



"as i was saying in the last issue....."





THIS IS  FRIENDS

OPEN YOUR HEARTS - YOUR MOUTHS - YOUR WALLET

 FABULOUS - to the LONG-AWAITED - NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN -  
ER...UM...AH...

(Oh yes...)

# AUTUMN 1984 ROT NUMBER 6



Boringly predictable Rot No 6, published by the ever-punctual (if not always entirely truthful: "If there are any future issues of Rot they will be distributed through FAPA" - Mal Ashworth in Rot No 5)...

MAL ASHWORTH, 16, ROCKVILLE DRIVE, EMBSAY, SKIPTON, NORTH YORKS, ENGLAND

follows hard on the heels of Rot No.5 (1963) in its headlong bid for the Ansible (or any other) Poll 'Top Fanzine' spot. (The only reason for the slight delay between issues, actually, was that I was waiting for Dave Langford to emerge in fandom, start publishing Ansible and include in it an annual poll with a 'Top Fanzine' spot. So you know who to blame for the delay).

Rot No.6 is published in 1983, exactly 20 years after Rot No.5, making it, of course, a celebratory and (naturally) celebrated - mind you don't get crushed by all that dancing in the streets - 20th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE (the hell with this silly idea of celebrating the Anniversary of your first issue; who the Hades Belle can remember when that was anyway?) But in order not to break with Rot's fine, old-established and much-respected tradition, it is, of course, being published late. In 1984 in fact. Thus it Lives Up To Expectations, celebrates George Orwell, does obeisance to G.K.Chesterton (for THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL) (on instructions from Dave Wood) and - perhaps uniquely in the whole vast panoply of Fannish History -

TA ROOM TA ROOM

 BOOM BCOM 

BONK

Marks - simultaneously - not only the...

MAGNIFICENT TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

but also the

UNBELIEVABLE TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY

of whatever it was we were talking about. Beat that if you can. (Just don't tell me if you do is all I ask.)

Despite your overwhelming impression that what you have in your hands is the latest glossy tract from The Christian Slanzine Publishing Corporation, 26A, Sludge Street, Smoketown, it is in fact a Genuine Product of Coelacanth Fandom and may well be The Only Living Fossil you are holding in your hands at this moment! A True, Honest-to-Roscoe, Fifties Fanzine miraculously brought back to life (well - almost) by an amazing little-known scientific process called Persistent Stupidity. However, its one redeeming - if not actually endearing - feature is that it is not a typical Fifties Fanzine. Thus it is that the Editor and his dedicated staff believe they have remained true to the Motto of the founder of the Rot publishing empire, Mr Paul Tröön:

You can't please some of the people all of the time  
You can't please all of the people any of the time  
You can't even please any of the people some of the time  
You might as well stick your head in a bucket



# CONTENTS

Over The Cemetery Wall	- Summat n' Nowt, Mainly Nowt	-	Page 5
Kwopall! - Clive Ashworth	- A Tender Nostalgic Re-creation of Adolescence in the Fifties	-	Page 21
Gibberings From The Gibbet	- Where You Find Out What It Was You Wished You Hadn't Said But Couldn't Remember	-	Page 24
The Penultimate Doc Weir	- Selections from Doc's Letters	-	Page 25
1984!	- Conservative Party Manifesto	-	Page 33
Mutterings From The Morgue	- Devoted This Issue To 'The Oddwave Legend'	-	Page 37
Grande Finale	- Kind Words, Fond Farewells, Fireworks, 48 Trombones, 17 Bass Drums, Elephants, Full Frontal Aerobatics Display and TAFF Statement by D. West	-	Page 44
Cover and Illos pp. 9 (slightly adapted by Hazel) and 35	-	-	Dave Wood
All other illos and headings	-	-	Hazel Ashworth

Anything uncredited to others is by - er - lemme think about this - oh, yes - by me.

The third instalment of 'Confessions of an English Book-Lover' has been held over this issue due to lack of space. The Editor trusts that this will not cause readers to experience any lack of continuity or to lose the thread of the series.

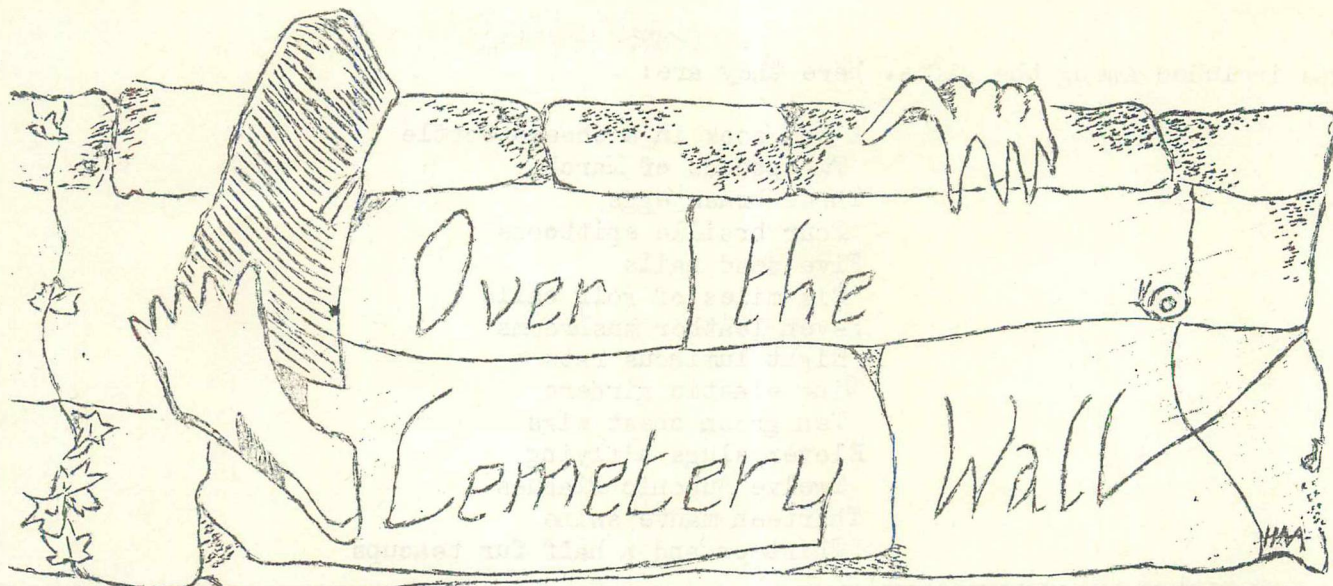
## AVAILABILITY AND DISTRIBUTION

This issue: If you got this issue it can only be because I thought you might be someone who would dig it (unless you are one of a very small coterie of people with their claws into me obligation-wise). If you didn't get it it's unlikely to shatter your world into smithereens, I would hazard, the more so as you will probably never even notice. Numbers ? Around 50 if I had anything to do with it; in reality, around 120.

I am, these days, an enthusiastic convert to the practice of publishing your intended distribution list. It helps, in my view, for instance, when contributing to someone else's zine, to know who is getting to see your material, and to be able to make suggestions to the editor about others who might be added. (Though I don't suppose Doc Weir, for one, gives a damn by now.) Initially then (though there are bound to be others I think of later) Rot 6 goes to: Ackerman; Akien; Aldiss; Andruschak; Clive Ashworth; Hazel Ashworth; Barker; Bell; Bentcliffe; John D. Berry; Birchby; Bloch; Boggs; Brunner; Bulmer; Burbee; Burns; Busby; Carol; Calkins; Carmody; Carr; Vince Clarke; Coulson; Ceward; Connor; Danner; Davies; Lillian Edwards; Malcolm Edwards; Frost; Geis; Grennell; Goudriaan; Green; Hansen; Harris; Hickman; Hill; Hoffman; Hanke-Woods; Huntzinger; Jarrold; Jeeves; Klein; Kettle; Christina Lake; Langford; Lichtman; Ethel Lindsay; Lillian; Maule; Mayer; Neale; Ray Nelson; Nielsen-Haydens; Ounsley; Owen; Pardee; Pickersgills; Pinto; Priest; Raeburn; Robertson; Rotsler; Richardson; Rapps; Real Bob Shaw; Shearman; Shiffman; Shippey; Siclari; Skel; Kevin Smith; Sneary; Steffan; Stopa; Temple; A Tom; Tucker; Tubb; Tudor; Vincent; Walker; Wallace; Warner; West; Weston; James White; Ted White; Willis; Wood; Ward; Whitecack  
(Addresses for Burbee and Grennell anyone ?)

continued on page 43





WASSAMARRER - CAN'T YOU TAKE A JOKE OR SUMP'N ?

Along about the end of 'Mutterings from the Morgue' in Rot No.5 (published 1963) I had a note

saying that I was Going Gafia. I then sat back and waited for you all to realise that it was a joke. And waited. And waited. And.... OK, the hell with it; if you're not going to take any notice I might as well go right ahead and put out my next ish.

MODEST PROGRESS CAN BE REPORTED:

I also noted last issue (Rot No.5, dated 1963, if you remember. Never assume a damn thing is my motto.) that Ken Potter didn't like the title of the 'zine and ATom thought the Department Headings were pretty crappy (I beg to be excused for disremembering his exact and precise phraseology - but 'crappy', I'm fairly sure, is a reasonable summation of his sentiments). Now I don't want it thought that I am pig-headed and obstinate; that my editorial carapace is impervious to all outside influence, and, all in all, that I haven't got the goddamn sense to take good advice and change my errant ways and my unbelievably crappy Department Headings. I just don't like to rush things, is all. But I'm definitely still thinking seriously about it.

WINTER WORRIES:

Seasonal as I write (though probably not as I publish) is this nice little anecdote from Leo Walmsley's LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE (About Britain No.9) concerning the great snow of the winter of 1947. When this started, the wives of most of the Upper Wharfedale farmers were in Skipton, on a coach trip to the pantomime. They were stuck there and couldn't get home, but no one expected the adverse conditions to last very long. As Walmsley puts it: "At first the farmers were more worried about their women than their sheep." Then they gradually realised that things were serious.

SINCE YOU'VE WAITED SO PATIENTLY:

For nigh on thutty year, and while we're being all festive and the like, Rot, in a mind-boggling World Exclusive brings you the original words of 'The Thirteen and a Half Days of Christmas', a ditty composed at one of the legendary Lancaster fan parties of the late Fifties, which owes very little to 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' and hardly more to the delightful Walt Kelly/Pogo version, 'McTruloff'. I guess I'll miss out all the trimmings and just give you the nitty-gritty. Looking at it again, in fact, it occurs to me that it can surely only have been due to an oversight that no Nitty Gritty



was included among the gifts. Here they are:

A wet sock in a cheese bottle  
Two pounds of March  
Three brass eggs  
Four braille spittoons  
Five dead nails  
Six miles of golf balls  
Seven leather mushrooms  
Eight luminous rats  
Nine elastic girders  
Ten green chest wigs  
Eleven slugs a'flying  
Twelve Bubonic Plagues  
Thirteen mauve swine  
Thirteen and a half fur teacups

---

"Kirk here. OK, men, phasers set on 'Blast the bastards to bits' "

---

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, AND THANK YOU AGAIN, FORD MADDOX WOMBAT: For one of my very favourite stories, related in The

Running Man magazine, No.1, published a few years ago (well - erm - now that I look, it was 1968. Lawks-a-Lunky it's almost out of copyright anyway!): "Ford Maddox Ford told an anecdote about an old eccentric hermit who lived in the Romney Marshes. After Ford chastised him for his capricious ways, he asked the old man why he gave up his previous comfortable life at home in favour of poaching and sleeping-in-the-rough on the Marshes. A baffled Ford concluded that he had been countered with the only incontrovertible answer to questions regarding human volition when the old man replied: 'I'd be a damned fool if I didn't "

"Gay People in NATFHE" proclaims a heading in my union bulletin, NATFHE Journal. Well, what next, I wonder, bemused, "Necrophiliacs in the NUT" ? "Transvestites at the TUC" ? "Lesbians in the

Lords" ? Who cares, already, is what I really wonder ? How has this insidious belief that one's sexual predilections are somehow basic and prior to all else and must be hollered from the treetops when applying for a job, joining a Union, etc., gained such currency ? Is this trend to rule our lives in the future ? Must I now search diligently for a newsagent - a coal merchant - a bus driver, even - (all female, too, mark you, since 'gay' I assuredly am not) with a tendency towards bondage and sadism ? (Well, no, I grant you, I just never thought to mention it before, but trends are trends and if what we must do is let it all hang out, so be it. There it hangs - though if anyone betrays even the mildest interest, I shall be faintly astonished.) Perhaps I should make a formal declaration of my libidinous preferences to the Local Council before they allocate me a regular Refuse Collector ? I would, too, and would see the sense of it, if they were likely to send me a nubile young female masochist, but they aren't. And would it not, I ask you, play merry hell with the refuse collection service if they did ? That, surely, is the whole point. The truth is, I don't give a good goddamn and a half if my Refuse Collector bangs elephants, so long as he does it in his spare time and doesn't frighten the trashcans (though I would be quite interested, in a scientific sort of way). All I ask of him is that he collects my refuse with reasonable efficiency, and after that his time is his own and he may practise



perverted postures with Pershing missiles or shag sharks for all I care. And I have no reason to think he feels any differently about me. Maybe the badge I saw at a Beer Festival had it about right: GAY WHALES AGAINST RACISM.

---

"Detective Inspector Bloggs here. Now remember, lads, .357 Magnums with Dum-Dum bullets set on 'Stun' "

---

THAT OLD RUGGED CEMETERY WALL: I just remembered that that much-maligned heading back there is probably grounded on reasons with impeccable and unassailable ethnic and historical antecedents; that is to say, something slightly better than 'It seemed like a good idea at the time'. The most dustily antique among you may, with difficulty, remember that I actually used to live in a suburb of Bradford with the name 'Tong Cemetery', a fact which used to freak the Americans somewhat. In very truth, compared with a lot of other folks, our family didn't live particularly close to the cemetery - I'd say our house was roughly 150 yards from the cemetery wall, which, while it didn't exactly put us out on the perimeter of the community, didn't quite give us the status of those old-established members like Grandma, who'd got herself comfortably ensconced a mere forty yards away. Of course, eventually she moved inside the cemetery wall, which was a fairly normal and socially-acceptable shift of location. In fact it carried with it a certain unspoken prestige-value. Not only was one regarded as, in a way, settled and among steady company, but one could not have expected more Sunday afternoon visitors even if one had gone into hospital instead. Less, probably. I'd say, on balance, that the majority preferred the cemetery for their Sunday outing. I don't think this was due simply to the health aspect - the fresh air, the exercise - but rather to a certain subtle community spirit. Everyone went for a walk round The Cemetery on a Sunday afternoon. It had just the right sort of ambience. The young and frivolous were said to visit the Parks in certain parts of the city, but it was to be hoped that most of them would grow out of that. The Cemetery, truly, had everything anyone could possibly want: as well as fulfilling one's obligation by visiting the family - or a very large proportion of it - one could have a nice little stroll, gossip with the neighbours about the latest mounds and headstones (products of the Monumental Mason across the road) and the dreadful neglect by certain persons of their relatives' final abodes, speculate who would be next to join the ever-expanding company, and, of course, admire the colourful flower displays which were a pleasant reminder of duty done. A thoroughly satisfying occasion to 'set one up' for the rest of the week, especially the women. 'Passing away', in this part of the world, is undoubtedly 'women's business'. When my father, at 62, was lying in his coffin in the Sitting Room, his family, strangers to us kids all our lives, came to visit. Among them was his older brother, Alfie, with his wife, Aunt Mary-Ann. After energetic condolences and tea, in the Living Room, my mother asked if they wanted to 'go in and see him'. "He doesn't, but I will", replied Aunt Mary-Ann, unarguably, "You stay there, Alf". And Uncle Alfie sat.

About 150 yards from the cemetery wall, I reckoned we were, at 'Sunnyside'. Now that I come to mull it over, just about everyone and everything in that community was between 20 and 300 yards from that black Millstone Grit cemetery wall. Out at the farthest perimeters - beyond which were The Fields - were the old, disused coalmine, and the chemical works, which smelled bad and leaked coloured liquids onto nearby cinder paths. Next to it was the owner's house, containing his two daughters, the elder of whom showed her legs when she went riding on her horse, and the younger of whom I fancied hopelessly for years. (She showed a touching - but stupid - devotion to a snide little git called Andre who



became a Captain in the Regular Army. I suppose by now he could be a Field Marshal. Maybe even got his fingers on a few buttons. No matter how high they go in the world, they always carry that little old Cemetery of their carefree youth right along with them.) The Mill was a hundred odd yards from The Cemetery, the working coalmine was right next to it, and the Vicarage, suitably enough, about 30 yards away (this contained the Vicar's daughter, Helen, who, at one stage - when I was about five, I think - I was going to marry. Whether this was her idea or mine, I don't recall; all I do remember is that she smelled of Dolly Mixtures. Like they say, whatever turns you on. Maybe it's all for the best that I didn't know her during my Black Pudding phase. Anyway, we lost contact, and she never did turn up to claim her prize (me); I'm almost beginning to think she may have forgotten. I wonder what she smells of now?) About the same distance away as the Vicarage was the Police Station, a long yard, with huge solid-wooden gates, containing cells, two police houses, P.C. Embleton and his son, 'Jumbo', and P.C. Brown and his sexy daughter, Pat. Many cemeteries later I still remember her long hair and her exciting off-the-shoulder blouses, and the way, the one time I managed to be alone with her on a long cycle ride, she talked, and talked, and talked, until I'd almost rather have been riding alongside her father. In those far-off pre-Fill days, contraception took many diverse and interesting forms. (As a matter of fact, many's the night I did ride alongside her father - mile after mile after mile - mainly because I didn't dare pull in front of him and let him see I hadn't got a rear light on my bike; though the only time he did catch me out, all he said was: "You want to get some lights on that bike - a Bobby'll be catching you one of these days".)

At the time we never realised the part that The Cemetery played in our lives; what more natural than, when, as kids, we played on a large grassy patch where several streets met, what we played on were two huge carved gravestones (one of which rocked) which had never made it across the road and to the other side of the wall?

It is only with the coming of a later, more sophisticated anthropological knowledge that one realises that people in other parts of the world live differently. Imagine my initial incomprehension when Hazel, who comes from Devon (where, apparently, pub talk does not invariably centre around death and terminal illness!) used to balk a little at being taken into pubs called 'The Cemetery' ("Ee, they 'ad a reight grand wedding reception, our Doris and 'er young fella. Ah mus' say, they do purron a good do at t'Cemetery.") She even shuddered a little - would you believe? - at passing along one of many ubiquitous 'Cemetery Roads', and was embarrassingly agog at perfectly normal Yorkshire sights, such as The Cemetery Fish and Chip Shop, or "Ye Olde Cemetery Hairdressing Salon".

My brother and I made a return pilgrimage not long ago to Tong Cemetery (we avoided Sunday afternoon, of course; it can get a bit busy then). It was just the same as always. We came away feeling rather relieved; it's nice to know that some things can still be relied on in a rapidly deteriorating world.

So that's about the Cemetery where I lived and played and where I did my early fan publishing, and who knows but what it may be the origin of that execrable feature heading back there. Not me. I'm just happy to happen to have gotten over that cemetery wall in the other direction for a while. But I don't doubt I'll be back.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WANT TO READ UP ON THE SUBJECT: As us academics allus say, read Ronald Blythe's superb book, AKENFIELD, especially his final chapter, 'In The Hour of Death', an interview with a local gravedigger. Extremely fine, powerful literature infused with a gripping elemental energy.



AFTER ALL THAT, WHAT ELSE BUT - RE-ANIMATION:

buying a new refill will be met with a smack in the Naughty Parts. I really wanna know.

Can anyone tell me how to resurrect badly constipated ballpoint pens ? Please. Smartass suggestions about

A CULT BOOK FOR BAFFS AND BOFS ? :

Great fun, if you can find a copy, is L.A. Morse's THE OLD DICK (Avon Paperbacks, 1981), the story of a 78 year old Private Eye, Jake Spanner ("I stretched my neck like an iguana and felt the sun on my forehead, which, for the last thirty years, had extended to the middle of my skull") Jake, self-described Boring Old Fart, suddenly gets dragged back into the thick of the action, putting the heat on the Nasties, getting into and out of hassles with the fuzz, all the while reflecting dryly and wryly on his own situation: "I slicked myself down a little and strolled into Sebastian's, trying to look like I hadn't made a mistake. This was a little tough since I was at least as old as the combined ages of any three people there. Hell, my shirt was older than most of them. My clothes weren't skintight; then again, neither was my skin. And I didn't have on a neat little gold earring. My entrance caused a silence like what must've occurred when Red Death revealed himself at the masked ball".

A delightful change when you've finally had enough of those endless trilogies about Boppard The Piece of String or Algernon The Twig, who discover a magic jewel at The End of the Universe and kill a few monsters on the way to reclaiming their princely heritage and a moderately sexy princess, cocking a snook - inevitably - at Tolkien as they pass. I'll take Jake's brand of fantasy on most days of the week: "Simultaneously, they flipped open little cases and showed badges and I.D. cards. 'Nicholson. Narcotics', the one in front said. The other one didn't say anything.

I quickly flashed the lapel of my bathrobe: 'Spanner. Geriatrics'."

MARPA ON TIME-AND-A-HALF:

I read somewhere that one of the functions of the Tibetan God, Marpa, is that of looking after the art of translation. I enjoy collecting instances of those

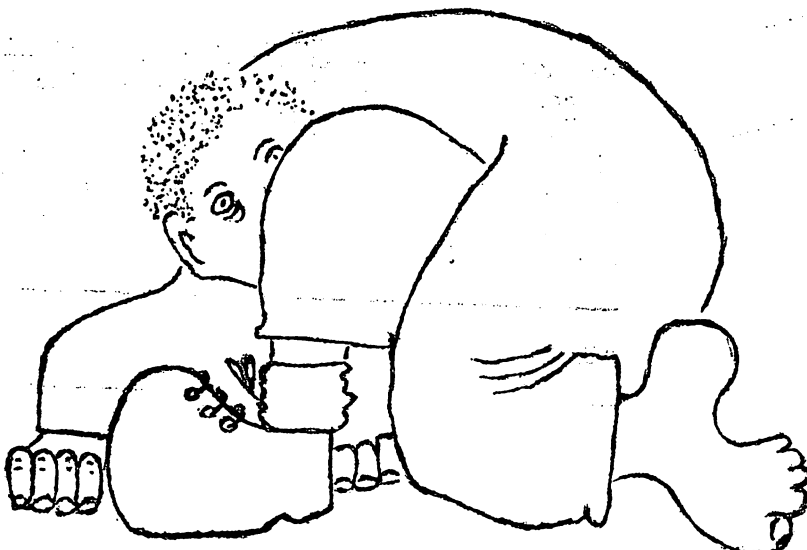
occasions when he took time out for a quiet snooze, and would appreciate any you come across. Here are the ones I have to hand at the moment.

For starters, then, dear old Swami Vivekananda is quoted as having taught the following injunction:

"See not, touch not with your toes even, anything that is uncanny."

Then there is a verse in the BHAGAVAD GITA which goes something like:

"The abstinent run away from what they desire But carry their desires



Dave Wood '83



with them:

When a man enters Reality,  
He leaves his desires behind him."

In 1955 Adeltaa Siitaa Devii managed to make that into  
this:

"Objects of sense turn back from the foodless body-dweller,  
savour-relish the exception. Relish also for him, the Beyond  
having seen, retreats."

Many and diverse are the examples from instruction sheets accompany-  
ing various items arriving from the Far East. I thought those with my Four-In-A-Row  
game had a certain something: " FOUR IN A ROW

Big Challenge With Your Talent

((Did they really mean 'Big Challenge  
With Your Talent', I wondered.))

FOUR IN A ROW is a game for two and  
a pet for all ages.

Each player takes his own chips and  
puts a chip into a slot of the panel  
in turn, then the one who first  
succeeds in placing 4 chessmen into  
a line (No matter a row, horizontally,  
vertically or diagonally), is the  
winner of the game.

Have a challenge to our FOUR IN A  
ROW let it filled your daily life  
with more interesting, exciting  
and more entertaining. Give it a try,  
then you'll see.- Good Luck to You."

#### TALKING OF FUNNY FOREIGNERS:

Possibly because of some oddity in reception  
conditions it doesn't seem to be possible to pick  
up an English language radio broadcast around  
Skipton. All I ever get is some incomprehensible foreign stations. Around Weather  
Forecast time they seem to come from Iran, so that we get news of "Shahs coming in  
from the Ishe Sea". When it should be the news we hear about "The bounce of  
payments" which could be some kind of American sports item I suppose. Things get  
worse from there on as there only ever seem to be two more programmes broadcast.  
One is called "Gerng Places" and the other is "Devot Iwan Dif, intwodyuice by Woy  
Pwumwy" I wonder if I should buy a new wadio ?

#### BUT SOMETIMES IT'S ALL WORTHWHILE:

Well, viss Contractor 'ad called ter see 'em,  
like, in ver new 'ome (the young man explained  
to the 'Checkpoint' interviewer, in accents of  
the deepest Sarf-East) an' 'e seemed like er nice enuff geezer. After 'e worked out  
ve cost of ve job, 'e give 'em a discahnt fer viss, an' a discahnt for vat, "An  
ven", (he concluded, in a phrase that brightens for me the darkest of days). " 'e  
give us a discahnt fer bein' a young couple strugglin' ter ge' a 'ome togevver".  
Who could ask for more ? And then, of course, he took all their money on holiday,  
and was never seen again. And even after all those discahnts, they still  
complained!

---

"Un homme n'est qu'un poste d'observation dans l'étrangeté" Or did you know already?

---

STREET CRIES OF OLD FANDOM: "What about some good solid articles ?" I hear you cry. "What about some good solid fans to read 'em ?", you hear me cry back.

QUO VADIS, NOMINE ?: Being a collection of NAMES... All of them for real....

Admirable: (The kind I may one day use in a triffic trilogy of swashbuckling and derring-do)

A publican at Walsden in Lancashire: Adam Godzman

A CAMRA Regional Organiser : John Strange

Appropriate: Our local drunk is called Mr Tipling

Inappropriate: A local Driving School: St Peter's Driving School  
A Garden Centre we pass on the way to Preston: Brown Leaves Nursery

Imaginative Beyond All Imagining: When I worked in advertising we used to publish the House Magazine of the National Provincial Bank. It was called - wait for it: NATPROBAN

Just Unbelievable: A toupee - hair-piece - I once saw advertised: 'Trendman Trendura'

I SING YOU A SONG OF AN UNSUNG SON ( OF FANDOM ) : It seems that another fine old Rotten tradition is pointing the fingerbone of limelight at

some inadequately lauded member of our mystic microcosm. Last time it was the Official Keeper of The Printed Books at the British Museum. This time it is a fan who has been around for a very long time, and a square for even longer. A person who is an unmitigatedly Good Man and Fine Fan. Eric 'Scrabble' Bentcliffe, this isn't exactly your life, but I've seen worse space-fillers. Eric has been publishing my stuff now - on and off (mostly off) - man and boy and babe-in-swaddling-clothes - for thirty years. But this appreciation is not being penned out of gratitude. Well, not much. Well, not very much. He also whumped the ass off of me in the legendary 1960 TAFF race (actually, it wasn't the least bit legendary but after 24 years who's to know ?), thus saving me the excruciating mental agony (as it would have been at that time) of having to meet hordes of new people, sit on platforms and make speeches and whatall. I published a tiny oneshot when the results were out, headed "A Few Words About Bilbo Bentcliffe". Who would it embarrass the most if I said that over the years since then Bilbo seems to me to have become more of an Elrond ? (Or even an Ent) Me ? Eric ? Elrond ? Probably. But for sure he has held true to the Thin Red Line of Trufandom through all the Dark Times of.....well, whatever those Dark Times were back there that I don't know about. He is someone who truly seems to have grown in stature (tho' not physically, whoo no!) over his years in fandom, until he is rock-hard grounded in the unshakeable certainty that having fun is a lot of what it's about, and publishing good fanwriting is one way to do that. Not slagging and fishwifing and feuding. I have never known him do a reprehensible or hurtful thing to anyone, but I sure have known him do a whole lot that were quietly helpful. Into the darkest depths of the Glades of Gafia he sent me copies of Triode and got nary a Tarzanical trumpet in return. But the moment I stuck my head out of the bushes and whispered "What's going on ?" Eric was there with information, addresses, ideas and a huge bundle of current fanzines for me. And if he ever beats me in a TAFF race again I'll write twice as much about him.



I SAID I WOULD AND BY GOD I DID  
(But of course I didn't intend to):

The third thing most of my concerned college 'colleagues' said, when they heard I'd taken a Crombie, was "What will you do ?" Get the scenario right, if you will. A Crombie is not like a cyanide pill (though we did have one guy take one of those after the last-but-one College merger) and they were not inquiring about my prospects of living out the hour. A Crombie was a fairly favourable Voluntary Redundancy cum Early Retirement scheme which has now gone the way of the Dodo. The one I caught may have been the last living specimen. So, of course, the first thing these good folks said was: "You lucky bastard!" This was usually followed pretty quickly by the second, which was: "How the hell did you manage it ? I didn't know you were anywhere near 50!" (this being the minimum, and possibly the only, qualifying condition; you didn't even have to be especially unwanted, although I was, and I made sartin' sure everyone knew it. I got into that College twelve years ago in the most casual way possible, by not applying for a job. But By Gar I wrote a humdinger of a letter of application to get out! One of my confreres, having put in a 'safety net' application for a job (one for which he was perfectly qualified, and for which there was no other applicant) in the new college (result of yet another merger) - as well as an application for a Crombie - was advised within three minutes of the time he was due to go in for the job interview, to withdraw, if he really wanted the Crombie. He withdrew, and got his Crombie. "What you needed, Derek", I said, "was a placard reading 'DON'T GIZZA JOB" ) So this second greeting I usually got, their eyes getting slittier in calculation of a possible fiddle, concerned how the hell I managed to meet the age qualification since they had still considered me the youthful (well - nearly) token Hippie I was when I arrived twelve years earlier, an image which, I grant, had faded a little, but which I'd never gotten around to basically revamping. "Oh, I can age fast when I want", I quipped jauntily, maintaining my good English sang-froid, but trying to imply that having my 50th birthday just thirty days before the qualifying date was something I had been cleverly planning for years. Number Three was the real stinker, though - "What will you do ?" This caught me unawares at first and gradually it dawned on me that it emanated from a kind of awed fascination, to which Stages One and Two had given way, of the sort that would be called forth by a chronic asthmatic who has announced that he is about to climb Everest, solo, in nothing but his underpants. For back of this seemingly innocent query - and not far back at that - was a deeply rooted conviction that anyone who left a job without something solid and very time-consuming to go straight to - like another job - was on the way to dusty death at supersonic speed. He would shrivel and dry up; his teeth would fall out and his skin would flake away from his bones, like at the end of all the best Hammer films, when Retribution catches up with the nine-hundred-year-old youngster who has been doing all those terrible - but rather interesting - things to all those nubile young wenches for the last hour and three-quarters. And the cause of this rather unpleasant malaise, it seemed, would be something called 'Boredom'. Now all this was never made explicit - too horrible to talk about doncha know; never discuss the stretch factor of a hempen rope with the condemned man - so I had to elicit it bit-by-bit, in sneaky fragments, here-and-there. And it put me in a bit of a quandary about answering that tremulous "What are you going to do ?" business. For one thing it had never occurred to me as a possibility that I would even have time to notice that I wasn't going to work any more, for the first five years or so. Clearly, a bit of smartass deflection was what was called for. The come-back I cobbled together started like: "Well, I've been thinking about this" ('Well thank goodness he's got that much sense at least' you could see flashing up on their internal screens), "and I thought that first of all I'd like to catch up on some of the things that have had to be neglected while I've been working" (Most sensible thing he's said in twelve years. He really has aged', as the inner screen

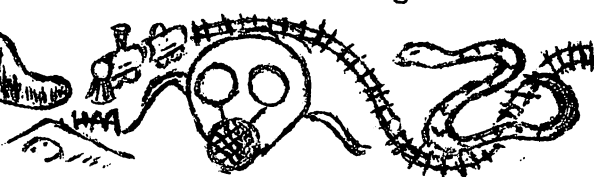
ran pictures of house-painting, gardening, fitting a sunshine-roof on the dog kennel) "I thought I'd try to be systematic about it and do things in chronological order" ('No doubt about it, prospects of retiring have really made him take things seriously at last. He's actually talking sense. A Life Crisis like this gets to them no matter how daft they were before') "So I'm going to start by sorting out my toy-cupboard" ('Uh ???'), "and then after that I want to try and catch up on my adolescence" ('Oh my God.....'). Naturally, they thought I wasn't serious about this and that I didn't realise the Awful Dangers - shudder, shudder -; or else (a moment's awful doubt before they convinced themselves 'No Way') I had landed an Oxford Professorship and wasn't going to let on to them!!

Well the truth is, although I made up that answer in self-defence and double-quick time, I was, of course, quite serious. That toy-cupboard has been a real bastard for a long time now; every time you go for a gun or a game of 'Go', a wind-up railway engine falls on your foot and table-tennis balls roll all over the floor. Try and get at a model excavator or a toy spaceship and you are likely to be buried in an avalanche of Lego or Meccano. The Awful Dangers are there alright, but maybe not just the sort my fellow lecturers were visualising, and I certainly had it in mind to do something about them. But not just yet a while. Yes, indeed, sometime before getting on with my Ph.D. research, but there were other things to come first. I was both more and less serious than I seemed.

Then, just the other night after we got back from the pub, Hazel asked to borrow my big, black, jumpy spider to fill a few lively moments in her next morning's infant class, I went up to look for it with all the fine co-ordination that too many pints of Tetleys brings, and the Meccano, the Lego, the spaceships, the table-tennis balls, the gas-masks (Er - yes - it's a slightly less than 100% logical toy-cupboard), the soldiers, the dinosaurs, fell all over me and rolled all across the floor and over these fanzines which had already been waiting months for a letter-of-comment. And it turned out I didn't have the goddamned spider any more anyway!



So - this piece isn't about retirement or anything of that sort, it's all about my toy-cupboard, which, for the last three days I have been resorting into exquisite order. Everything is now neatly boxed, and labelled, and sectionalised. Anomalies have been ironed out (I'm not yet sure about the gas masks though) - guns have finally been displaced from a stationery drawer and relocated in the toy-cupboard, while Phenobarbitone tablets and Amphetamine medicine are no longer regarded as childish playthings and have made their way to the medical drawer. And I've fulfilled the first part of that solemn oath I swore to my former colleagues. Now how'd that nex' bit go ?





IS THIS WHAT THEY MEAN BY A 'TRANSACTIONAL RELATIONSHIP'?:

Hazel has been teaching yoga (hatha, relaxation, pranayama, some meditation) for about eleven years now. Along the way I got roped in to give some talks on the 'philosophy' behind yoga.

Two, three years back I bumped up against fandom again, after twenty years. Within a short time Hazel produced a few illos for fanzines, and then a piece of writing.

Now, I get requests to go off and talk at yoga seminars, and Hazel gets requests for fan articles and illos. Who's running this show, is what I want to know.

BUT THE CULTURE SHOCK IS STILL PRETTY SHOCKING:

I find, however, that I do not groove naturally to the ethos of many of these yoga occasions. I confess to getting the shivers when I open a programme and see that what we are, allegedly, in for is 'A Weekend of Calm and Contentment' - or 'Peace and Placidity' - or 'Wholeness and Harmony'. "I wish they'd let me organise the theme for them one time", I growl to Hazel, "How do you think they'd go for 'A Weekend of Fucking and Fighting'?"

"Well", she says, "If the yoga people didn't like it, maybe you could sell the idea to the Viking Society."

BUT 'TOLERANCE AND TOGETHERNESS' IS OK:

Vincent Rylance runs from Rochdale an organisation called 'Yoga Society International' (Stop laughing; we haven't got there yet - and anyway the back streets of Lancashire are filled with 'Professors' of this, that and the other from Ferret-Fancying (take it how you will) to the Deadly Art of Origami). 'Bringing Yoga to the World' proclaims the modest masthead of his magazine. Latest reports are that he is bouncing - boing, boing, boing - from his set-up anyone who gets 'too Indian' in their approach. Internationalism is all very well, but you don't want it extending too far the other side of Bury. Not in something like yoga. Hell, no.

THE SPISH RAN AWAY WITH THE DOONERISM:

Back in those Fabulous Fannish Fifties, which were a Golden Age, A Very Eden and a Beacon to all subsequent fannish ages, there fanned a fan of such stature that he would make 80½ times any of the piddling little fans of today (but, of course, since this was the Fabulous Fannish Fifties, He Was Not Alone; there were dozens and dozens and dozens of Fabulous Fans of equal stature\*). Dean Grennell was his name and he published a zine called Grue which was so immaculate that if all the puling, decadent Morlocks who pass for fans today banded together they couldn't even produce anything to match one of Grue's 'Contents Pages' (Or did you know all this already? God, it's hard work being a BAFF some days!)

One issue of Grue, Dean came up with a silly pastime which got its hooks into me again a few months back. I publish the results in the hope that the same will happen to you. Let me know.

(\*In case you took any of that seriously, that bit is an out-and-out lie.)

Dean Grennell's original examples:

Putton - what some people are a, for glunishment

Nins - what some people are on, and peedles

A couple of Hazel's recent efforts:

Migh - what some people are, and highty  
No+r - what many are under a Conservative Government, and peedy  
Freace - what people fight for, and peedom

And a few of mine:

Good - what some video 'nasties' show, and bluts  
Gead - what some ex-people are, and done  
Park - what it sometimes is at night, as ditch  
Lay - what Fandom is a, of Wife (!)  
Pory - what every sticture tells  
Stits - what things go in, and farts  
The Nong - that which has a luminous Dose (or, perhaps more to the modern taste:  
The Dose - that which has a luminous Nong )  
Foot - that which is sometimes on the other boot  
Dine - what things very occasionally are, and fandy  
Haint - the kind of feart that never won lair fady  
Chalk - what some twins are as alike as, and cheese  
Pick - what you are if you don't understand all this, as thigshit

AND THEN THE TIME RAN AWAY WITH THE SPOON:

I see I have a note, among many, saying: "Keeping a camping-style knife, fork and spoon set in my study. Is this a trifle eccentric?" In common with the many, this note is now way out of date. I now have three such sets in the study.

And a De-Luxe set in the car - De-Luxe, that is, if you judge by the number of gadgets it features - scissors, saw, can-openers, bottle-opener, etc., as well as the basic knife, fork and spoon; not so De-Luxe if you judge by its functionality. Quite apart from the propensity of most of the items to behave more like rubber than steel whenever they meet their destined target, it seems it also suffers from a basic design fault. Harold, elderly gas-meter reader and champion Skipton ale-shifter, shook his head sadly after inspecting this item one night in the pub: "Nay, lad", he said, "That's no good. You want t'bottle opener on t'outside where you can get to it fast."

GREAT VENUE FOR A EUROCON:

"After making their way there ((the National Festival at Ozora in Western Hungary)) through the night, they went to Mass, met together and, after introducing themselves briefly, beat each other to death."

PEOPLE OF THE PUSZTA - Gyula Illyes

BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS :

I would like to believe that Rot has no readers so plebeian, so lumpen even, that they have failed to add to their collections a copy of COMIC TONES IN SCIENCE FICTION: The Art of Compromise with Nature by Donald M. Hassler at only £20.50 for 168 pages from Greenwood Press.

I only hope they still had enough left over to secure also, this time from Yale University Press, Terence Parsons' essential little guidebook, NONEXISTENT OBJECTS. Let me whet your appetite further: "Since Russell's famous article 'On Denoting', the idea that there might be such things as nonexistent objects has been presumed to be nothing more than a logical or linguistic mistake. Parsons revives the older tradition of taking such objects at face value." ("When did you last take a nonexistent object at face value, hmm?")



## GETTING KNOTTED

The Wages of  
Living in Sin:

Back in the days of High Hippiedom there was current a rather fine phrase for those situations which, had you not been a tolerant, smiling, easy-going hippie, you would have called a Real Bastard. It was - 'A Learning Experience'. I get a lot of these Learning Experiences. In fact, it's a rare day when I am not reminded several times that Life Itself is a Learning Experience. A recent avalanche of fannish weddings, which was followed by a tsunami of fannish marriages and climaxed in a stampede of fannish nuptials triggered off one more of these endlessly fascinating Learning Experiences. What I learned is why, despite lurking around on this rather unprepossessing planet for 50 odd years, I had become neither the editor of The Times nor a Captain of Industry. I am a dumb-o. (I'll tell you this about Learning Experiences; they do get sort of boring after a while. Why can't I learn something new from them ? Why always the same lesson, eh ?)

The way it came out was that, reading of one of these fannish splicings, I thought: "Oh, yes, Hazel and I did that a few months ago". ('Did that' will suffice, I believe, to indicate rough equivalence. Although the external differences between one Registry Office wedding and another are not, I dare hazard, legion, I wouldn't have you feel that I am claiming identity of high degree. Just a kind of comradely general similarity.) Three mugs of coffee later, with stunning acerbity, I thought: "Shit, if I'd remembered to write to Ansible about it at the time I could have gotten a free issue added to my sub". Sometime in the next hour or two I thought: "Twenty-one quid down the drain on that job. That wasn't too clever". Here Starteth The Lesson For Today.

It wasn't the actual Doing of It that bugged me unduly. We both managed to listen fairly politely to what was said at us (though I couldn't tell you a word of it now), to mutter adequately what was wanted from us, not to giggle (much) and to forget the whole thing by that evening. It was just that I was having a little difficulty ignoring the fact that, after living together for ten years, actually paying out an extra twenty-one quid for a Special Licence or whatever-in-Hell they're called so that we could get hitched three days later did seem to bespeak a slight lack of careful forethought and intelligent planning on my part. Even the fact that I had an excuse of sorts didn't help much, but I'll tell you about it anyway, in case it eases the ache a little.

Along about the end of 1983 (December 31st, to be reasonably precise), when I was doing nothing special aged fifty and a quarter, Early Retirement snuck up on me. This in itself was in no way a matter of remark since everything in Creation - even relatively predictable things like morning, seasons of the year, Christmas and being drunk again - always sneaks up on me. If The Universe is simple-minded enough to be amused by a game like that, I'm not going to bother complaining. As a result of this, some good people who have persuaded The Universe to take them more seriously than I have, started to tell me things For My Own Good. One of these things - roughly translated - was that if one chilly morn I were suddenly to be gone with the wind (or even just with acute indigestion), Hazel, as a Scarlet Woman, would not get the Widow's Mite that she might if she were a Proper Wife. Not only that, but even if she made the transformation from a S.W. to a P.W. after I'd retired she'd only get half of what she'd get if the metamorphosis took place before that Crowd Stopping Event. Neither sum, in fact, would ransom even a palace loo-lady, let alone a Prince, but I so rarely realise any facts at all that are to my financial advantage that on the few occasions when I do I'm a real hellion. Hence the Special Licence and whatall.

Well, that's my excuse. I warned you it wasn't much. But I see the cynical smile on some faces that suggests that, having been flang on the scrapheap with a measly five grand a year just for staying home and keeping out of everybody's hair (another of my life-patterns sticking its bare bones out of the tattered fabric of the Cosmos like the ribs of a starving donkey; as a kid I

used to get paid my share of the carol-singing kitty just for keeping my mouth shut) - that, being thus circumstanced, then, I realised it would be no bad deal to get bound-up legal like with this zotzy glamorous young meal-ticket. Hell, the day I get smart enough to think of things like that I'll go out and land myself a plummy sinecure anyway like, say, science-fiction editor for Gollancz or Professor of Medieval Literature.

The actual event - if such a description does not rack the vocabulary beyond all endurance - took place at 10 o'clock of a cheerless Saturday morn. 10 o'clock of a morn being already cheerless anyway, the mathematically minded among you will have already divined that 10 o'clock of a cheerless morn is doubly cheerless. The worst thing about 10 o'clock of a morn - here in Yorkshire, at least - is that there is still an hour to go before 11 o'clock (I can see how a mathematical mind stands you in good stead at times) which is, of course, Opening Time.

I suppose the only good thing about it is that we'd have been even more dragged and fragged if we'd been on stage an hour later and realised we were wasting good drinking time on something like getting wed. Which was one of the (quite well spaced-out) things going through my mind as we sat in the car that cold and (did I mention?) cheerless morn, waiting for the kick-off. Another one was about how, the first time I'd gotten married, Chuck Harris took up a collection among fannish well-wishers and I still have the black ceramic dinosaur which was one of the things we bought with the money. This time around no one had time to collect anything. Not even me. Not even my wits. I made up for it, however, by feeling like a dinosaur, which involved a close-to-zero amount of role-playing.

One of my favourite lines in the whole of English literature occurs in the Anglo-Saxon poem, 'The Battle of Maldon'. Maybe you know the setting. A band of Vikings land on an island in the tidal river Blackwater in Essex, intent upon the usual things which Vikings seem to have been intent on ("Plunder the valuables, kill the men and rape the women. And if you get it wrong one more time Thorgeir Grimsson we're changing your name to Clarence.") An Anglo-Saxon force musters on the mainland bank opposite and, the tide flowing too strongly between for them to get at each other, they content themselves with hurling across the water the most blood-curdling threats, insults and imprecations. Then comes that lovely line - "The tide went out". Well, it felt a bit like that when the doors of the Registry Office finally opened.

We trooped inside to, as you might say, meet our match.

I've mentioned elsewhere that in Yorkshire most of the stuff to do with dying is left to the womenfolk, except the actual lugging around of the carcasses of course, and the same is true of marrying. The two pleasant elderly ladies who landed us made a commendable stab at 'giving us a Bit of a Do', as we say in this part of the world, and did their best to inject some Significance into those ten minutes. They stopped short of actually waving pictures of Happy Marriage under our noses though, and even seemed slightly relieved once they realised we didn't want a Bit of a Do and wouldn't be offended if they gabbled through their jazz at twice the Standard Speed and half the Standard Sonorousness and scarpered off sharply for an extra cup of tea before doing the next lot.

Hazel and I tried not to look at each other so as not to hurt anyone's feelings by submerging the whole shennannigans in a lava-flow of laughter, and attempted, instead, to look as though we were waiting to pay the rates and had ended up in the wrong queue. Brother Clive (blood brother, not ecclesiastical brother, that is) sat, or rather stood, out the whole business with the unwavering stoicism of one who knows for sure that all the endless aeons of the present universe are no more than a rather irksome endurance-test specially set up for him alone. Sister-in-law Edwina struggled, with reasonably quiet desperation, some interesting contortions, and no success, to tug off her own wedding-ring - not as any sort of Grand Symbolic Gesture but to lend to Hazel if the Good Ladies who were still



saying things out front should refuse to proceed beyond a certain point in their enchantments without One Ring To Bind Them, and so leave us nuptially half-knotted. (They didn't.) Nine year old niece, Rachel, arch-realist, wandered around peering, with studied casualness, at flowers, books, papers, people, trying to figure out if this was another of my silly jokes or, incredible as it might seem, For Real.

Nobody threw anything at us, not even The Book, as we filed out and got into the car. With subtle forethought we had substituted for the usual tin-cans tied to the bumper a half-detached exhaust pipe that sounded like tin-cans tied to the bumper, and this subtlety was carried through into the notices attached to the car. Forsaking the obligatory 'Just Married' and 'They've Done It At Last' and 'Tonight's The Night' and so on, ours announced to all and sundry 'Skoda Super Estelle' and 'Support The Lifeboats'.

The temperature was still sub-Siberian and would be no better at home since the central heating fuel-pump had packed up. Getting a replacement for the sheared brass screw-fitting was, in fact, the morning's really important business. Back in the car Hazel said, "I suppose you'll be going off to look for a screw now?"

"Well, I dunno", I said uncertainly, "That lady in there said something about 'to the exclusion of all others' "

I settled instead for several pints of Boddingtons beautiful Bitter, a few games of pool and double pie-and-peas.

A week later Hazel remembered to tell her mother. She, for some reason, thought it was hilarious. I'm certainly glad it amused somebody, but even so twenty one quid seems a high price to pay for one mediocre joke. I reckon that represented about thirty-five pints of Boddingtons at the time.

Sometimes the cost of being a dumbo gets out of all proportion to the perks. And I didn't get that screw for another three days either.

YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL!: "Brighton bomb repercussions  
In the wake of the Brighton bomb attack, Barnoldswick Civic Hall was searched for bombs with  
"Sniffer" dogs last Friday..." (Craven Herald & Pioneer, Skipton).

THE MISSING BAFF: One fan-face we are not likely to see re-appearing among the  
A Fannish Tragedy recent crop of BAFFS (Born Again Fifties Fans) is that of  
of Olden Times: Dennis Nigel Quinn. When he gaffiated, after ten years of  
brilliant letter-writing to every major fanzine of his day,  
his disappointment with fandom went too deep to be assuaged in a mere twenty-five years. I don't suppose many of you have even heard of Dennis and that is the real nub of the tragedy. The receipt of one of those scintillatingly witty letters, characteristically signed with Dennis' initials, was the great joy - and, in one sense, also the frustration - of every fanned, and, if anything, his letters got better and better throughout his fan career. Desperation, probably. For while Dennis was WAHFD no less than four hundred and eighty-six times not a single one of those legendary letters ever got into print.

---

"Beam when you beam me up, Scaddy !"

---

HAVEN'T WE MET SOMEWHERE "Sir, I hope the day will never arrive when I shall  
BEFORE - AND SINCE ? neither be the object of calumny or ridicule for  
then I shall be neglected and forgotten"-Dr Johnson.

OK, Sammy, baby, you got your wish. Quite apart from setting a bad example to people, we can all think of and wish we couldn't, if that quotation is accurate (I haven't checked the original text), your grammar stinks. That keep you happy till I think of something worse ?

HALLOWEEN HORRORS 1984! There has, it seems, been an update among the undead,  
a coup d'etat in the old Grimoire. The four hundred

year old vampires have taken early retirement and the Headless Horrors, voluntary severance. A new Bete Noire, covered in coal-dust, sits on the Bogey-throne to-night. I open the door this Hallows eve to find three youngsters thrashing about under a white sheet in a ghostly gestalt, more tangled than terrifying. But the real horror is yet to come. Keeping his head when all about him are losing theirs the middle boy gives an eerie muffled shout: "I'm Arthur Scargill!"

#### OVER THE SYMMETRY WHORL:

I didn't realise at the time that what I was caught up in was a descent into the maelstrom (or, as I put it in one of my, mercifully very rare, attempts at writing science-fiction, 'being whirled away down the electron vortex of time'. Days when I don't have much to do I still occasionally sit and wonder what the hell that meant.) I suppose it had never occurred to me before that maelstroms might sidle up to one quietly like city-centre bums selling 'Old Moore's Almanac'.

I forgive myself, with uncharacteristic grace, for failing to realise, as soon as the 1980s nuclear war scare started to gain ground, that what was coming up was a cosmic spiral of correspondences linking 1983 to 1963 and Rot 5. But the connection was there to be seen had I thought to look. One thing that war-scares always generate, of course, is peace-protest on the part of those incomprehensible 'wets' who would rather stay alive than die rather nastily. Greenham Common and a rash of demonstrations, 'Die-Ins' and the like in 1983. And in 1963? A letter from Dick Ellington in Rot 5: "We're engaging right now in a pacifist demonstration bit, but, being the type of people we are, are foregoing the usual prayer vigils (I'd look kind of silly at one of them anyway), peace marches and such like and instead we will be publicly demonstrating, probably in the streets of Berkely, the new King Kong missile defense system. The King Kong missile is made of one old nose cone, a frame of cardboard painted with aluminium paint, fins, a little red line and a buzzer, controlled by a big red button, labelled aptly enough, Big Red Panic Button. The point of the leaflet is that the U.S. and Russia must both be forced to adopt the King Kong missile to replace all existing types of missiles. Then, if some neurotic type gets goosed by a flight of geese on radar he can wham down on the buzzer button and the buzzer will buzz, lights will go off and we might even arrange a small explosion like a skyrocket or something to add realism, but nothing flies off and blows up anybody's real estate and the savings in tax dollars will, of course, be fantastic".

By contrast the years between 1963 and 1983 were peaceful and unhysterical and the mushroom clouds seemed to have parted for a while. But, as I say, I am not self-castigating too vigorously about failing to realise, as soon as the war and peace movements gained momentum, that we were on a spiral of that much-loved old electron-vortex of time that would turn out to have some surprisingly close correspondences with that of the early 60s and would insist on my re-emerging onto the fannish playground and putting out another Rot to make the mirror-image even more exact. But I should have started to cotton on when the chain-letter arrived. In Rot 5 I wrote of a chain-letter I'd received which, apart from being a little literary masterpiece, promised me untold riches (like what General Atkins and General Patton had 'recieved'; it didn't mention if I had to enlist to get mine) if I did all the right things. (I didn't. Didn't get no fortune neither. "See, that proves that chain-letters work!") "Trust in the Lord with all they heart; in all they ways acknowledge Him, and He will directy th@y path" was a sample of the style. Well, I don't believe I've ever 'recieved' a chain-letter since. Until February 1983. Then, suddenly, one arrived, inviting me to write to six people on the included list saying "We want peace in this world". I concluded that, surprisingly, there was a touching depth of naivete abroad in 1983 that overshadowed even that of 1963, but I still failed to see that this was one small smidgin of a Mighty Universal Blueprint clutched in the paw of The Great Architect of the Cosmos. Silly me.

Things started to speed up. Only a few months earlier I'd finally sold the old rusted Gestetner of my fannish past to a lady from the Sally Army. Then Hazel got made Regional Editor of a Yaga newsletter and suddenly we once again had a Gestetner in the house. And I still didn't twig! I could kick myself in retrospect if only I could get my foot up that far. Other fans who hadn't been around since the 50s or early 60s started to reappear. At the time of Rot 5 I had just lost my OMPA membership. In 1983 I was invited to join the fledgling Frank's APA. Then I happened to read William Lindsay Gresham's fine novel, NIGHT-MARE ALLEY, and that re-awakened my interest in carny life, dormant since the early 60s when I'd been delighted by Gresham's MONSTER MIDWAY and Dan Mannix's MEMOIRS OF A SWORD SWALLOWER. Around the same time, browsing through the books in the Clitheroe Oxfam, I came across a copy of Arthur C. Clarke's CHILDHOOD'S END - in the Child Psychology section. (Rot 5 had an account of how, browsing through Beets library, I had come across, in the 'NON-FICTION: TRAVEL' section, a copy of A.E. van Vogt's VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE.) Even I cotton on eventually if I get hit over the head often enough with something as plain as the nose on a pikestaff. Something was trying to tell me something.

Reviewing all the available data ("Duh - daw -uh - yuh mean..? - crikey - uh -" is the sort of quietly efficient noise made by my internal computer) I knew what I had to do. I had to pub my ish. Yes - even the legendary, lost Rot 6. And I had to make it as close a clone as maybe of Rot 5. This threw up a couple of slight problems. While I could probably manage most of the stuff myself I was clearly going to need replacement parts for the doyen Doc Weir and the very fine fanne humourist, Irene Potter. I won't weary you with an account of the months of patient research and information-sifting which finally revealed Harry Turner and Linda Pickersgill as the most perfect counterparts. Negotiations were initiated and were proceeding well when I was laid low by a sudden bout of that virulent honesty which attacks me from time to time. I let on to my two neo-contributors what had become of their palao-paradigms, adding that I was sure they were not at all superstitious and would dismiss the news with a shrug and a smile. (Doc Weir was dead before Rot 5 hit the newsstands, and Irene's fate was even worse. She had a nervous breakdown and dropped into the living death of the Jehovah's Witnesses. She is still there. And so is her daughter who has just married another Jehovah's Witness.) Harry wrote back to say he had given up all interest in fandom and taken up stamp-collecting and I never heard from Linda again.

Which is how I came to resurrect the Doc himself. I just hope the Great Architect of the Cosmos doesn't get too heavy-handed because I didn't manage to solve the Irene thing this time around. I done me best, mister, honest. It's all your fault, anyway, giving me this star-role in a play I haven't seen the script for. It feels more like a cement barrel than a symmetry whorl you've got me over. Just don't stick my feet in it and drop me down that electron-vortex of time for lousing up a little, is all I ask.

**PENITENT DREADFUL  
(A MEA-CULPAPER):**

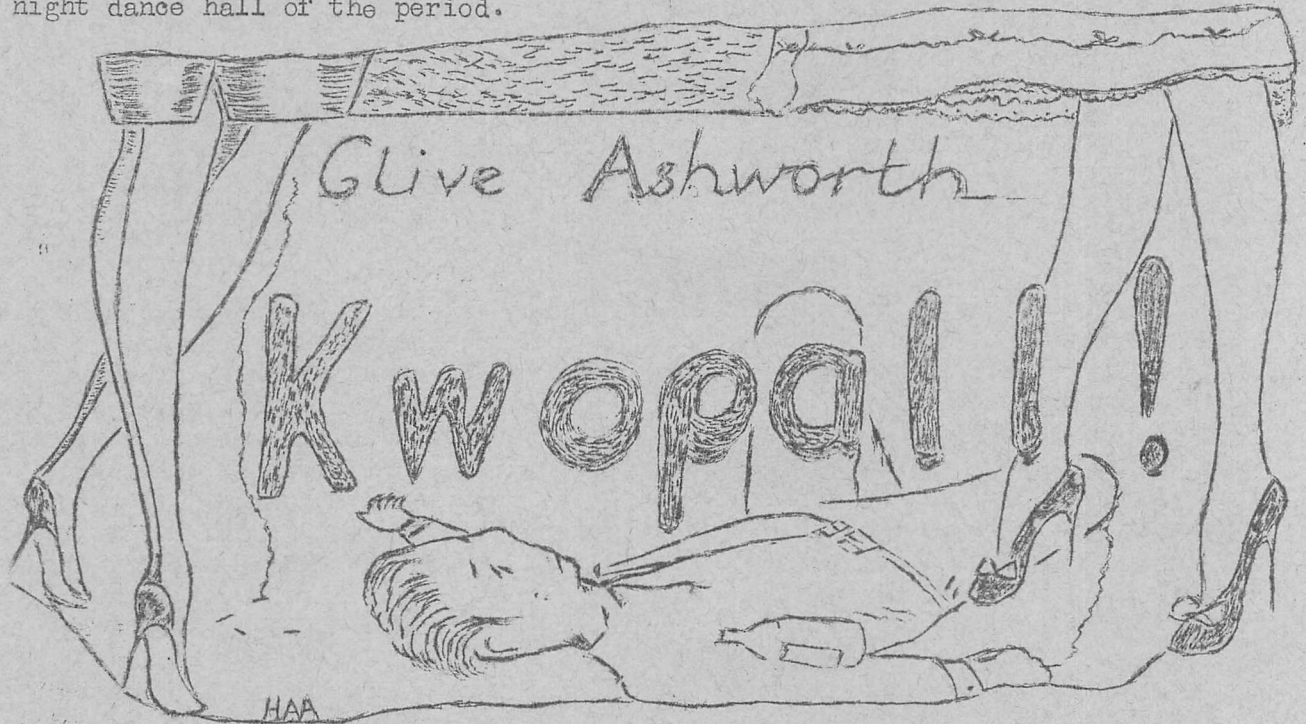
After giving the matter a quite unbelievable amount of staggeringly serious consideration I have come to the conclusion that Ken ("Gimme another sherry ash I've jusht poured thish one all over your besht tablecloth") Potter and Slickpex Artie Thompson are right about those Rot section headings. They do stink like unto a baker's dozen of flatulent jellyfish. Flatulent dead jellyfish. But what can any of us do about it, eh? We are all helpless pawns ground up in the never-ceasing maw of an indifferent Destiny along with a whole scad of minutely mangled metaphors. A state which, I am given to believe, is technically referred to as 'Tough shit'.

**(NEARLY)ALL (FAIRLY) HUMAN (HALF)  
LIFE IS (MORE-OR-LESS) THERE.....:**

What an issue! Marriage, retirement, death, resurrection (did I get the order right, I ask myself with my usual nail-biting incertitude?) What more do you want, already? Now for an encore, what I thought was...



I discovered the Kwopall, as we knew it, in the mid 1950's when I was a teenager, mentally, if not physically, spotty still. Its name, to all but the determinedly yobbish hobbledehoyes of my set, was the 'Co-operative Hall' and it was a Saturday night dance hall of the period.



My old diaries show me - a fact I note with amazement - that one actually had to queue in that era in the hopes of getting into the Kwop. If one arrived too late then it was a choice - either the Queens Hall, yet another dance palais, which was respectable and therefore, to us, insufferably dull and a blow to the ego, or 'Shuttsies', which was an out of town dance hall. In fact, it was on the frontiers (of Bradford, this is, where I frequented all of these cultural centres). 'Shuttsies' was known far and wide for the guaranteed nightly brawl, and policing there was about as strident as it is around a mining picket in the 80s; brawls would begin inside for no good reason (other than the desire of the resident 'Teds' to kick the living hell out of somebody), grow, erupt, take in six or seven policemen and a variety of screaming tarts (on a good night) and spread outside the hall and down the pavement for some several hundred yards like human lava. Myself and friends tried this a few times and noticed, eventually, that not only were there flying fists, feet, teeth, truncheons, obscenities, bras, knickers, helmets and so on but also knives, razors (much beloved by the yobs of the era), coshes, broken bottles, and we decided that such close contact with reality was, in the long term, undesirable.

We were all around sixteen, just having left or almost having left school. We were not Teds ('Teddy Boys'); gangs of whom roamed the streets in that period, not yet in search of the archetypal picnic, but looking to mindlessly destroy anyone or anything (provided, of course, the odds never fell below fifty to one). They were far more 'heavy' than today's mods, rockers, punks (who would look like members of a Puff the Magic Dragon fan club by comparison), partly because of the weight of their shoes and the width of their lapels. They reflected pretty accurately the mindless confusion so apparent in the 50s - so well epitomised by James Dean's maundering, murderous self-indulgence.

But we - we were just ordinary Bradfordian youth; simple Yorkshire lads

with simple nicknames like Big Eggo, Pobble, Bong ('Beano' readers with long memories will not be bemused), Top Coil, Erasmus and Harry the Knife and Stoop. With the ruthless logic common to all nicknames, Stoop went on to become a policeman, Top Coil got electrocuted and Harry the Knife came hunting for me with a razor.... We would assemble at a seedy pub in the city centre each Saturday night (no problem getting served since the youngest of us looked at least twelve) and order pints of a powerful brew known to us as 'bite 'is nose off' after a little incident involving a sexy 'bint', two rival suitors, a filthy fight and a partially severed nose. The landlord had no trouble interpreting "Eight pints - o'nose". (I haven't tried it in recent years but the reader will see instantly that it was the kind of beer CAMRA would call 'full-bodied').

Thus replete we would walk and stagger to the Kwop. I rush to stress that I never went for the dancing. I never went anywhere for the dancing, even to the school of dancing I attended for six months before aborting the mission suddenly, having crushed the feet of the proprietor's wife once too often. No, I went - as did 'me mates' - for those two essentials in every thriving cultural community of the world, sex and violence. The Kwop was good at providing both - or so we thought in those amazingly naive days. There were permutations, of course; some weeks it was sex and sex, others violence and violence and so on. But it never failed us on both counts in any one week. If one did not find a willing and desirable 'bint' then one could always find consolation in the obligatory punch-up, kick-up or throw-up which occurred every week, somewhere, in the Kwop.

The place itself was basic (or is that perhaps too grandiose a word?) - a ticket office, attached to a large policeman, a cloakroom, a standing-leering area, a small stage, a dance floor with chairs round the side; down some steps a cafe that made the British Rail cafeteria look like the Waldorf Astoria, up some stairs a balcony with seats where one could take ones chosen girl. Lights, moody music, crowds of people milling together, smoke, drunken yobs, coy girls - what fond memories of an era when, whenever real sensitivity tried to raise its head above the macho-mean, it got a knuckle sandwich. And yet - there were many of us groping for meaning, for profundity, for self identity, or just plain groping. The girls were sensual, teasing; tight sweaters, tight skirts, tight morals, tight mouths - provocative despite the obligatory 50s brush-off - "Oooh, I'll tell me mam over you!" As much enmeshed in their sexual image as were the strutting youths who walked around putting on the James Deans, the Marlon Brandos, the King Konga. On the dance floor the atmosphere was heavy; in the balcony, the petting was heavier. It was a place where crescendos of lust and passion could be instantly extinguished by the injudicious squash of a big toe; a place where coitus could be extremely interruptus when the screws (literal) fell out of the seats and tipped you both on to the mucky balcony floor. It was the home of smooch - which, as we all know, was (is, perhaps) a form of dancing where millions of sweating, steaming, lustful bodies cram together in the middle of a dance floor and gyrate slowly (they always went anti-clockwise at the Kwop for some reason I never discovered), whilst the hobbledoys and hobbledehirls indulged in passionate kissing and embracing (or at least what passed for such in the fifties). From an aerial view (name of, the balcony), the thing looked like a troop of soldier ants whose leader has been assassinated. But no one ever criticised my foxtrot at the Kwop and I found in this smooch the solution to my dancing problems, for it was actually possible on occasions to remove the feet entirely from the dance floor by dint of jamming an elbow in the ear of the guy behind and wrapping one's other arm round the girls neck in a snake-like grasp. This helped me enormously since, whenever I tried on a dance floor to do any thing more elaborate than stand up, my legs invariably ended up in convoluted spirals which would have been the admiration of a Persian mosque designer.



Alas, though, one always fell, the only compensation being that the process of stabilising one's return to earth involved grabbing the girl's blouse and - if it were a truly horrendous fall - ripping it off. Ah, what memories; I like to believe I smooched a more smoochy smooch than anyone had ever smooched before - I would do it all again, e'en now in the eighties - only I would insist on being equipped with oxygen tanks and snorkel before entering the floor.

In this frenzy of lust came, of course, the occasional dispute over territory -- the territory was always the body of some beguiling girl whom two youths wished to paw and possess. She, poor creature of history, trapped in the fifties, did not realise that she was more than a mere sex object to be presented to the winner (or so one thought) and so she would stand helplessly by while they slogged it out. When one youth lay unconscious and bashed to the middle of next week, the submissive creature would, more often than not, find a sudden fifth-gear autonomy and ask the triumphant youth to desist from pressing his attentions - usually along the lines of "Get stuffed, you greasy little creep or I'll stuff yer cosh up yer nosehole". Often too, these localised fights would develop spontaneously, like bush fire it seemed, into huge total brawls where everyone smashed the person next to, behind or on top of them - or someone else. Kick, thump, bite, strangle, gouge; rules were extremely catholic and were once concisely expressed by Harry the Knife - "Destroy the bastards". If you happened to be in the balcony with a half-naked girl at the time of one of these outbreaks you could, to avoid disappointment, do your bit for Queen and country by throwing chairs down on the brawlers below, or even, in extremity, throwing the half-naked girl down on the brawlers below. The departure of chairs made more room for oneself and aforesaid half-naked girl on the floor anyway and, in this manner, one could get ones moneysworth from both worlds. The brawls were rarely serious but were enormously stimulating. I still recall the sheer physical thrill of thumping an opponent with my girlfriend's face. The brawls did not detract from the evening either, and were as much expected as the police raids, though the two were carefully timed so as not to upstage each other.

As I said, I was teenage at the time and like all the other teenagers, unsure. But we all had to pedal images (so what has changed?), to keep the macho flag flying, to feel we knew who we were. So, we all had images. I saw myself as a cross between John Wayne, James Dean and Wittgenstein. The conceptual difficulties involved in this hybrid didn't seem to strike me. When I entered the place and strode up to the wilting 'bint' I wanted, I was every inch Rooster Coburn about to give Ned Pepper his final corouppance; if I found a girl hard to get, James would start to muscle in on Big Leggy - the writhing eyes, the incoherent speech, the sweaty brow (though I realise now that excess of 'bite 'is nose off' was really the cause of these things) enchanted her. Having got her attention, I would come on strong with the Wittgenstein sweet-talk. "Ooo, you are deep, you - you're always thinking - you remind me of Alan Ladd" was a typical response. Fortunately for my ego, I held the Norman Wisdom image in reserve and could, at a moment's notice, boot out the three big-leaguers, becoming the simple, good-natured, Yorkshire fool. It was an image I sustained with far less frisson to the soul.

The Kwop has gone now - razed to the ground these many years - so have the Teds and the coshes. Like so much else from the fifties and sixties, gone without trace, with less remains than a Viking burial site; the bints grandmas, the youths managers or recidivists. Yet the springs of the Kwop, its moving principle, doesn't change; you have to walk forward just to stand still.



"That's not professional jealousy, that's  
trade criticism"

"She says things like 'Sit on the floor' -  
and I can't. I tried it and I fell over"

"I think people were taking being cheerful seriously"

"I found FANZINES IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE very relaxing"

"I think I've got the wrong shape  
of spoon for this conversation"

"...and generally giving them a bit of  
overkill with the Grandmother Stuff"

"Oh yes, Ted White can write his way out of a paper-bag;  
he just writes so much the bag eventually bursts"

"Swami Paramatmananda; I usually call her Dottie"

"We go through pine tables like there's  
no tomorrow"

"Crifanac! And let slip the dogs of Warhoon!"

"Sledged  
Polacks  
to you  
mate!"

"It looked like they all had  
their faces set on 'Stun'."

"I'm not one of those people who has to strain  
to make an effort to make an impression"

"You're still inhabiting the 50s that's your  
trouble - but at least there should be plenty  
of room there by now"

Those lighting a brief span of their dismal road to dusty death by having gibbered  
thus-and-thus within hearing of my occasionally voracious notebook include: All the  
Ashworths; Vince Clarke; Nellie Dalton; Pete Lyon; Tom Shippey; Anne West; D. West; Brenda  
Wood.

Doc Weir was a fan of unusual type. When he appeared on the fannish scene in the late 50s he was already elderly, a distinguished looking gnome of a Cheltenham school-master not so many years from retiring age. Surprisingly, perhaps, he took to the fannish scene, with its bias towards a much younger age-group, like a Doc to an apple-free diet. He showed prodigious energy and was prolific with his time and with articles and letters-of-comment, always ready to oblige an importunate fanned.

But no unmitigated eulogy ever tells the full story and I suspect that a red glow in the evening sky of memory means one is wearing rose-tinted retrospectacles. Doc had some annoying habits. Knowing a hell of a lot about almost everything under the sun was one of them. Not being prepared to pretend he didn't was another. So was being right about most things. And a great capacity for accuracy and precision, with its unbearable twin, the expectation of the same in others. Would it surprise you to learn that some thought him pedantic - dogmatic - self-satisfied even? I suppose around the time he master-minded a science-fiction platform quiz at the 1960 convention for us three TAFF candidates - myself, Eric Bentcliffe, Sandy Sanderson - which gave me a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate in public that I knew little if anything about s-f and was far too shudderingly shy to get it out even if I had, I would probably have been among the front-runners with a burning brand if anyone had suggested burning Doc at the stake.

I'm glad we didn't, though. Not only would I have missed his article for Rot 4, 'Villainy, Where Art Thou?', in which he regretted the dearth of really black-hearted, dastardly villains in latter day science-fiction, I would have missed six months of what, despite over 30 years age difference, was to me some of the most fascinating correspondence I had ever had with anyone. This took place during the latter half of 1960. In January 1961 Doc died after several weeks of illness which started with a very severe attack of his old complaint, asthma, early in the December.

Re-reading his letters again recently it seemed nonsensical not to share them. What follows, then, is the first instalment of selections from my correspondence with Doc Weir. Ecce homo - or some part of him. Judge him now you will, if judging be your thing.

For myself, I found the richness and diversity in these letters made editing them a daunting task. I struggled for an hour or two to separate them, paragraph by paragraph, in terms of subject matter before concluding that the multiplicity of topics touched upon, and their interfusion, made that impractical. What you have, then, are selections from whole letters, in chronological order. Extracts from my replies, where these are necessary to provide context or continuity, are in smaller Elite typeface set to a slightly wider measure.

DOC WEIR



1st June, 1960.

Arthur R. Weir, D.Sc.  
Primrose Cottage,  
Westonbirt Village,  
Nr. Tisbury, Glos.

Dear Mal,

Your reading looks interesting — are you reading Pindar and Plato in the original, by the way — if not, whose translation? If you can read Greek, you are one up on me; I got Latin knocked into me so solidly that I can read it for pleasure, but not Greek. Who is the sword swallower whose memoirs you're reading — Cinquevalli? Under the circumstances, assuming that copies of THE LORD OF THE RINGS are within easy reach, I should give them preference over Zen in the Art of Archery, and the Stream of Consciousness novel. Most people's consciousness is such a murky stream, anyway! And, ~~for~~ Zen or not I've never known a Japanese archer that was worth a damn — that's why they were so scared of the Tartars, who were archers really worth their salt.

I confess to an unholy curiosity as to how the name "Mal." came into being — I'm not prepared to believe that anyone christened you Malvolio! Was it "Mallett" after the articulated railway locomotive bloke, Malversation, Mal à propos, Miching Mallecho, Mallarkey, or the date in the Aztec omen-calendar "Ce Mallinalli"? I hope not, since it was a very evil-omened date; if you've read Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" you may remember it was the name of Cortez' Aztec mistress and inter-preter, whom his men called Marina.

Another piece of reading worth having; if you've read "Exploration Fawcett" (now available as a paper-back) look out for "Ruins in the Sky" by Brian Fawcett, which describes how he set out to explore by aeroplane in hopes of finding the ruined cities that his father lost his life trying to find — and, in a sense, he did find 'em! By the way, I've met Fawcett — the original Colonel, I mean — which gives you a clue to my vast age compared with most of these infants who read S-F and run fan mags! Eheu fugaces! (!)

*With thanks & all good wishes*

*Ar.*

3rd June 1960

Meet a second-generation Fawcett-meeter! I have met Brian Fawcett. He gave a talk in Leeds about three or four years ago, shortly after he had returned from a trip to South America, and when I met him assured me that his book would be out in about nine months. He was optimistic by something over a year as it turned out, but even so I still haven't got around to reading it. Which is a pity since EXPLORATION FAWCETT was one of the best books on South America I have read. Am I correct in thinking that Fawcett only became really famous after he disappeared? It always seemed to me that a lot of wishful fantasy surrounds the interest in his disappearance, probably because he was searching for lost cities. In the circumstances in which he disappeared I have always thought failure to survive — even without leaving any definite trace — rather more likely than survival.



'Mal' originated simply as a shortened version of 'Malcolm'; sorry to be so prosaic after all. I copied the abbreviation from a speedway rider (he was never very good either!) in my teenage days when I used to indulge in the same sport only on a pedal cycle instead of a motor-cycle. (And there was a 'parallel fandom' if ever I saw one). I simply carried it over into my fannish aspect because by then I had come to like the abbreviation better than the full name, which always seemed to me to carry with it echoes of my childhood. I don't mean I was trying to 'escape' from my childhood, but rather that 'Malcolm' always seemed to me then to be a little boy's name - as indeed it had been in my case. Sheila, incidentally, hates the abbreviation.

You are so right about most people's consciousness being a murky stream; perhaps that is why I have got stuck when only a third of the way through the book. The sword-swallower was Dan Mannix whose book *THE MEMOIRS OF A SWORD-SWALLOWER* was published over here a little while ago by Panther books and is well worth reading. I tracked it down deliberately just recently, having suddenly cultivated an interest in carnivals, watering a seed left in my mind years ago by Theodore Sturgeon's *THE DREAMING JEWELS*, with William Lindsay Gresham's *MONSTER MIDWAY*. Another fascinating volume.

I finished *ZEN IN THE ART OF ARCHERY* but shall gleefully pass on your comments on Japanese archers to a friend of mine who runs a bookshop and insists he is a Zen Buddhist. He holds Zen-trained warriors to be invincible and unmatched.

Pindar and Plato I am reading in translation, alas. I once set out to teach myself Greek but never carried it through. It is one of the things I would dearly like to do. (Learning Sanskrit is another), but doubt if I ever shall now. The seed of hope is still there, though. Pindar I am reading in Richmond Lattimore's modern (and, in my opinion, excellent) translation, and Plato in Hugh Rednack's (Penguin) translation, which also appeals to me. I can get along quite amiably with a lot of translators, there being only two so far whom I wholeheartedly loathe. One is the Victorian Hookham Frere who 'translated' Aristophanes (in my book he no more than annotated Aristophanes - and in a particularly stuffy way at that), and the other is W.H.D. Rouse whose translations seem to be favoured in the States, judging from the fact that they are used in the Mentor series. What he has done to Homer I shudder to think, but what he has done to Plato I just cannot conceive. I think one of the happiest marriages of recent times between author (Greek author, that is) and translator, is that of Dudley Fitts and Aristophanes. I note that his *LYSISTRATA* has just been published by Faber in their paper-back series for about 5/-; a pleasing idea, even though I personally would have chosen *THE BIRDS* ahead of that.

30th June, 1960

I'm glad you liked the article on "VILLAINS" since I got quite a lot of amusement out of writing it. As regards being able to sit down and write it - well, I was a professional translator for three years of my life, and a good deal of the work I had to do during that time was more or less journalistic work, so I am more used than some of you may be to having to sit down and turn out something on a given theme at the drop of a hat, so to speak! Also I speak other languages besides my own, which is very good for making one "frame words" quickly, since no two languages assume that the speaker "thinks" in exactly the same way.

I'm glad you've met Brian Fawcett - since you've heard him lecture on the subject, you probably know more about his explorations in his father's footsteps than I, who have merely read his book. It's almost a pity you didn't give me your account of him in verse, so that, since you claim to be a "second-generation Fawcett master" I could have got back with something about in

what way it might be meeter to meter the metre of the meeter — or something like that ! As I last met his father when I myself was about eight years old, I can't say that I remember him very well — chiefly his height, his completely bald head and his eyes.

You are quite right, by the way, Fawcett only became generally famous after he had disappeared, though people "in the know" knew him as a well-qualified explorer of uncharted countries, and a very fine surveyor thereof for map-making purposes. It is, I think, no secret that Conan Doyle's "Lord John Roxton" the "South Americomaniac" was to some extent drawn from Fawcett, for whom Doyle had a great liking, though Roxton's physical appearance and manner of speaking were both drawn largely from Doyle's brother-in-law, Malcolm Leckie.

I'm Glad, too, to find someone else who likes Sturgeon's DREAMING JEWELS ; I'm very fond of E PLURIBUS UNICORN, too.

I still stick to my opinion about Japanese archers — but I've encountered some Zen swordsmen ( and the sword is the Japanese weapon, par excellence ! ) who were very good indeed, though not unbeatable ; they were too good for me ( my weapon is the épée, not the edged sword ! ) but I've seen them beaten both by non-Zen Japs, and by British swordsmen.

I can well imagine Hookham Frere ( hardly a Victorian, since he was first British ambassador to the Spanish guerilla government during the Peninsular War ! ) not being quite the man to deal with Aristophanes. Gilbert Murray is my translator of Greek literature, against all the world ! Talking of Aristophanes, I'm still wondering when some theatre manager will have the sense to make his fortune by putting on " The Knights " just as an election campaign is starting ! It shows up both the candidate, the election agent and the earnest chiseller among the crowd exactly as they exist to-day ! It's an all-time topical skit, and one of the funniest ever written, at that.

Hookham Frere's highest literary flight is the political pamphlets he wrote to the various European nations submerged by France during the Napoleonic wars, encouraging their citizens to sabotage the French war effort and their troops, fighting in Napoleon's service, to desert. They are really wonderful, and they nearly drove Napoleon to burst a blood-vessel with sheer rage.

And I'm still hoping to hear that you've started on THE LORD OF THE RINGS !

I expect you've heard that Ted Johnstone, in the U.S.A. and some others, including the fan magazine publisher Bruce Pelz, are starting what amounts to a Tolkien Society among U.S. lovers of what Joe Patrizio calls THE BOOKS.

They are asking those interested to contribute a " research paper of a type designed to show familiarity with the LORD OF THE RINGS." I sent them one, and they have accepted it, so I shall expect to receive a membership card in due course. It was rather after the style of Asimov's "Thiotimeline" but a little more seriously meant.

A thing here that appeals to me greatly is the Elven-script that Tolkien has himself invented — it is well adaptable to the writing of English, and is one of the most handsome written characters that I have come across, especially when written with a broad oblique-pointed pen. This sort of thing :

~*pmu njpnu h' ib u' qm nre*~

Quite impressive isn't it ! I love really beautiful scripts, possibly because my own handwriting is so peculiarly unsightly, I suppose ; it was permanently spoilt by five years of university note-taking at full lecture speed.

9th July, 1960.

You will no doubt be pleased to know that at long last I have made a start on the Tolkien mythos.

Had I not started on Tolkien I should probably have read *THE WORM OUROBOROS* next; that looks quite interesting too. Concurrent reading includes a translation of *THE BHAGAVAD GITA* (my fourth; I am collecting them and have fourteen to date), and *THE MACABRE READER*, edited by Wollheim and just published over here as a Digt pocket-book. I am quite enjoying some of the old macabre fantasy for a change, but I still laugh at Lovecraft. I know I shouldn't by all that's holy, but I just can't help it. As I've said elsewhere horror applied with a steam-shovel always has that effect on me.

Hum it sounds as though I misplaced Hookham Frere; well, all I can say is that even if he wasn't a Victorian he would have made a good one, judging from his mutilation of Aristophanes. Yes, I love the *KNIGHTS* too and especially the apocryphal story that goes with it as to how none of the theatre mask-makers dared to make a mask of Cleon and Aristophanes had to play the part himself!

29th, July, 1960.

I don't believe that I ever reacted to the copy of ROT that you were kind enough to send to me ; the item that I found of most interest was "Witchcraft at Pendle." Am I right in thinking that you got hold of Thomas Potts' "Wondrous Discoverie of Witches in His <sup>ancient</sup> ~~Waller's~~ County of Lancaster" of 1612 ? I notice, by the way that you put the dates in the modern style — the arrest of the Dendikes, etc. in March would have been in 1611 by the contemporary reckoning, since the New Year did not start till April 1st (which is why the financial year still starts on that date — the Exchequer wasn't going to be bothered with new-fangled reforms of the calendar, especially if they might lend a loophole for tax-dodging.)

I take it that you have read the two novels to which this gave rise — Harrison Ainsworth's "The Lancashire Witches" and the very much better modern "Mist over Pendle" of Robert Neill — am I right ? Neill's book is very good ; unlike Ainsworth, he knows his Jacobean background, and it is a good novel, quite apart from its occult interest. If you can, you might do much worse than read some of his other historical novels, such as "Rebel Heiress" (resettlement of exiled Cavaliers in England after the Restoration), "Moon in Scorpio" (the Popish Plot) or "Hangman's Cliff" (smuggling during the Napoleonic Wars).



A propos of Pendle, ~~though~~ there's a rather famous Witchcraft Museum here in the Cotswolds at Bourton-on-the Water, and one of their exhibits is a contemporary portrait of Edith Nutter — a direct descendant of Alice Nutter — and a noted "cattle-doctor", by occult means of course, together with one or two objects that were found in her house after her death that strongly suggest that she practised blacker arts in secret. I personally think that the Witchcraft Museum should be burnt down — far too many people take a very unwholesome interest in this sort of thing, and it's altogether evil — but it's quite an interesting collection. Some of the objects in it are embarrassing ; one peculiarly interesting specimen that they imported a couple of years ago they had to chuck out again in a hurry, as they found that they had imported with it the poltergeist that was supposed to be associated with it, and it nearly wrecked the whole museum ! They also had some terrifying disturbances at nights, too, till they altered the arrangement of some of the ritual pentacles, etc. inside.

I see I've left out what I meant to say — that Edith Nutter died quite late in the nineteenth century.

Your list of books was interesting — Von Hagen's HIGHWAY OF THE SUN is on my wanted list at the local library, and I suppose I'll get it in due course. Whose translation and what edition of the POPOL VUH was it that was remaindered ? I missed this and would be interested to get it. Another American explorer whom I knew personally was the late Frank Mitchell "edges, and through him I once met Thomas Gann, the man who did so much to popularize the Maya Civilization in the 1920's.

My encounter with Zen swordsmen isn't as romantic as you would seem to like to believe ; in my youth, my Latin tutor was one of the people down on the official list as suitable for foreign students to be sent to who wanted to learn English. Many of his students at that time 1919—26 were Japanese officers of the army, navy or police, and many of them were kenjutsu (fencing) experts of some note. He was himself no mean hand with the sabre, and it was his great delight to take them on — standard international light sabre against the Japanese "shinai". I sometimes came in on this, but, as I said, with little success — at about 9½ stone and 5 ft. 8 ins. as I was then, I haven't got the sheer weight of beef that's desirable for sabre-play ! (Tenses unforgivably mixed up — tut ! tut !)

At that time the Japanese sword-play still carried strong reminiscences of when they used to wear armour ; e.g. their only thrust was a double-handed upward jab, with all their weight behind it, aimed at the throat, and obviously designed to get in between the top edge of the gorget and the chin-piece of the helmet. The only time it got home on me, it nearly broke my neck, having nearly thirteen stone of blockily-built Jap about 5 feet cube behind it, so that I have the most painful recollections of it to this day. I'd amused myself using épée technique on him, getting in thrust after thrust all over him, till suddenly he landed me a cut on the elbow that almost paralysed my arm, even through the padded jerkin, and then, before I could recover, got home one of his own classic thrusts as hard as he could put it in !

Several of these Japs were Za Zen adherents, and some of them were good, though not the very best.

But the Jap two-handed technique is a very nasty and efficient thing to meet, and a steady volley of cuts coming in at all angles at about three per second, aimed indifferently at your knee, jaw, forearm and the pit of your stomach, will keep you amazingly busy keeping your skin whole !

Talking about two-handed sword technique, did you ever read the Latin treatise on it that was written by The Admirable Crichton ? Not Barrie's character, of course, but the historical figure from whom he took the name — the XVth century James Crichton, about whom Harrison Ainsworth wrote a historical novel. It's only a few pages, but it's the most perfect guide to the art of the two-handed sword that has ever been written.

21st August, 1960.

You were quite correct in assuming that I should have finished the 'Rings' trilogy by the time I got your letter. I went through it (for me) like wildfire. By the time we reached 'The Prancing Pony' I was 'hooked'; by the time I got to the end of Book Two I was gripped unbearably and couldn't put it away. And that was that.

Yes, I readily and happily concede that it is a great work; I had great difficulty deciding what to read after it that would not seem anti-climactic and paltry by comparison. And, of course, I didn't solve the problem completely. One of the most wonderful things about it, to me, is the tremendous feeling he has for countryside; one can feel that one knows the places described, all the way through. In fact on August Bank Holiday Sunday Sheila and I walked over 'Ilkha Moor' (yes, baht 'at, too), had our lunch on the slopes of Weathertop and finally dropped down into Rivendell (a rather densely populated Rivendell, though, I am afraid).

Another sideline effect of the Tolkien trilogy on me was to start me off reading sagas etc. I began with Beowulf and, of course, right there in the introduction found Tolkien being quoted. Since that I have read 'The Fall of the Nibelungs' and am now on with 'The Men of Lardale', and it begins to look as though from now on I shall always have on the go not only one Greek work and one Indian work but a saga too.

You are quite correct as to my source material for the Pendle witchcraft article - the major part of it was Master Thos. Potts. A very little came from Christina Hole's 'A Mirror of Witchcraft', and some came from a small booklet about that area generally.

The Witchcraft Museum at Bourton-on-the-Water is one place I very much want to visit; perhaps even more so than Gerald Gardner's at Castletown in the Isle of Man. I remember seeing a note in an article by, I believe, Bobbie Wilde (as was) to the effect that some of the pentacles and inscriptions have been changed. I have never really delved into witchcraft yet; it is one of the things I want to take a closer look at some time.

My edition of the POPOL VUH was published in 1951 by Hodge at 18/- and remaindered at 6/- two or three years ago. The English translation is by Delia Goetz and Sylvanus G. Morley, from the Spanish of Adrian Recinos. And I really must read it!

25th August, 1960.

Glad you have finished THE LORD OF THE RINGS, and from what you say I gather that you now see why it is we are all so struck and impressed with 'em ! I did very much what you did, I imagine, though perhaps at a faster speed ( my reading speed is faster than most.) I started reading the trilogy at about 2.30 p.m. on a wet afternoon ; the family complained that I was systematically

late to all meals that day afterwards, and most uncommunicative thereat, generally behaving like a bear with a sore head. I went early to bed taking the BOOKS with me, and continued reading steadily in bed (owing to asthma, and not wanting to disturb the rest of the family, I sleep alone) till I finished Volume III at 3.24 a.m. the following morning, after which I had to take a sleeping tablet to settle my seething brains !

Next day, after having done all the outstanding jobs ( including two I should have done the day before and didn't ! ) I set to and spent the next two days reading the whole thing through again. Then I spent the next week in going through the appendices, and referring back to all the references in the text to see how they fitted together. Then I read the whole thing through a third time slowly.

You could do a bit of dropping down into Rivendell about here, wandering over the upland table-land that gives the Cotswold its ending, and dropping down into one or other of the knife-cut narrow sheltered fertile valleys you find here — some of them so well sheltered that some of the farmers can grow grapes out in the open and get plentiful sweet eatable crops four years out of five !

If you're doing saga reading, try to get hold of Eric Linklater's novel THE LAST VIKING, an account of the life of Grim Asleifsson of Orkney. The last part of the book, designed to show the sort of people he came from, and their general pattern of living and behaviour consists of summaries (one chapter each) of several of the most famous sagas — Burnt Njal, Laxdale, Grettir, and Egil Skallagrimsson — Oh, and Olaf Tryggvasson, too. The best saga collection is, of course the famous BOOK OF FLATEY, while of the individual sagas my own favourites would be Njalassaga and Turgislassaga — did you ever read the novel "Thorgils of Treadholt" that Maurice Hewlett wrote round this last ? Do, if you can get hold of it. You might also try comparing the standard Sir George Dasent translation of Burnt Njal with the new one that has just come out in Penguin Classics.

You say that witchcraft is one of the things you want to take a closer look at some time. All right, but confine it to looking, and at not too close quarters, at that, or you'll regret it ! I know — I had the ill luck to encounter a genuine black wizard when I was in my early twenties ; he was trying at that time to make proselytes among some of the London University students. By the mercy of Heaven — and I mean that entirely literally ! — I was able to get clear of him, but most of the others didn't, and I know what happened to them afterwards. Black Magic is a thing to keep clear of — at any cost.

Another source book for the LORD OF THE RINGS that you'll have to tackle some time is THE KALEVALA — you'll find it rather tedious in some parts, but very rewarding indeed in others (there's a very good summary of it in the new Larousse Dictionary of Mythology, by the way) ; and after you have read it, you'll find yourself with quite a new outlook on Sibelius' music for ever after.

I am one of the people who have already put in an order for THE SILMARILLION, when it is published, even though I have no idea what the price may be. It will, presumably, tell us in detail the tale of Beren and of Luthien Tintviel and of Earendil.

P.S. Have you read "With Hyshie & Hagians in Tibet" by Alexandra David-Neel (Penguin No 68) — I strongly recommend it!

*Doc.*



1984!

# DEAD ON TIME

## ORWELL RESTS IN PEACE

'I TOLD YOU SO' HEADSTONE ROW

With the return of Margaret - 'The Plutonium Lady' - Thatcher for a second (some say 'indefinite') term of office, s-f fans breathed a sigh of contentment at the fulfilment of yet another prophecy from their favourite medium.

Promised in Maggie's ambitious programme is a range of far-reaching measures. Interviewed yesterday, the remarkably smooth-complexioned First Lady, pooh-poohing rumours that and-roids are already among us, launched into an outline of her plans in an even voice carefully regulated to convey controlled hysteria.

WET

"We said we would unify Britain as no other government has ever done," she said, "And now we will do it. Norman has a very exciting set of measures worked out to deal with the proles. Actually," she confided with an engaging smile, "I always did think Big Brother was a bit of a 'Wet' myself. In any government of mine he would probably have been given Northern Ireland to look after. Mention of that Poor Troubled Province which, of course, Engages All Our Deepest

By our Political Editor

(A Recording Machine at  
Conservative Party Headquarters)

Sympathies and Is Never Out of Our Thoughts reminds me to mention that My Government's policies have been so successful there that we shall now extend some of them to the mainland in a crash programme to alleviate the unemployment situation and the housing shortage. Concentration Camps will be set up in Brixton, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester and ninety-eight other centres, as part of a pilot scheme. In addition to providing greater security for the homeless and out-of-work, this will also ease the burden on our marvellous Guardians of Law and Order. After all, we've known for a long time that, where crime is concerned, prevention is better than cure; it really is quite outdated to wait until someone actually breaks the law to put him away."

THUGS

"While on the theme of Law and Order I must reiterate my stance on terrorism and make it quite clear



to those ruthless thugs in Northern Ireland that no matter how many votes they may get at the polls ( I'll come to that rather quaint old notion of 'Democracy' in a moment), this Government will never - NEVER - deal with terrorists. Not unless they're successful terrorists, anyway, like dear old Mr Begin and Mr Shamir" she ended engagingly, with yet another unexpected flash of that very human wit for which she is so famous.

"As for Democracy", the Prime Minister continued, "well, of course, we



Big Sister Maggie foresees a glowing future for the nuclear family

are absolutely committed to it as an ideal - who in the Free World could be anything else? - but by now every thinking person is agreed that the actual technicalities of the electoral process need to be brought into line with the ambitions of a Go-Ahead Society looking towards the 21st Century. And, of course, it is our duty as a Democratic Government to implement the Will of the People, so we shall be introducing some further minor local boundary changes which will ensure that at the next General Election only Conservative candidates will be returned to parliament. This, as I see it, is the best way to safeguard the future of free elections in this country; and, of course, it makes

sense economically, too - the savings we shall make by cutting out all that useless argument and debate in the House of Commons will be simply enormous."

### NONSENSE

"Let me give you another example of the ways in which Your Government is cutting out waste for the benefit of all our people", she went on energetically, "Just think about BBC interviews these days - so much more streamlined than they used to be. Since the interviewers were told to stick to personalities and questions like 'Is this a defeat for Arthur Scargill?', we've been able to cut out all that terribly wasteful and time-consuming nonsense of discussing the issues. Just one more example of the way Conservative Government is working to Build A Better Britain."

Asked for her views on Free Speech, the Prime Minister crackled: "I would have thought our views on that were obvious to anyone. We have spoken out freely against CND, the 3½ million lazy loafers who are sponging off the Welfare State instead of going out and getting a job, education, nutritious school meals, free medicine and many other things that threaten the basic fabric of our Free Society. I think anyone must agree that this Government has a truly enviable record on Free Speech, and it is to ensure the continuity of this most valuable British heritage that we are taking steps to safeguard the future of communication in this country. Among these steps will be the installation of another eighteen press-monitoring units at Scotland Yard. I am pleased to tell you that we have had excellent cooperation on all this from our friends in the media, especially the BBC. (As always we came across one or two dissident trouble-makers who insisted on producing factual documentaries and then refused to reveal to us their sources of information, but they soon ceased to be a problem.) They all agree with us that the public would much prefer lis-



tening to three hours of Jimmy Young to bothering themselves with a lot of boring detail about Police Powers, or nuclear radiation leaks or the closing down of some boring old dockyard. Those of us in Parliament accept the burden of dealing with all that sort of thing so that the ordinary working man can enjoy his leisure watching all those wonderful television shows; and, of course, I need not remind you that the BBC regularly runs polls in which its viewers and listeners can express their opinions. That is the real essence of Free Speech, and I can assure you it is safer now in this fine country of ours than ever before. Indeed, my Government is seeking to extend it. We are intending to erect large television screens in prominent locations throughout our towns and cities so that everyone can gather together to see what is going on in other parts of the world, and freely to express their very strong feelings against the repressive, warmongering regime in Soviet Russia."

#### FREE

"Later", Mrs Thatcher continued, "we hope to extend this facility to provide a free television screen in every room of every home in the country; and not only that but they will be provided with a two-way function which will allow the broadcaster to address the viewer directly and personally. I ask you now, in all fairness, could any Government do more for the cause of Free Speech?"

"Of course, I don't want to give the idea that this Government is complacent in any way. We realise that our society still faces many problems; those scruffy, long-haired, Commie perverts in OND are just one example (and, by the way, didn't you think that dear Michael's delightfully libellous poster campaign against them was a scream! I believe he got all his ideas from a German Public Relations expert called Goebbels). But really, all this continual fuss they

make about missiles and nuclear war makes me so angry. Where would this country be without our massive expenditure on defence? That is what we need to ask ourselves; the Financial Times Index would simply plummet. I'm sure all these sloppy-brained pacifists never give that a moment's thought. And anyway, you know", she confided, tapping my arm for emphasis, "most of these cowardly Moscow dupes have never even been in a nuclear war! It really isn't anything



A cowardly Moscow dupe who has never been in a nuclear war

like as bad as they make out. And besides, I'm sure you would agree with me that our dear old English climate could do with being a few degrees warmer; better sunburned than Red,



I always say", she chuckled enchantingly.

## VICTORY

"So, while we are certainly not blind to the problems facing us, we do feel we can honestly say that with effort and determination, we shall overcome them, and it is a job in which everyone can help. To remind us all of the true backbone of the Euras...that is, of the British people, we are asking everyone to remember once again the wonderful spirit of the 1940s. Now, as then, our theme is Victory, and we hope it is a theme which will be adopted universally as we go forward together - and I cannot emphasise that too strongly, together - into a

bright new future. As a matter of fact one of the country's biggest Breweries has already demonstrated its support by launching a new brew called 'Victory Beer'.

"And so I can say with confidence, the Premier concluded, "1984 is going to be a year we shall all remember for a long time; and you can take it from me that that silly old George Orwell was just an alarmist trouble maker. I'm afraid I must leave you now. The photographers have just arrived to take my picture for a new major poster campaign which Michael has come up with. I don't want to say too much about it just yet, but he believes that some sort of family image is the ideal thing."

.....

Note FROM: Alm Washroth

TO: Mal Ashworth

I must say I think it is a sad day for fandom when articles like this get published in fanzines.

Surely we can keep mundane politics out of our zines.

Are we slans or are we not ?

What happened to our Sense of Wonder ?

*Alm*

Communique from

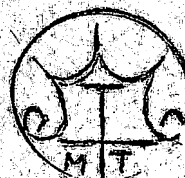
# THE MINISTRY OF TRUTH

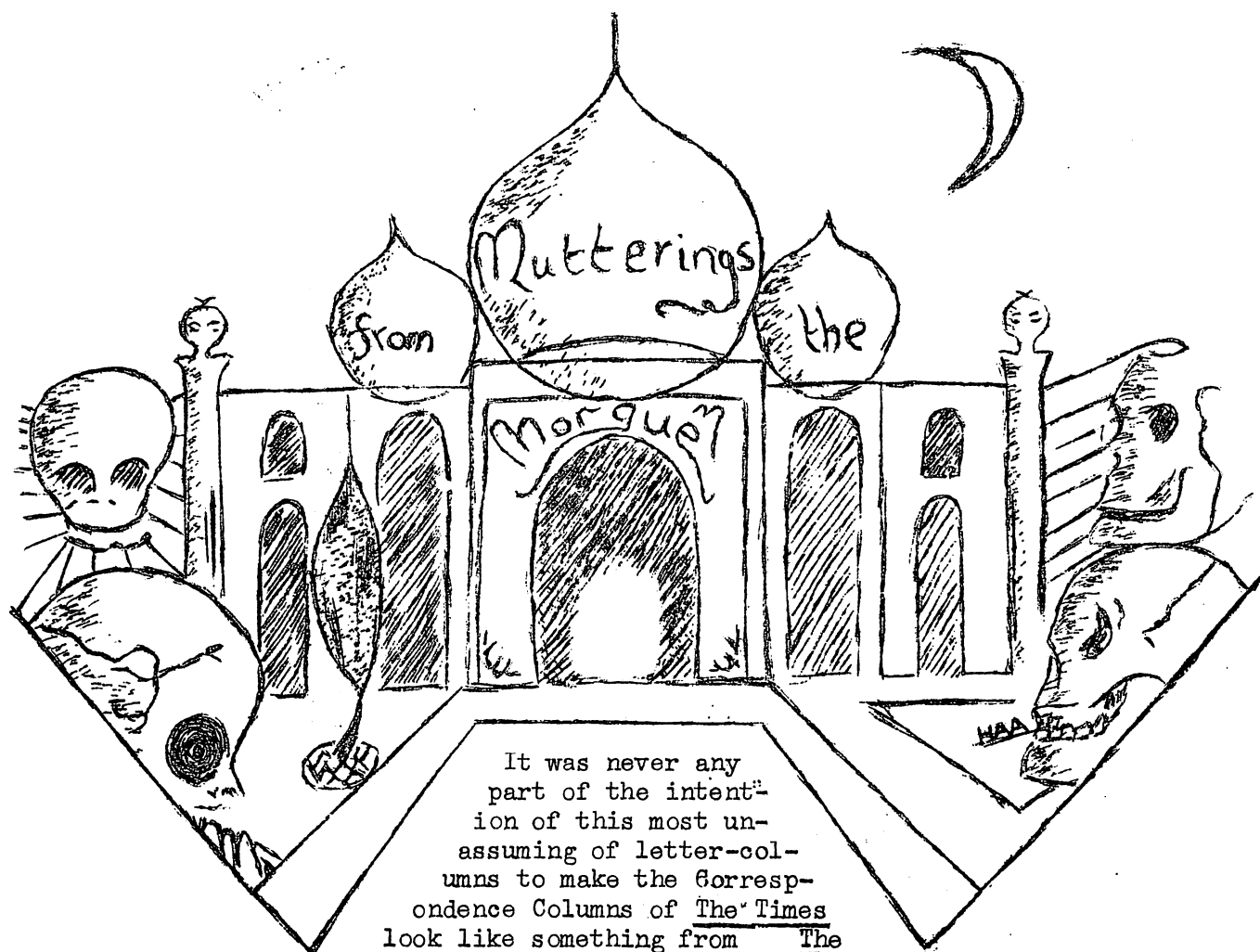
(formerly The Central Office of Information)

NOTICE is hereby given that:-

The Sense of Wonder has been suspended.  
By Order for the duration of the  
present civil and economic difficulties.

NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE PERMITTED





It was never any part of the intention of this most unassuming of letter-columns to make the Correspondence Columns of The Times look like something from The Beano. Which was probably just as well because it never did.

Since I seem, temporarily, to have mislaid the letters-of-comment on the last issue, and since natural modesty forbids me to invent an impressive feature WAHfing Hugo Gernsback, Jerry Pournelle, Claude Degler and a host of other all-time greats in the field of fine fannish humour, I have decided on this occasion to devote the whole of this column to one man. Or possibly two. Or maybe somewhere in between. You, the reader, shall be the judge (but you'll have to wake up first). Some of the finest, funniest letters in every 'Mutterings From The Morgue' came from a young Lancaster fan called Dave Wood, whose prettily parabolating blonde girl-friend I... but there, such memories are not good for coelacanth, they only get the water all bubbly.

Among Dave's fellow Lancaster fans were the even more ebullient Ken Potter, brilliant humourist Irene Gore (later Irene Potter) and Harry Hanlon. Among those dotted about in other corners of this Fifties fannish universe were such luminaries as Chuck ("Fifty Guineas Will Be Paid To Any Gentleman or Lady Who Can Prove That He Is Not Human") Harris, Archie Mercer who lived in a caravan at a Malleable Iron Works (don't ask me why) and All-Time Olympic Gold Medallist in Formula One crudzine publishing, Wiltshire fan Norman G. Wansborough.

Eventually Dave married his (still) prettily-parabolating blonde girl-friend and sneaked away silently southward. I lost touch with him (and with her). Until - one day in January 1983 - there commenced that strange and eerie chain of events which was to build up into ...

# THE ODDWOVE LEGEND

It all started when, out of the blue - well, the muddy brownish grey : really - of The Bristol Channel, I received:

1, Friary Close,  
Marine Hill,  
Clevedon,  
Avon.

May I suggest you write to the above address where you may learn something to your.....(fill in appropriate word when you have finished this letter), the purpose of which is to include a milkman called Derek, a cardboard box, a year old letter in a magazine, a road map of Wales, Invasion

of the Body Snatchers (the definitive edition), a Soggie, five 15p stamps, a Mamiya 645 camera, the worn lining of a fur teacup, an autographed copy of Woman's Shining Star Weekly, a diploma from the Ashworth Amorphous Abstracts Assoc., a map marking 40, Makin St., Bradford 4, a genuine photograph of certain individuals at a West Coast holiday resort, Wansboro', Northern Ireland, a potter, Wendover Way, Coverdale, Dallas, and deep pain over the heart and assorted sundry pieces of memorabilia. I will not now go into further details. There is however a possibility that the above tenuous threads may be fully explained in a forthcoming issue of a certain journal NSFN or by ghod if he doesn't publish it by asking Vin Clarke to explain it all.

Having read this far I know you are hooked. I am and I wrote it. What the hell, who the hell, why the hell. Indeed.

Below are the anagrams of four completely unimportant people. Solve the correct one and you will immediately know the writer of this letter and will be able to cast it from your frilly curtained window into the bustling street of Skipton.

KEN POTTER

IRENE GORE

A ODD WOVE

HARRY HANLON

You're still with me then! How did you enjoy my little puzzle ?

Here are some of the answers:-

HAL N. RHYEFAN (A Welsh Druid from Giggleswick)

RON PKETTE (A Yugoslavian Travel courier) NERO EGRIE (A fat deaf Californian Private-Eye). Have you solved the others?

Did you know that according to Vin US fandom tends to think of the '50s as a Mythical Golden Age! There are rumours completely unsubstantiated that every year in Wootton Bassett they hold a Con in which the fancy dress participants all dress up as a named 50s fan. Last year there were twenty seven Norman Wansboro's, five Mal Ashworths (some say it took five to make one) a brace of WAWs and a matching pair of Potters.

In early February 1983 I replied to this enigmatic missive as follows:  
Dear Chuck,

Well, it was a nice try, Harris, and, of course, I'm delighted to see you back in Fandom, even in such a roundabout and sneaky way - but it never had a chance of succeeding. You forget how well I knew old Oddwove; hell, yes, as close as Jekyll and Hyde, Oddwove and I were. Did I ever tell you about the time I and that sexy girl-friend of his... but, no, I guess there are some things that can't be related even after all these years.

I always reckoned that had something to do with Oddwove's disappearance into the wild hinterlands of that lost land from which you arranged to have your letter posted, you know; he was trying to remove that incendiary little bundle of desire from my clutches. So they made that epic trek South until Oddwove was convinced he'd covered all his tracks and that never again could I disturb his nights of oriental bliss. I reckon he probably built himself a stately pleasure dome, a bit like Kublai Khan's pad, and settled in there with his opulent 'ouri, and my theory is that poor old Oddwove didn't last very long after that. There is a limit



to what human flesh can stand; and even blood has its boiling point. What mere human could hope to withstand hour after hour of ecstatic xxxxxxxx, day after day of rapturous xxxxxxxx, week after week of ravishing xxxxxxxx, month after month of voluptuous xxxxxxxx ? No, indeed, I fear we shall never see old Oddwove more; but he must have gone out with a smile - nay, an idiotic grin - on his face, the lucky bastard.

Before he leapt so willingly into the arms of his engulfing fate, Oddwove was a very talented fellow, ya know. I miss him, most decidedly. Only the other day I was thinking "Now that I'm hoping to get ROT No 6 out in the next few months - 20 years between issues seems like a comfortable sort of interval - I could do with a few of old Oddwove's drawings, maybe even a short piece of his unique writing". But there, alas, no chance now - unless you feel that you can draw in Oddwove's style, Chuck ?

1, Friary Close,  
Marine Hill,  
Clevedon,  
Avon.

Dear Mr Wansboro',

Look Norman, (I trust you don't mind this familiarity) I need your advice. And you are the only mega-star from those far-off halcyon days, to whom, I feel I can, with complete trust, turn to in my hour of need. You see, I'm being plagued by a particularly invidious form of the UNDEAD! Honest. People who I know are now just heaps of dry dust and cobwebs are writing to me! At least, they claim to be those people. In my opinion there is devilish work afoot in these fan-nish lands. There is SO MUCH INTIMATE detail about which these simulacrae are overtly familiar. One indeed, from some dank outpost on the Yorkshire moors tempts this Lancastrian lad with desires of the FLESH, flaunting such words as ravishing and VOLUPTUOUS. Ah! Hidden truths are there. And how, over the years have I flayed mine own flesh to purge certain memories from my past. Even my abode, as you will perceive from my address, I chose because it is built on God's own soil and stands firm against the lashing winds and salted spray on a headland facing the Bristol Channel. Nightly I stand alone on that hallowed land, hands over ears, body trembling as I fight the siren voice, from within the bricks and mortar, which tempts me, oh, how it tempts me to the connubial bed...

But I digress.

Some twenty years plus four have passed since my BELOVED snatched me from CERTAIN FATE and carried me from the Vale of Foolishness into a GOOD LIFE. Emboldened, at that time, with my freedom I, with HER help, produced two mewling infants who, over the years have grown exceedingly TALL. One, strong and HANDSOME in the image of his father, the other, fair and BEAUTIFUL in the image of her mother. And they were called DAMON and SHELLEY. I, myself, then plunged into the development of the finest Telecommunications system in the WHOLE world. One day my MASTERS offered me inducement of gold and silver whereupon I packed my chattel and wrenched body and soul from my native haunts to the glittering spires of the SOUTH WEST. Over 200 miles I trekked against great hardship. During the voyage the devil's helpmates in the form of REMOVAL MEN took from me all my fanzines and my precious BRE Astoundings. They were never to be seen in these lands again. For which I got no recompense. Finally I found a resting place in the beauteous county of SOMERSETSHIRE. Here was to be peace and contentment. But, alas, foul things were still afoot and doubtless with the conniving of those of Yorkist vein the GOVERNMENT of the land at a stroke cast me out from SOMERSETSHIRE and placed me in AVON, a place of no past history and an uncertain future.

What CAN I do Norman ? What can I DO ?

Cutting through this miasma of obfuscation I wrote back:

Dear Archie,

22nd March 1983

I have to admit, I guessed it was you all the time. All that 'Chuck Harris' jazz was just to draw you out, so I could be sure, and you fell for it.

The fact that not once in your letter did you mention either a caravan or a Malleable Iron Works was a dead giveaway. Anyway, Archie it sure is good to have you back - and the one thing that really impresses me is how much your drawing has improved from those scrappy little sketches you used to do in AMBLE and the like. If I may say so it is every bit as good as Dave Wood himself would have been doing had he continued to improve from when we last knew him - and that is saying something. I look forward to using some in ROT once I start to get it together. They really recapture the atmosphere of Dave's drawing quite remarkably. (I say, though, Archie, I'd be mighty sorry to lose Oddwove, wouldn't you ? Sounded a much more interesting character than 'Dave Wood' didn't you think ? Do you think, maybe, with Dave himself not around, we could do a bit of history re-writing - after all it is nearly 1984 - so that we could keep Oddwove around and lose all trace of 'Dave Wood' ? You know the sort of thing - "Back in the Fifties Lancaster Fandom consisted of the elongated Roy Booth, Sinatra lookalike Harry Hanlon, the ebullient Ken Potter and his kooky partner Irene, and the talented artist and writer, A. Oddwove." Think it would work, huh ?)

1, Friary Close,  
Marine Hill,  
Clevedon,  
Avon.

Dear BAFFman,

Your musings on the origins of Dave Wood, and the reasons why the Lancaster fen of the 50s found it necessary to invent him, made me realise that after 30 odd years perhaps the truth can be told. It was, of course, all an

elaborate hoax created by George Shipperbottom, now dead and gone. It started one wet Saturday morning when Ken Potter, still at school, knees brown from scouting, was standing on Horse Shoe Corner (a well-known Lancaster vantage point for observing passing females). He accidentally dropped a copy of "Stanhope's Moon" onto the pavement. At the precise moment that he bent down to pick it up, a chauffeur driven car passed by splashing Potter's kneeling form. The car stopped and the chauffeur came round to ensure Ken wasn't too badly drenched. Ken was in tears. His pristine copy of "Stanhope's Moon" had been reduced to a pulpy mess.

The passenger window of the car was lowered and an enquiring voice trilled, "Everything all right Oddwove ?" I, for that is who the chauffeur was, inclined my head and murmured "Yes ma'am". But my steely blue eyes were fixed on the copy of "Stanhope's Moon". "The lad's a little upset, but I'm sure he'll be all right in a moment" "Hurry along then Oddwove". The window rolled up and Mrs Gladys Shipperbottom, wife of the local mill owner, George Shipperbottom, sat back and resumed reading her latest copy of Red Star Weekly. "Listen, I can't stop now, but here's my boss's card. Come up and see me at that address." I returned to the car and drove off. Ken, no doubt fearing I was some sort of pervert who liked boy scouts, tossed the card into the gutter. And stomped off in anger.

As driver for the Shipperbottoms I was onto a good thing, not least because both George Shipperbottom and I were closet SF fans! George at that time (1950) was 52 years old and had been reading it since he bought the first issue of Amazing while honeymooning in the States. He had complete runs of AZ, ASF and Weird Tales all bound in leather, gold-tooled and indexed. All of which he had, as a prominent local citizen, to keep secret from both his influential friends and his wife. George was a long time letter writer to all the mags (unfortunately under various pseudonyms which are no longer known) and he even had a framed letter from Ray Palmer in his den. George entrusted me to apprehend the morning mail before madam saw it, and extract the SF material sent to him. I posted his letters and renewed his subscriptions. Alas he had never entered fandom.

That evening whilst annotating his complete Unknowns I mentioned the young lad and his unfortunate accident. George, magnanimous as ever, arranged for a copy of "Stanhope's Moon" to be bound in vellum, autographed and printed on non-fade paper. By devious means known only to magistrates and Freemasons, he acquired Ken's address and one day we set off to deliver the volume

personally. We had taken the precaution to tell his wife we were attending the Odd-fellows. On that fateful day we found Ken, struggling to produce a one-off fanzine with only a John Bull outfit and hand drawn illos. It was all very crude yet George found it somehow uplifting. All that evening Ken regaled him with stories of fandom culled from copies of Operation Fantast and letters from BNFs such as Bentcliffe, Clarke, Jeeves etc. At 14 years of age, to Ken it was a wondrous world into which he intended to enter, but couldn't afford. That night it all changed. George put me in charge. We rounded up Ken's other friends, purchased a Cestetner and set about entering fandom. "Oddwove," said George, "We will conquer the world" "But what about madam?" I worried. "No problem. We will work through Fetter and company using a pseudonym. Let's see. A good anagram of your name would be, say, 'Dave Wood'. Let's get to work!"

The rest is history. George and I wrote all the 'Dave Wood' pieces and I did the illos. Public appearances were a problem until George plucked somebody out of the weaving shed to be Dave Wood. He actually attended conventions in Bradford, Manchester and London. The poor lad was completely bewildered. We told him he was attending fashion conferences! His job was to "say nowt" but pick up ideas for the next summer fashions. He came back with some great ideas for beanies, water-pistols and baggy trousers. Finally, at one con, he actually spoke to John Killian Houston Brunner. After which he never wocfed or weaved effectively again. Eventually George sent him off to the army as gun fodder...

Alas, George died in 1965. After a clandestine operation in which we removed his complete collection to the Lancaster Library archives, I left the services of the Shipperbottoms and moved South. 'Dave Wood' faded away and eventually the whole Lancaster group dispersed. The new wave of BAFFs, now sweeping the country, has persuaded me to pick up pen and start again. I am using 'Dave Wood' in fond memory of old George. I trust you will hold the foregoing as a secret and never ever tell anyone the real truth.

My Dear Oddwove:

16th April 1983

Or may I call you 'Adenoid' ?

What a fascinating story! And it explains so much. Even those parts which you decorously left untold I think I can now fill in for myself. That unusual surname of yours, for instance.

Clearly your family has worked for the Shipperbottoms for hundreds of years, but - and this is what your delicacy forbade you to mention - a strange hereditary defect afflicts all your line, the results of which were that your ancestors could never warp a wocf and even their wefts wobbled. Hence, of course, the family name - Oddwove.

Fortunately the first one so named, the original Oddwove, encountered a kindly Old Cove, in old Jephthra Shipperbottom, who was prevented by Christian compassion (and the reflection that congenital imbeciles come cheap) from turning your distraught forebear out of his Company-owned rat-infested hotel onto the rat-infested streets. Instead he kindly took him into his own service as an Under Candle Snuffer. From these lowly beginnings, over several generations, the Oddwoves slowly worked their way up to the dizzy heights of hereditary coachmen to the Shipperbottoms - which is how you came to be chauffering George Shipperbottom on that fateful wet Saturday morning.

Have I divined aright ?

pp Burke's Peerage

*Cozy*

E. Cosnzsjwrfdnzly

PS: Fancy thinking you could ever get away with all that 'Dave Wood' stuff!



Oddwove Hall,  
1, Friary Close,  
Marine Hill,  
Clevedon,  
Avon.

My Dear Ashworth,

Unfortunately it seems you have researched the wrong Oddwoves! The Oddwoves you have come across are, in fact, an offshoot of the Great Oddwoves of Cumberland, best known as supporters of the Jacobite cause in the rebellions of 1715 and the better known '45. The result of one famous incident involving this

family can still be seen in any reputable portrait of Bonnie Prince Charlie which reveals an example of an oddly woven left breast pocket. Apparently, after the skirmish at Scotforth, Lancaster, Charlie and co, retreating rapidly towards Scotland and his nemesis, passed through Cumberland towards the Solway. He stopped close to the Great Oddwove Weaving Sheds and met Meg Oddwove who seeing him in a somewhat desolate state said to him, "Why, barn, I doat knah mich about sic things, but I niver thowte theer cud ha' bin sic a terble time as thee hev hed, to be sewer! If ye'll believe ma, am' round t'corner theers bait an'cleading fit fa thee."

So they fed him and patched him and sent him on his way.

Charlie, ever grateful, wore that Oddwove "tartan" to the last.

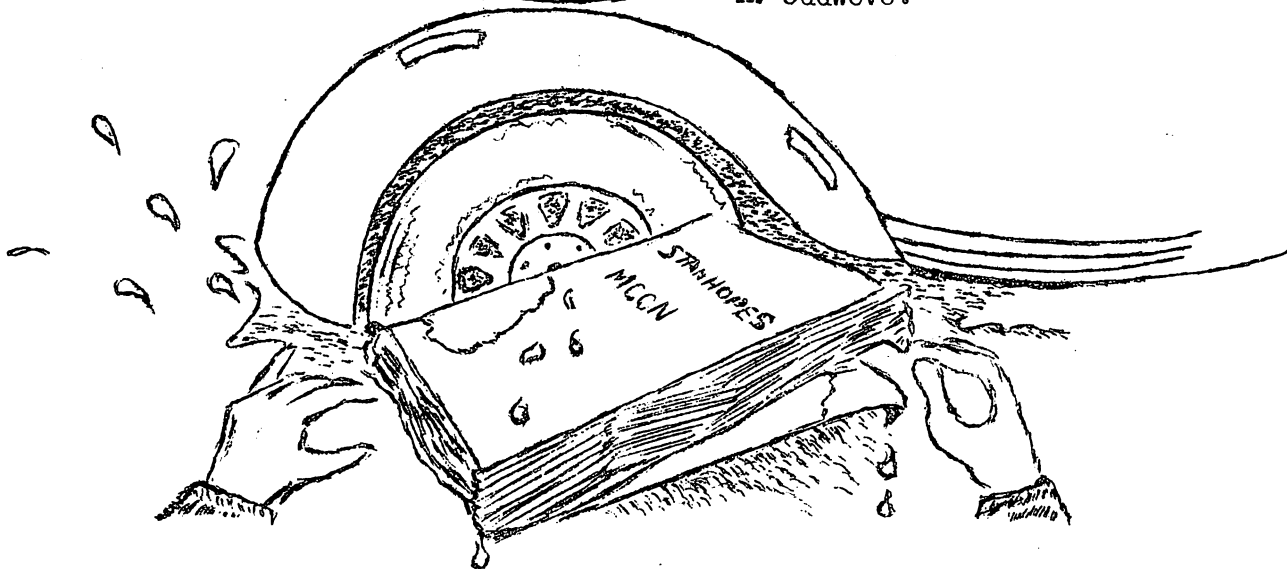
But to return to George Shipperbottom. I still get a shiver of delight when I think about my first glimpse into his room in that huge old house of his. The walls were lined from floor to ceiling with magazines, volume after volume of Amazings, Astoundings, Weird Tales, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Startling, Dynamic, Marvel, Unknown... Every year's volume was collated in two ways. One set, mint, unread, was bound in leather with handsome gold tooled spines. A duplicate set were reading copies well thumbed and in untidy heaps around the floor. It was, to me, Aladdin's cave! And there was more. File upon file of correspondence between himself and every editor, writer and artist he had been able to contact.

I still feel deeply privileged that it was I who was to introduce George to fandom with lasting effect. (What I always affectionately remember as "The Potter Incident" culminating in the birth of "Dave Wood" and George's nefarious entry into trufandom.) There is little doubt that if George hadn't spread his enormous talent so thinly between the young fans he gathered round him he could well have become THE BNF of the 50s. As it was, George was content to throw out ideas which we all gratefully latched onto. Article after article, letter after letter appeared in Hyphen, Rot, Space Times etc. They were all George's doing; we wrote his ideas, he polished them up and off they went! On reflection I suppose George was our John Wood Campbell! His pleasure, his egoboo came from pushing us into the limelight. Maybe he spread his genius too thinly and would have done better to fully develop our alter-ego 'Dave Wood'. But who knows?

Best,

*A. Oddwove*

A. Oddwove.



A STATEMENT ON TAFF by D. West

---

As the losing candidate I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have no complaints whatsoever about either the result or the administration of the 1983/84 TAFF election. I consider that the attacks made upon the integrity of Avedon Carol as North American TAFF Administrator are wholly unjustified and unjustifiable and represent nothing more solid than slurs and innuendoes arising from personal animosity and malice. To date no evidence at all has been produced to show that Avedon Carol is guilty of any wrongdoing, and I therefore call upon those concerned either to produce their proofs without further delay and equivocation or to make a full public withdrawal of all their allegations. In the event that this is not speedily done I urge fans everywhere to join me in publicly condemning with the utmost severity the behaviour of Avedon Carol's attackers.

26th October 1984

continued from page 4

The Future: Subscriptions ? With pleasure, but for nothing less than the next ten issues. Trade ? I'd be reet gobsmacked if anyone suggested it. So....

Quite apart from the fact that 1985 will be the 30th Anniversary of Rot 1 and hence is Too Good To Miss, the need to complete publication of the Doc Weir letters dictates another issue. Otherwise the future is uncertain (you guessed ?) This much for your comfort. Whether you get whatever I publish next will depend on your reaction to Rot 6. Not just the technicality of having responded but the quality of response. Oh my goodness, yes. How about that ? (The latest experiment in genetic engineering - crossing a fairly fuzzy hippie anarchist with an uptight elitist fascist bastard.)

Hazel says: "Well - the frequency with which you publish they'll have plenty of time to mull it over."

I says: "Don't bank on it, Buggsy. Remember Heisenberg. Duesenberg. Milenberg. Beefenburg." Take nothing for granted. Or grunted. You wanna live right out there on the edge, all you gotta do is let your concentration waver for three milli-seconds, miss a nuance and - ZAPPO - straight down that slippery slope to th'Outer Darkness (or t'Cosmic Oil-oil, as we say in Yorkshire). Lying energetically to me about how fab Rot 6 is is the only thing that will save you then. So why not do that in the first place, eh ? It's so much easier.

Warm Tears of Gratitude, Soft as a Furry Kitten or the Morning Dew on a Summer Rose Go To: Dave Wood for cover and illos; universal fannish benefactor, the ever-obliging Vince Clarke for photo-stencils at lightning speed and short notice, and technical advice at length; and Hazel for just about everything - illos, headings, a massive amount of often difficult stencilling on an ancient typewriter I can't even use, and generally for kicking me up the backside to get on with this issue; our uncomplaining team of 14,000 country-wide door-to-door subscription canvassers; and seventy-four other people whose names, faces, identities and distinguishing characteristics I have completely forgotten but without whom this - and probably everything else as well - would have been completely impossible.

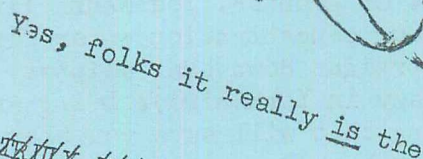


PRACTICE ????!!  
you should be so lucky

ersion of...

FANZINES I

.....You don't mean it's only...



TRULY INSPIRING

~~HUGO AWARD WINNING~~

~~MEMSA-APPROVED~~

MUCH LOVED

LONG AWAITED

LAUGH-A-MINUTE

**ROT SIX**

Refuse to accept cheap substitutes - like fanzines that come out without 21 year gaps between issues