize Dr. Blatt as much as I have previous Convention speakers, but I was agreeably surprised at the line taken by Dr. Blatt. He made good points on the earlier stuff, pointing out that the science in those days in the main was long dreary descriptions of gadgets which nobody, including the author, understood anyway. The renaissance came about under John W. Campbell in the late 30's, in which he pushed stories featuring the effect of new inventions on society.

All in all the address was most warmly welcomed by all those present, and I for one hope to see more emphasis in future on science fiction at Conventions, as Dr. Blatt gave us.

TRANSPORTATION IN THE FUTURE was the title of the address given by Mr. John Spence, while Wing Commander Ian Scott gave a talk on Dianetics. I would assume these addresses were of interest to (a) a transport enthusiast, and (b) a Dianetics follower, but to me, anyway, they were just so much wasted time.

Guest of Honour Arthur C. Clarke and Dr. Blatt then went onto the platform, and provided the second highlight of the day, answering many and varied questions from the floor. I was amazed at some of the questions. They must have been boning up on them for weeks.

Mr. Clarke disclosed that the Americans were advanced in their plans for an Earth Satellite Vehicle and, in his opinion, they should have one in operation within 10 years. One Sydney newspaper apparently got carried away, as they reported him as saying that man would be on the Moon within 10 years. It just

goes to show you never want to say much when the reporters are around, or you'll surprise yourself in the morning.

This was a very enjoyable part of the proceedings and after it had concluded tea was taken.

Attendance at this session was 51.

### SATURDAY NIGHT

Lead film was the 20th Century Fox epic THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, starring Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal and Gort. Most reader will know this, so I won't go into detail. Second film was the silent classic, METROPOLIS, made back in the 20's by Fritz Lang.

### SUNDAY MORNING

Only about 20 fans turned up for the auction and, as a result, prices were very low. There were only about 20 American items, the balance being BRE's and original British PBs and magazine. Top price was paid by yours truly for the pocket book edition of FANCIES AND GOODNIGHTS by John Collier. This set me back 17/6. Mostly, the American stuff brought around 3/- and the rest around 1/-.

### SUNDAY AFTERNOON

To some, this was the best session of the whole convention, but I think it was a disgrace. Supposedly the business session, the business of presenting reports was finished fairly soon, and the matter which had flared up at the last convention was on again.

Reports were received from the Melbourne SF Group, delivered by J. Keating, Adelaide SF Association by Margaret Finch, read by Arthur Haddon, Mr. Bill Veney gave attendees an idea of the activities of the Brisbane SF Group, Ted Butt reported on the demise of the Newcastle Group, Vol Molesworth gave a report on the Futurian Society of Canberra, Mrs. Molesworth reported that the Vertical Horizons femme Group was apparently nonexistent, but it was hoped to form a new femme group within the near future for activities in connection with the FSS and Thursday Night groups.

Mr. Brian Finch was surprised to be asked for a report on the activities of the ARCTURIAN PLAYERS, but obliged as best he could. He announced the holding of a competition of would-be playwrights. For further particulars, contact Brian.



Mr. W. Hubble reported on the activities of the North Shore Futurian Society, and mentioned that most of the energy of this group had been devoted to the Convention this year, so activities had been small.

Mr. David Cohen reported on the activities of the Blue Centaur Book Centre.

On behalf of the Futurian Society of Sydney, Ken Martin detailed this organization's activities over the past year, pointing out how close to extinction the club was prior to the return of P. Glick from Melbourne. This situation can be traced to the split in Sydney fandom, which took place some 18 months ago.

Mr. D. Nicholson reported on the present position of FORERUNNER, saying that the 3rd issue will be the last.[1] He mentioned that in his opinion there was a great need for a magazine of FORERUNNER's type in Australia, in order to develop the fan authors, and help them to break into the pro field. He hoped that some fan with more resources would start one.[2]

A motion was moved by Vol Molesworth praising the work of Don Tuck in Tasmania in putting out THE HANDBOOK OF SF AND FANTASY, which, I'm sure, every reader will join in with.

Mr. Doug Nicholson reported on the activities of the Bridge Club Group and SCANSION.[3] He outlined the reasons for the move to the Bridge Club, and the reasons for the local sheet SCANSION, which was a modern FUTURIAN OBSERVER, both in scope and popularity (?).

It was moved V. Molesworth and seconded by P. Glick that the meeting deplore the Obscene Publications Bill, now before the NSW parliament. This was carried unanimously.

The Chair P. Burke asked whether any progress had been made on the motion put forward at last year's Convention, that the two Sydney Groups meet and try to iron out their difficulties. Motion was made and carried that this discussion be held under an impartial chairman, and delegate I. J. Crozier was 'bulldozed' into the chair. He made it clear that the position was most unhappy for him.

Discussion was heated as to whether the tape recorder should be switched off in view of the contentious matter being discussed. After a lot of heated discussion, it was decided that

the recording continue, but be transcribed under supervision of the Convention Committee. [4]

Discussion was heated, and acting chairman Crozier never had much hope of controlling the meeting. I won't go into the gory details here, but finish on the earnest hope that when the two groups meet on Monday April 4th they conclude once and for all this childish wrangling. After all, it's only a hobby - to most of us, anyway - and should be treated that way.[5]

From where I sat, it looked as if the whole thing is a clash of personalities, and the sooner these personalities are gagged, forced out or resign from fan activities, the better it will be for all concerned.

This type of thing was all right when they were immature schoolchildren [6], but one expects something a bit better from them now. My God, the Labor Party hasn't got anything on Sydney fandom!

#### SUNDAY EVENING

Highlight of the last portion of the Convention, an original play authored by Norma Hemming, had some publicity in the Saturday morning papers. Titled MISS DENTON'S DILEMMA, it was somehow tagged SEX WITH HEX in the tabloids, and as a result, there was a very large audience present eagerly awaiting the raising, of the curtain. When this was done by a very engaging nymph there was an immediate raising of blood pressure among certain members of the audience.

Play was a very clever bit of work, reminiscent of the work of the late Thorne Smith, with gods, goddesses, nymphs etc wandering around in gay abandon, and very little else. Capable acting of the cast was appreciated, with Jack Leggett superb in the alcoholic portrayal of the father of the gods, Bill Veney suitably loud as Mars, Norma Hemming as Miss Denton (younger version), Brian Finch doubling as Bacchus and the older Miss Denton, and an unbelievable Cupid in the person of Bluey Glick.[7]

On the whole, the Convention was a great success and congratulations are to be extended to Arthur Haddon, for the superb location at Dunbar House and to all other members of the committee.

Only one thing was missing - the result of the Short Story Competition and Artwork competition. What about it?

The artwork from NEW WORLDS and NEBULA were auctioned on Sunday evening, and brought fabulous prices. Average was around 30/- each.

I was informed that all profits (if any) from the Convention will be passed on to the Melbourne Group. This is a common practice in the States, and we here in Melbourne will continue it. Thanks a lot, Sydney.

## Endnotes by John Foyster

[1] I have only seen two issues.

[2] Ron Clarke's THE MENTOR, commencing 1964, has had almost exactly this role, although it has placed slightly less emphasis on fiction than did FORERUNNER.

[3] SCANSION appeared over an extended period of time (more than 40 issues), beginning in 1954. Copies sighted have been single-sheet foolscap items.

[4] Circulated initially by Michael Baldwin and EXTANT, but distributed in cyberspace in 1999 by John Foyster.

[5] The meeting was not successful; see the section on Sydney Fandom in 1955 below.

[6] Crozier refers to the too-frequent pattern of behaviour by long-term members of the Futurian Society of Sydney, documented in both Vol Molesworth's History and in Bill Veney's article on early Australian fanzines.

[7] Though it wasn't until later years that it was appropriate to describe Bluey as generously proportioned, even in 1955 he was a man of substance.

## MELBOURNE

During most of 1955 the Melbourne Science Fiction Club continued to meet at the Oddfellows Hall, 30 Russell Street, Melbourne. During the year 20 numbers of the club's magazine ETHERLINE were published.

The first event of the year celebrated by Melbourne fandom was the marriage of Phineas "Bluey" Glick to Loralee Giles on 12 January. Bluey Glick had been active in Sydney fandom, and during the 1950s and 1960s he was to move frequently between the two cities.

Attendance at club meetings during the year was usually between 10 and 20 paying members: the year started off quietly with only five

members at the first meeting for 1955 (5 January). By the end of the month the numbers attending were up notably; interesting attendees at meetings late in the month were Durham Dillon (British Embassy in Singapore) and Race Mathews. Towards the end of January a dozen members met at Ian Crozier's for "chess and chatter".

In February there was discussion of the possibility of the club giving up the clubrooms and meeting instead at Harry Williams's house in St Kilda. It was agreed that there were problems because this was not central, as was the Oddfellows Hall. Later in the month Jack Bristow and three others from the Mountain District SF Club attended a meeting. There was some concern during this month that it was proving difficult to find a suitable site for the Olympicon, which was to be Melbourne's first science fiction convention in late 1956.

In the middle of March attendance was particularly low at one meeting; three members were attending the convention in Sydney, and Merv Binns was attending a Johnny Ray concert. However, it was announced that the Richmond Town Hall had been secured as a site for the Olympicon.

In April meeting fees were raised from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence. The additional sixpence was to go into funds for the Olympicon. (This means that attending a club meeting cost about the same as buying a prozine.)

Merv Binns's 21st birthday was celebrated with a party on 8 July. Soon afterwards, perhaps inspired by the location chosen for the Olympicon, the club began looking at premises in Lennox Street, Richmond as a new location for club meetings. By October, the club was in the new premises (168 Lennox Street, Richmond) but members were having trouble adjusting to what was thought of as a conspiratorial method of entry (the result of having to keep an outer door locked at all times). On 18 October there was a film night at Binns's.

One of the last meetings for the year was a trip to the Royal Melbourne Observatory (about a dozen members attended). Visitors late in the year included Jack Bristow and 2 others from the Mountain District SF Club and Geoff Bennett from the Futurian Society of Canberra.

During the year ETHERLINE typically reviewed six or so overseas fanzines each month. Other highlights in ETHERLINE were Race Mathews reviewing LORD OF THE RINGS in the 17 February 1955 issue, a convention report by Ian Crozier in the 31 March issue (see section above on conventions), an interview with Arthur C. Clarke reported by Sydney fans Vol Molesworth and Neville Cohen in the 21

April issue, a column by Arthur C. Clarke in a June issue (describing his expeditions at Heron Island off the Queensland Coast), and then towards the end of the year two regular columnists began: Forrest J. Ackerman began his Sci-Fi Flashes, which was to run for several years, and Alan C. Elms began a column on US fandom, THE MURKY YON, which had a rather shorter life.

ETHERLINE also announced more details about the Olympicon. Committee responsibilities were announced in April as

Bob McCubbin: organiser, sec, treas

Ian Crozier: publicity, con booklet, interstate liaison

Merv Binns/Keith McLelland: displays

Val Morton: films

Tony Santos: local/press publicity, social

Jack Keating: auction

Loralie Glick/Hemming: Play,

and later (May) the interstate advisory committee was announced as:

Arthur Haddon (NSW),

Rick Day (Qld),

N J Shalders (SA),

Don Tuck (Tas).

An interesting passing reference suggests that the following were NFFF members in 1955: Merv Binns, Harry Brook\*, Charles Mustchin\*, John Gregor\*, Ian Crozier, John O'Shaugnessy\*, George Tafe\*, Bill Tyrell, Bill Vency\*, Kevin Wheelahan (Victorian except for those asterisked).

## SYDNEY

The convention report, together with the details given in SEA GREEN SUNDAY, provides an adequate background for the later events of 1955.

ETHERLINE 48 carried a blunt "In Memoriam" page:

*"Sacred to the memory of organised Sydney fandom which passed away after a lingering attack of schizophrenia April 1st 1955. Resting in the hope of a Glorious Resurrection", though there was a tagline remark "with the hope that there's life in the old dog yet".*

In fact, Sydney fandom was to be plagued with division and dissension ever after, although the efforts of Ron Clarke in the late 1990s to bring many fans together under the aegis of the FSS may eventually bear fruit. The proximate cause of the problem arising at the 1955 Australian Fan History 1953-1966 (1) 13

convention was succinctly described in chapter 5 of Molesworth's history:

"During the year, Graham Stone, who was opposed to the North Shore Futurian Society organising the Fourth Australian Convention, had circulated a roneoed newsletter headed "No Convention in 1955". This created hostility towards Stone and the F.S.S. and drew scathing comments in SCANSION and ETHERLINE". (More details of those views are to be found in AUSTRALIAN FAN HISTORY: 1954.) So far as is known, Graham Stone never attended or supported another convention in Australia. Naturally enough, he was not present at the business session described by Crozier and in SEA GREEN SUNDAY.

Nor was he present at the inaugural meeting of the Albion Futurian Society.

This group was established after the failure of the meeting of the Sydney groups referred to above.

Vol Molesworth wrote up the first meeting for ETHERLINE 50.

The inaugural meeting of the new club was held on Sunday, April 10th. In case you are wondering where Albion is, it isn't a district - it is a historic name for Sydney and its environs. Foundation members felt that such a general name would not restrict membership to any particular district, and yet confine it more or less to Sydney.

The words 'Futurian Society' were added to the title because members are in general agreement with the policy and aims of the Futurian Society of Sydney, which indeed are the aims of science fiction fandom anywhere.

The group was formed by seven fans who considered that the failure of the recent efforts to secure unanimity in Sydney fandom emphasised the impossibility of doing worthwhile work under those circumstances.

Arthur Haddon was elected Director of the new club, Neville Cohen Treasurer, Vol Molesworth Secretary. Half a dozen items were donated to form the nucleus of a library.

The bulk of the meeting was occupied with discussion of scientific and science fiction topics. While Neville Cohen, Bill Turnbull and Bruce Gore became deeply involved in radio astronomy, the rest toyed with the subtler theme of social responsibility. Totti Kaplun took out top honours of the night with her remark that the emancipation of women had created fresh social problems which had not been adequately met as yet.

Later in the night a play was taped, Bruce Gore having little

difficulty in portraying the role of an ugly monster. Thanks to the ladies for a slap-up supper,

It is clear from this description that Molesworth, despite the clashes described in SEA GREEN SUNDAY (the following is the last few sentences of the transcript:

MOLESWORTH: All right then, if Bruce Sawyer says to me I'm going to be thrown out of this convention I'm going to walk over to Arthur Haddon and say, "Am I?"

HADDON: Yes!),

had a great capacity to stitch together alliances, and the fact that he had a key role with Haddon, in the running of this new group is an indication of his interpersonal skills. Unfortunately the most readily-available example of Molesworth's writing is the HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM 1939-1963, which does not allow his personality to emerge. The following is a later report in ETHERLINE 51, presumably by Molesworth:

#### ALBION FUTURIAN SOCIETY

Meeting No. 3.

Who says all the strife and trouble in Sydney fandom has gone? Members of the recently-formed Albion Futurian Society viewed with alarm and deep suspicion the date set down for the 3rd meeting - Sunday May 8th. It neatly bisected the birth days of Mesdames Nicki Gore and Laura Molesworth. Outcome was the meeting turned out to be quite a party, with both Nicki and Laura collecting attractive loot in the form of presents.

The fact that the 10 persons present were divisible into five males and five females was a further cause for alarm: the short sighted scurried for the works of Philip Jose Farmer, the longer range planners for Ray Bradbury.

Despite these fears and tensions, the meeting went off very pleasantly, except for the regrettable incident involving Director Haddon, Bruce Gore, Totti Kaplun, John Power, and a large bowl of cocktail frankfurts, which is best left in limbo. That Vol Molesworth is still the evil mastermind in back of Sydney fan intrigues was evidenced by the fact that (a) he was seen surreptitiously licking his fingers and (b) his collar was smeared with tomato sauce.

Guests Lee Taylor, Nola Davidson, Joy Anderson and Les Lee were impressed by a number of SF tape recordings played.

While Marj. Haddon, Nicki Gore and Laura Molesworth pored through a batch of 107 magazines just arrived from USA, Nev. Cohen and Vol Molesworth discussed (or tried to discuss) infinity, a subject which has a large number of points.

At 2 AM it was decided to adjourn the meeting until May 22nd.

A note later in the year in ETHERLINE reported that the Albion Futurian Society had received for general reading a letter from Robert A. Heinlein (who had visited Australia in 1954) and also advertised a social evening for early July (at which the charge was to be two shillings and sixpence). Meetings continued at least through to late 1935.

## ADELAIDE

The active group in Adelaide had been in existence since mid-1953.

The following report, which originally appeared in ETHERLINE 48, introduces the group.

General activity in the South Australian Science Fiction circles has been, as usual, taking up all our time. A project in the form of a home made duplicator is the main interest at present, and we hope that we may be successful in achieving what we set out to do. Various enthusiasts are donating all the parts, however, sad to say, the only piece to put in an appearance so far is an old gramophone handle... although it is quite a credible donation, because it can be put to numerous other uses if any of the other parts fail to turn up (such as cranking Norm Kent's bomb, perhaps !!!)

Jack was the cause of an unusual discussion the other evening by uttering the statement that he has discovered how to make (chemically) a human! (The boy is growing up - just like you and me, I guess!). His method is a combination of hydrogen, ammonia and something which sounded like epsom salts. (Male members have suggested a more practical method - not that I would know, as I was found under a cabbage.) Nothing has been heard about the discovery since, so we do not know if the experiment was a success...probably another skeleton in the family cupboard.

Talking of production, the Orchard family have become the proud parents of a bonny wee lassie. Another femme fan, we hope. I expect they will teach her to read SF at an early age to



shut her up.

Regular Robin Kemp unfortunately broke his ankle several weeks ago whilst riding his motor bike...he arrived on Sunday with the added assistance of crutches to receive condolences...can't run so fast now, Robin.....

Hal Nicholson and Phil Cornelius have been in Army camps. Phil has partaken of a break in Sydney, and as far as I know has been enjoying the 10 PM closing - until closing.

Hal has been waging a war with mud and salt-bush way up yonder...rumour has it that he secretly sneaked over to Woomera, hoping to get into the ground floor of the underground...he arrived back with some of his disguise still on his upper lip.

John Brooks is home from the West, but has not been seen at the club as yet.

The library total is steadily creeping up & up, and 1475 items have been catalogued to the time of writing this report. Unfortunately we are rather financially unstable (what SF group isn't?) (Melbourne. Ed (IJC).) We could always have a beard growing contest or sell pornographic pictures run off on the duplicator (if we ever get it). However, worse storms have been weathered, and I feel that 1500 is not far off which is a good effort, considering that the library's second birthday will not be until August. (Any sugar daddies around who read SF?)

Dennis Walsh's exterior fungus growing on his facial region is still causing a certain amount on interest. This effort, after so much coaxing, fertilization, petting and cooing, has potentialities of turning into a credible showing. (It has already been suggested that his shiny countenance with wax mo and beard complete, form the centre part of the Coat of Arms.)

Joyce celebrated her birthday last Sunday, and turned on a super supper, complete with a delicious chocolate cake. Refreshments were varied, and I noticed several 'dead marines' lying around afterwards. I wonder if anyone slept in the dog house that night? All the club extended to her their very best wishes, and hoped that she has very many happy ones to come. ( A thought I'm sure the rest of Australian fandom will be happy to endorse. Ed - IJC.)

Ruth Wheeler popped along last meeting, and it was nice to see her back...(she has been sorting out her love affairs) and she has been roped in to do some work in the library ... (very much

appreciated there. Ruth...look who's talking!!!)

Also nice to see Mr. Headon, who enjoyed Joyce's party very much. It is nice to see older fans come along and join in with the club activities. Well, that just about winds up news from over here in Adelaide...crash, bang, wheeee, whoops, be seeing you, Spike's just blown in.

(Margaret Finch)

Later in the year eleven members of the group went to an Anna Russell concert, and afterwards there is a reference to that Adelaide fan who provides continuity with 1990s fandom: "Al Capone came along King William Street, causing a riot, but when the police quietened the mob, it proved to be Alan Bray wearing a hat to keep the cold out..."

The Annual General Meeting of the South Australian Science Fiction Association was held on 3 July 1955. The officials elected were:

Norm Kent, pres.;

Dennis Walsh, vp;

Joyce Joyce, Sec;

Robin Kemp, treas.;

Hal Nicholson, Dennis Walsh, librarians;

Joyce Joyce and Robin Kemp, asst. librarians;

Margaret Finch asst sec.

It was noted that in two years the library had reached a total of 1620 items.

Typically, the group would have a dozen members in attendance at meetings.

## BRISBANE

The Brisbane group had its first meeting for the year on 6 January, where it was noted that members were looking forward to the meeting later in the year with Arthur C. Clarke. While the February and March meetings had only a handful of attendees, the numbers rose dramatically for the following meeting, as described in ETHERLINE 48.

To meet Arthur Clarke and Mike Wilson, the B.S.F.G. held its monthly meeting one week ahead of schedule - on Thursday evening March 31.

At 6 pm, members George and Betty Tafe, John Adams, Iris Girvan, Joyce and John Gurney, Rick Day and Frank Bryning took Arthur and Mike to dinner in the city. John Gurney said a few words on behalf of the Group, welcoming the guests of

honour to Brisbane. He expressed the hope that they would not only enjoy their visit to the utmost, but would succeed fully in their objectives while in Queensland. He spoke appreciatively of Arthur C. Clarke's work as SF author and science writer. It was a great pleasure to the members of the B.S.F.G. to meet Arthur in person. To Mike Wilson he extended a warm welcome also, and the Group's best wishes that all would go well with the venture in which he was collaborating with Mr. Clarke.

Messrs. Clarke and Wilson responded with their thanks for the welcome to 'sunny' Queensland, and expressed the hope that, on their return from the North, they would have something interesting to tell of their adventures. Arthur had a book to write, and deliver by September, based on his visit to the Barrier Reef, and he hoped to write some science fiction derived from his visit to Australia. He did, of course, continue to write stf but he did not think he would write any more books of space travel or interplanetary flight. He would keep his 'Interplanetary Flight' up to date, for later editions, of course, and likewise 'The Exploration of Space', 'The Young Traveller in Space', and 'The Exploration of the Moon'. But now that rocketry and satellite space stations had become the province of the billion dollar industry and top secret military projects the role of the amateur in research, theory and experimentation had become more or less futile. The British Interplanetary Society, which recently celebrated its 21st anniversary, had likewise come to the end of its 1<sup>st</sup> phase, having brilliantly justified itself and won recognition for its objectives and for itself as a responsible scientific body. Its aims were now no longer scorned and derided, but generally admitted to be capable of attainment in the not-too-distant future. The B.I.S., of course, had a new and boundless phase ahead of it and Arthur Clarke anticipated playing his part as a member.

After dinner, the party motored out to the Tafes' home at Tenerife, where the B.S.F.G. meets regularly. In attendance were members Fred Drennan, Bob Lynagh, Reg Urquhart and Mrs. Urquhart, and many friends and guests of members. About 40 people attended, among them being Don Johnston and Lyle Davis with fellow members of the Underwater Research Group, and Alec Hardaker, who brought a 35 mm

slide projector.

Introductions, library business, sales of the latest ETHERLINE, autographing of volumes by Arthur Clarke, and inspection of underwater camera equipment took up the first half-hour or so. Then, on behalf of the B.S.F.G., Frank Bryning made a brief speech welcoming the visitors and members of the Under-water Research Group., and introducing Arthur Clarke and Mike Wilson.

After some of the usual false starts which seem to be inseparable from projectors, Arthur's really 1<sup>st</sup> class colour films of underwater phenomena were screened, together with commentary by Clarke and interpolated by Wilson. We saw also the first screening of some sequences of a surf carnival Arthur had photographed (in colour) at Manly, Sydney, and then the slide program. The entire show was much appreciated, and the good work done by George Tafe with his film projector, and Alec Hardaker and Mike Wilson with the slide projector. is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

Thereafter, Clarke and Wilson were involved in discussion of equipment, and answering questions. Betty Tafe assisted by other ladies present, served coffee and cakes - a heroic effort in the circumstances - for which thanks and appreciation are herein recorded.

Shortly after supper, John Adams, on behalf of the B.S.F.G., proposed a vote of thanks to Arthur and Mike. He was supported, on behalf of the visitors, by Don Johnston, of the Underwater Research Group. Arthur responded suitably, and Mike expressed appreciation on behalf of everyone present to Betty Tafe and the ladies for their hospitality.

It had been a great night for the Brisbane Science Fiction Group. For the first time, three new things had happened at a Group meeting. One was that speeches had been made at the Group gathering. Believe it or not, that had never happened before so informal are our doings. Second the Group had entertained another Group as guests, together with many other visitors. Third the Group had had, for the first time, an eminent overseas author of science fiction present among them.

Messrs. Clarke and Wilson returned to Coolangatta for the following weekend where they had left their diving gear at Mustchin's. The weather was fair, but the waters of the swollen

Tweed River hardly clear enough for diving. Back in Brisbane, on Monday, April 4th. Arthur Clarke spent a busy week on business. He also recorded an interview for 'In Town Tonight' on 4KQ, and negotiated for the typing of his manuscript of his just-completed novel, THE STARS AND THE CITY, which BSFG member John Gurney is arranging for him.

As we conclude this report on Easter Monday, Arthur Clarke and Mike Wilson are in Brisbane, preparing to leave on Wednesday, April 13th., for Heron Island and the Reef.  
(Frank Bryning?)

Arthur C Clarke attended BSFG meetings later in the year - in June when the group went to see WAR OF THE WORLDS, and again in July before leaving Australia. Meetings continued monthly throughout 1955 at the Tafes`, with attendance dropping to half a dozen at some meetings.

## CANBERRA

The Futurian Society of Canberra met monthly during 1955, normally in members` homes for a film showing (by no means always science fictional in nature). Numbers attending varied from a handful up to 20. Secretary was Arthur Porter, but Geoff Bennett was perhaps the best-known fan outside Canberra. Midway through the year the group showed some sign of engaging with the other fan groups when Geoff Bennett challenged Alan South, who had recently won the FSS chess championship, to a postal series. By July, it was being claimed that Bennett had a slight material advantage - but there were also some unkind remarks about the slow pace of play.

## 1955 IN SUMMARY

In addition to the groups treated separately above, small groups in Albury (best-known fan John O`Shaughnessy) and Ballarat (Joe Cynski) should be noted, as well as fans like Don Tuck (Hobart, Tasmania) and Roger Dard (Perth, Western Australia) who could almost be said to have fanned in isolation. But all the groups were fragile. None of them had regular attendances over 20 (although in 1954 the FSS could easily claim this). The Adelaide, Brisbane and Canberra groups all met in members` homes, and that is how the Albion Futurian Society started its meetings also. Even the Melbourne SF Group at one stage briefly considered moving

from rented space to members' homes, but this was rejected. It is not difficult to believe that the continued strength of the MSF Club has been its capacity to afford rented premises (it also had a fortnightly fanzine to produce!). It is similarly true that for a long time the Futurian Society of Sydney, with rented premises, was able to maintain a purpose for itself. As we shall see, by the end of the decade only one of these groups, the MSFC, was still functioning effectively (and it was about to enter its decade of greatest strength).

Arthur C. Clarke's visit to Australia clearly had a large impact during the first six months of 1955 (he had passed briefly through Melbourne at the end of 1954, as described in AUSTRALIAN FAN HISTORY: 1954). Robert Heinlein's visit in 1954 had had a similar impact. But after this there were almost no visits to Australia from prominent science fiction writers for fifteen years, when Edmond Hamilton and Leigh Brackett broke the drought ("Cordwainer Smith"'s visits were effectively invisible to fandom.).

The decline of this wave in Australian fandom can be attributed to fallout from the wars in Sydney, which were so disruptive at the national convention, and the increased access to science fiction in Australia (lessening the need for the library/book exchange function of the clubs). By the end of the decade, when science fiction suddenly became very generally available, there was no longer much need for club libraries

## 1959: THE YEAR AUSTRALIAN FANDOM CHANGED - A SKETCH

Partway through 1959 the Australian Government decided to lift an embargo which had been in place for almost twenty years. One consequence of that 1959 decision, reversing a policy introduced as a war measure, was that American science fiction magazines could once again be distributed in Australia.

The first US sf magazines to be sold in this way were dated October 1959. I can remember buying AMAZING STORIES for that month in a branch of Collins Booksellers in Melbourne which no longer exists; opposite the museum, and removed not long afterwards in preparation for the construction of Melbourne Central, it was a small dark place which made McGill's, where Mervyn Binns worked, look attractive by comparison. But it was first with the latest, and for some months I bought magazines there.

By 1959 the great boom in sf magazines had passed, of course. But the trickle which was left was still enough to impress the Australian fans of the time.

During the twenty years of famine, Australian sf readers had to manage with truncated British reprint editions of American magazines (and relatively few of them), the few British magazines, and the even fewer Australian magazines. The exceptions were those who managed to discover other sources. Science fiction fandom, for that reason, was very much a fandom about science fiction.

For a range of reasons Australian readers were even less well-served than readers in Great Britain; and so if "fandom" in Australia of that time is to be compared with fandom elsewhere it ought to be with US fandom prior to 1926; science fiction was so scarce that for most "fans" obtaining something to read was the whole purpose of any participation in fandom.

I had begun reading sf in 1956. One consequence of having had polio was that in that year my sporting life was cut to a minimum and a piecework job was found for me to fill in the time not at school. Since it paid ten or fifteen shillings a week I was relatively rich; that would buy four or six new sf magazines a week - and there were not that many around.

By the end of 1956 I was a regular reader of ETHERLINE, the fanzine of the Melbourne SF Club, whose main purpose was to tell you  
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where to buy sf (in addition to McGill's). As a result, towards the end of 1956 I began buying US magazines from Ken Slater at FANTAST (MEDWAY) LTD. This, as much as any activities of the MSFC, was my pathway into fandom.

I wasn't well enough to go to the OLYMPICON held in Melbourne in 1956, but I did attend the 1958 convention held at the Richmond Town Hall. I spent most of my time there with aspiring (and soon-to-be-published) author Nigel Jackson, who eventually managed to have a story in NEBULA SF in 1959. I bought quite a few secondhand magazines - the auction being a central part of the convention - and noticed that the buyers were not especially discriminating. They didn't set any special value on certain issues of GALAXY which had particular interest for a reader like me - those for which a British reprint did not exist.

My fan contact in those pre-1959 days was therefore limited. I did once or twice visit the MSFC clubrooms, but was depressed by the restricted content of meetings - swapping books and magazines seemed to be the beginning and end of it all. This didn't seem to be much like the fandom one read about in the sf magazines.

So when the embargo was lifted I was ready for something different. And "different" is what we got.

On the one hand, science fiction in Australia was suddenly plentiful. The amount available through the magazines probably tripled - and then there were the paperbacks.... Science fiction readers were overwhelmed. (But this change in Australia must have had broader impact. I don't remember reading anything about changes in England, but clearly there would be little or no market for "British Reprint" editions in Australia. ASTOUNDING, I seem to recall Mervyn Binns saying, used to sell about 8000 copies a month in Australia in the BRE, and McGill's might have sold as many as 800 of those.) There was no longer a need for "fans" to devote large amounts of energy just to find something to read. On the other hand, what was now the *raison d'être* for the science fiction club and the Australian fanzine? They could no longer function purely as a source of information about the availability of science fiction. If they were to survive they would need to define new roles for themselves.

Enter John Baxter.



## 1960: QUANTUM into BUNYIP

In 1960, now a university student, I began visiting the MSFC clubrooms about once a month. Bruce Gillespie's entry in THE MUP ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY on fandom will mislead the unwary reader, by suggesting that the MSFC had moved to Somerset Place by 1955, when in fact this did not occur until the early 1960s. In the late 1950s the MSFC had been meeting in very dingy rooms near the interstate railway station at Spencer Street: one visit to that location was enough for me. But by 1960 the MSFC had moved to much more pleasant surroundings in McKillop Street, only a stone's throw, as it were, from McGill's, the main Post Office, and also the site of its next, apothecic, manifestation, Somerset Place.

Up a couple of flights of stairs - or use the lift if you wish - the room(s) occupied by the MSFC were minuscule. As I recall it, there was not space in the main room for the AFPA Roneo, which had turned out so many issues of ETHERLINE, and it sat in a sort of annex near the entrance to the main room: if you turned left too rapidly out of the lift you would wind up impaled on the Roneo's crank. But inside, the library was now displayed more comfortably. The only problem was, what was the club's purpose? The old club had been a place to buy and swap magazines and books, but that could now be done directly.

Of course, you could always try buying stuff by mail; I have previously mentioned buying SF from Ken Slater's FANTAST (MEDWAY). But for those willing to take up a challenge there were alternatives. For example, I quickly acquired an almost-complete collection of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE once the currency restrictions were lifted, because FU had a particularly attractive back issues sales package. And then for those of a really adventurous mind, there were dealers like Les Smith.

I only bought from Les Smith a couple of times, for reasons which will soon become clear. But Les had a small catalogue, with pretty good prices on moderately hard-to-find pulp magazines, and so for a while at least you thought dealing with him was worthwhile. The main barrier to the creation of a vast Smith empire based on the sale of second-hand SF was, it seemed to me, Les's very particular attitudes towards buying and selling. Les accepted payment, according to my recollection, in only one form - used postage stamps. It seemed to me then, and still does now, that this places some restriction on the flow of trade, since Les's prices were quite reasonable in terms of what a used postage stamp costs you, but not so hot in terms of mint stamps.

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Nevertheless, I thought it worthwhile to make the effort to buy some of the stuff Les had to offer. This brought me up against a lesser but not insignificant problem: Les only despatched the sold magazines by rail freight, and only to your capital city's main freight station. Fortunately for me I lived in Victoria's capital city, but it still took me a couple of shots to get to the station after Les's box arrived. (And don't leave it too long - uncollected stuff gets dumped!)

Such were the trials of the science fiction fan in Melbourne in the late 1950s. But now, in a new decade, all would be well, even though the MSFC was still without such clear goals as once it had.

I gathered from Mervyn Binns, on one of my irregular visits, that this was now exercising his mind also. "You should have been here last week" he said, "to meet this guy from Sydney. He told us exactly what he thought of what we had done in publishing ETHERLINE. I think you would have got along with him very well. His name's John Baxter."

John Baxter had left an issue or two of his fanzine, QUANTUM, at the clubrooms, so I picked them up and had a look. They didn't look exactly like other Australian fanzines of the period.

Of course, Australia wasn't exactly over-run with fanzines in the late 1950s, so there isn't much with which to make comparison. But in one sense QUANTUM fitted the 1950s fan scene in Australia: its title.

The Melbourne fanzines from AFPA, ETHERLINE, PERHAPS, QUESTIONMARK, the proposed Harding-Binns TOMORROW (to have been a "professional" magazine), ANTIPODES - all had breathless titles redolent of the atmosphere found near the whirring brains of the boy-scientists their editors aspired to be (but never became). The Sydney fanzines - Nicholson's FORERUNNER, Baldwin's EXTANT, Jefferson's MC<sup>2</sup> - had titles with the same flavour. A major exception would have been Race Mathews's BACCHANALIA, as befitted Race's more decadent stance (this was, of course, before he fell from grace as a science fiction fan to become a politician). (Full - even over-full - details of all these fanzines and their background will shortly be zapped through the ether under the title I REMEMBER AFPA!, by Harding, Jenssen and Foyster.)

The title QUANTUM fitted in, but the contents didn't. Of the fanzines I have mentioned above, it was most similar in content to PERHAPS, but it would be easier for present-day readers to appreciate its content as being somewhat (and only somewhat) similar to YANDRO, Buck Coulson having been one of John Baxter's early contacts in fandom. But to me - someone who had not seen a copy of YANDRO (nor at that time a copy of PERHAPS...) - it was a revelation. There were short articles about a wide range of subjects, there was a long letter-column in which

readers of previous issues gave their opinions at length. I had seen nothing like it before. Soon, of course, I was to be a regular reader of SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES, CRY OF THE NAMELESS and YANDRO itself, but this was the initiation. It opened a door into a new world. I sat down and wrote a letter to the editor.

And he wrote back. On and off, we've been exchanging letters (now email) ever since.

One of the things John said in an early letter was that he was changing the name of his fanzine "to BUNYIP". This seemed like a good idea to me. (Now, it seems positively revolutionary! Fandom was not just about junior rocket scientists. The 'sugar-coated pill' approach was no longer necessary. I've never cross-examined John on why he changed the title, but I guess it was more "Australian" and more reflective of the editor's approach to life.) I wrote a review of Jack Kerouac's fantasy novel DR. SAX. John published it. I started writing to one of his more regular letterhacks, Bob Smith. Bob wrote back to me. The major changes in Australian fandom were beginning.

John Baxter was a young and energetic clerk in the NSW Railways department. I can remember early in our correspondence that he remarked to me that he could usually finish all the work he was expected to do by the middle of the day, leaving the afternoon free for (a) science fiction and (b) films. In the end, of course, it was the world of cinema which would claim him.

(Recently John has mentioned to me that his early aspiration was to work in radio, and that he had auditioned for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), as it then was, before taking the railways job. Had I but known earlier! My first broadcast for the ABC was in 1959, in my last year in secondary school, and John and I would have had yet another area to discuss. Eventually, in the 1980s John was an immense success as a book reviewer and organiser of book review programs for the ABC.)

John's energy impressed me forty years ago; now it daunts me. He still maintains a frighteningly hectic schedule as a writer and commentator on film (but happily survived the overwhelming media attention following Stanley Kubrick's death).

Meeting John Baxter was not something to be done lightly. I had missed him in Melbourne; now I would have to travel to Sydney. Before then I would publish my first fanzine in February 1961. When I did meet John Baxter, in Bowral, other players would be involved. There would be Damien Broderick, about to drop out of a seminary. And there would be Albert F. Marino, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

## 1961: THE BOWRAL CONFLUENCE

In the early 1960s John Baxter lived for a time in a small apartment - a bedsitter really - in Ross Street, Waverton, so close to the central part of Sydney that within a few years it would be located on expanded maps showing details of the city of Sydney itself, though in the mid 1990s when, finding myself staying at a hotel in the area, I ventured out one morning to see if I could identify the building again, there was no plaque memorialising the temporary home of the famed film critic, a civic oversight for which I am sure the town council of the area will meet an awful fate.

But I did not meet John Baxter there; I met him in a country town in New South Wales.

Soon after I began corresponding with John Baxter, he emerged as part of a solution to a problem. Albert F. Marino, of Baton Rouge, La., had advertised in the classifieds in AMAZING STORIES that he had a pile of sf magazines for sale. By the time he received the letter I wrote to him he had sold most of them, a necessary preparation for his forthcoming marriage. But he had a few hundred left, and I could have them for, more or less, the cost of shipping to Australia. This was the kind of offer one does not refuse - but what to do about it? I was still living with my parents, and there was no room in our house for a few hundred sf magazines - not with two brothers and a sister as well as our parents. But I was going to be moving out of home in a year or so: perhaps some temporary accommodation could be found for the collection.

John Baxter agreed to provide a refuge for the potentially homeless magazines. Not, of course, in Sydney, for he had no room there either. But at his parents' house in Bowral there was plenty of room, and he visited there most weekends. And so Albert F. Marino dispatched the boxes of magazines to Bowral, thereby inadvertently bringing together to one place John Baxter, John Foyster, and Damien Broderick.

Some months later I was able, during a university vacation, to arrange to visit Sydney, with the specific purpose of meeting John Baxter for the first time. John Baxter thought it would be a good idea if we met at the weekend in Bowral and went on from there to Sydney. I could see the boxes of SF, and could also meet this other science fiction fan if I did that, he said.

I took a train to Moss Vale, somewhat to the south of Bowral,

and from there on to Bowral by road vehicle, arriving around midday. Thinking back in terms of train schedules I now find this a little puzzling, since there were only, I thought, two trains from Melbourne which I could have caught, neither of which would have brought me to Moss Vale at that sort of time. But perhaps I took a local train in NSW, rather than one of the major expresses. (A dozen years later I had to visit Junee, even further from Sydney, and another place in which John Baxter had lived, and escaped from there on the romantically-named South Mail, so I know that such trains existed.)

I remember little of that day or so in Bowral. John Baxter must have shown me his fanzines, and we must have glanced through AFM's boxes. And one afternoon we both met up with Damien Broderick. Damien was then enrolled at a seminary in Bowral. He was at that time even more gosh-wow in his enthusiasm for science fiction than either John Baxter or I was - we were, after all, a couple of years older than Damien - but did not seem to have graduated to fanzines and fandom, which was what WE were more interested in. (Years later Damien would write his best book, TRANSMITTERS, about science fiction fandom in Melbourne in the 1970s. It is a fine novel, far surpassing anything else he has written but it is regrettably little-known or appreciated; it is the one item Damien has written for which I am sure he will be remembered.)

At this distance in time I vaguely remember meeting John's parents. His brother Phillip, who was more commercially-minded and drew cartoons for BUNYIP as Philby, was not there, and I do not recall at all meeting then his younger sister Virginia, who has since become prominent in Australia for producing "interesting" radio documentaries. Perhaps I should not have waited almost forty years before making these notes.

On the Monday morning John Baxter and I set off to catch a train to Sydney. We were about halfway to the station when the ground began to vibrate wildly. When the earthquake was over, we ran back to the Baxters' house to see if there was any damage. There was, as I recall, relatively little damage - a crack or two of a very minor nature. And so we turned back for the station and took the train to Sydney (a place I had only previously visited in passing when on the way to the Australian naval base at Jervis Bay to play for a Victorian schoolboy rugby team). I was to visit John in Sydney many times in later years, most recently in the middle 1980s, and some of our adventures will ultimately be described somewhere or other.

And the sf magazine collection of Albert F. Marino? When Damien Broderick left Bowral and returned to Melbourne he took the

boxes with him and, a couple of years later, the remnants of the collection were finally in my possession. They didn't remain there for long for, in April 1966 when the house which Elizabeth (nee Pike, then Foyster, now Darling) and I were renting was burnt to the ground a month after we were married, almost all of those magazines were reduced to a simpler form of carbon, along with many others, and my fanzine collection (mostly of fanzines of the fifties and forties, though not many so memorable: who, for example, remembers the fanzines of Fred Chappell?) and just about everything else we owned. I do still have one or two of them - those which for some reason weren't in the house at the time - and of course Albert F. Marino did far more for me than merely unload on me the effluvia of a mis-spent youth.

## 1961: CHUNDERING NEAR THE OLD PACIFIC SEA

(from *GRENDDEL*, March 1962)

One time last year it looked as if I might get a little interested in Chinese food. I was doing well, too, but then I went up to Sydney. John Baxter is a NUT on Chinese food, so I ate Chinese food most every night. I didn't mind, of course, as I liked Chinese food.

Then one Wednesday night John Baxter and I decided to cook our own dinner (we were just about out of cash and Bob Smith wasn't going to get up from Pucka[punyal] till the Friday night and buy us food and like that) so, at approximately 5.20 we set out to purchase some steak for to make hamburgers (Sydney stores close at 5.30). We wound up in a chain store and bought some meat of exceedingly doubtful ancestry. Neither of us can claim to be an expert cook but the stuff did seem edible, so as we churned out copies of I-SHINE 2 on Mike Baldwin's flatbed duper (swiped the previous Sunday from the home of part-time bohemian Mike Baldwin) we disregarded the occasional twinging of the guts.

Next evening we lashed out and got rid of some Chinese food and then toddled off to the Royal George Hotel to meet Doug Nicholson and Mike Baldwin before going out to Nicholson's for the evening.

This was quite historical in itself as it was on this occasion that John Baxter, teetotaler, had a drink\* - in fact Mike Baldwin had to grab it out of his hand and shout "Easy, John, it's not lemonade, you know". But I digress. Eventually we did get out to Doug's place (and this is where the story really starts) and after an interesting talk on power politics in Sydney fandom (LA was peaceful...) we began to leave. It was at this point that my previous queasiness began to assert itself. In fact, I would not be exaggerating if I said I was violently sick all over Nicholson's front garden. "Don't bother, John," said Doug, "you're really a fan now. All the Sydney fans have been sick here." As I redoubled my efforts, Doug tried to brighten me up. "Look," he said, "here's the spot where Pat Burke was sick last year, and that spot on the tree, yes, just there, that's where Bluey Glick ... and over there by the fence..." Eventually I ran out of raw material and Doug out of places of interest. I've never been able to eat Chinese food since.\*\*

But I have a wonderful impression of the strength of John Martin Baxter's stomach.

\*John Baxter has had a few drinks since then.

\*\*It was a mere decade, until the early 1970s, until I was again able to eat Chinese food.

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Box 3086, Rundle Mall, Adelaide, South Australia,  
AUSTRALIA 5000, to whom all correspondence should be  
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