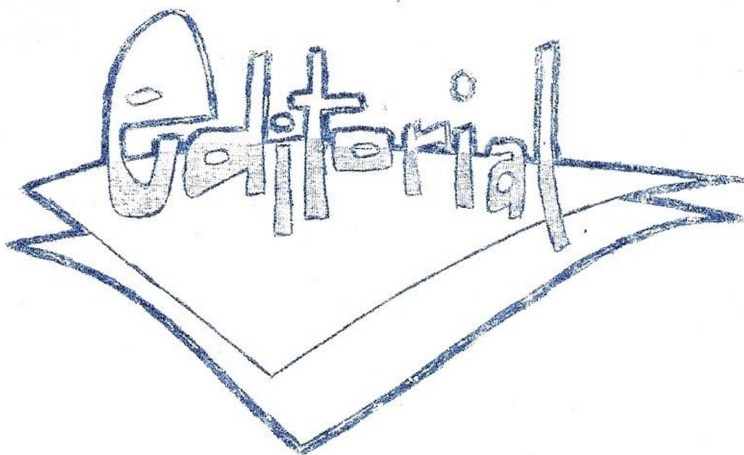


THE  
SCARR

If this copy is illegible don't read it.



The SCARR 10

December 1965

OMPA 46

Uranium 235

WHEN A CAR is bought in Northern Ireland the buyer has to fork out £30 to cover the cost of bringing it from England. So when I decided to get a new car I arranged to take possession in London immediately after the Worldcon (thus saving £30), drive it to Stranraer in Scotland, cross on the ferry to Ulster and drive home. But this scheme was ruined by BMC carworkers who decided to have a strike, so I had to forgo my little motoring holiday and instead pay £33 for carriage, in addition of course to £3 for licence plates and £134 Purchase Tax (equal to 20% of the value of the car). That is why I was amused to read a few days ago that the British Motor Corporation had to lay-off 100,000 men on account of the bad weather. I hope the weather improves before next summer!

I had difficulty about my insurance, too. Full, comprehensive insurance would, I was informed, cost £62 less £25 no-claim bonus. I decided I only wanted insurance for third party, fire and theft. I had to pay the full £37, and a few days later they sent me a cheque for £31, the difference between the two premiums. How is it worked out? I dunno.

This car is an Austin Cambridge, or A60 for short. One can get a Morris Oxford or a Wolseley or an MG or a Riley with nearly the same shape and engine at slightly different prices. This shows the versatility of our car manufacturers.

The speedometer is calibrated to 100, but whether the car could do "the ton" or not I do not know — nor do I care. Anyone who does 100 mph on Irish roads is crazy. With one exception road engineers here know nothing about making roads and apparently don't want to.

There are a few things I would like altered in this A60 of mine. For example, the windscreen washer has to be pumped by hand — all right perhaps for 1915 but this is 1965. It is well-made, however: I've only had to have it fixed twice so far. The windscreen itself is curved, to give, perhaps, more vision or more space, but is actually just to make a more expensive repair job if it gets damaged.

Mileage per gallon is 25. Because it is what is laughably called a high-compression engine one must use the most expensive brand of petrol. Some of

the sneaky Continental firms make cars which can do 40 to 50 mpg on the cheapest petrol, but this is because they don't know any better.

[It has just struck me that this is not a bit like an editorial at all, at all. Perhaps

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

would be a better title. Yes?]

The key for the doors and ignition will not fit the boot: you must have a second key for this. (This is to give better acceleration or something.) All the keys are very stiff, especially in wet weather, and it is rather amusing to stand in the rain for two or three minutes trying to open the door.

The heater is cunningly contrived so that it doesn't set the car on fire: in fact, one cannot feel any heat at all until the car has gone about five miles.

There is a small mountain range running down the middle of the floor. (As the interior is all in blue I naturally refer to this as the Blue Ridge Mountain.) I believe it conceals the drive-shaft. You never see a thing like that in a Rolls. And a Rolls only costs £6000.

Anyone who wants to can open the bonnet from the outside. The reason is simple. When the car is locked up tight it takes about two minutes to open it up with a piece of stiff wire. (I have seen it done.) So the makers quite rightly decided not to try to foil car thieves.

If, like me, you roll down the side window when reversing you will have to be careful not to stick your head out careless-like or you'll bump your forehead on the top of the door-frame. Sitting upright my hair touches the roof. But it's OK for anyone five foot six or less. It's my own fault for growing over six feet.

The rear-view mirror has to be placed about the middle of the windscreen to give one the best view of the traffic behind. This makes a big blank area in the driver's view so the remedy is to put the mirror as near the top of the windscreen as possible. The rear view is not so good then, but one can't have everything, can one?

One end of the sun-visor can be unhooked and hooked on again at the side, but care must be exercised in doing this or it may fall down — which it may also do when you are merely raising it — and this can be inconvenient in heavy traffic.

The ash-tray for the driver is just below the ignition key. If you keep your ignition key on a ring with other keys the bunch dangles outside or inside the tray. The moral is, don't smoke while you drive.

I have left the car's worst fault till the last: I love driving it and waste time doing this when I should be trying to get out another issue of this fanzine. I missed the December deadline and if I'm not careful I'll



miss the March deadline as well. This is a very skimpy issue (even though it is up to 100 pages) and is just a reminder to the customers that The SCARR may be moribund but it's not quite defunct. There are no letters (as they are now more or less out of date), there is no Peeps into my Diary, and there are no mailing comments. But I hope people will continue to write to me — even if I don't read the letters I can always save the stamps.

I have only become interested in stamps from seeing John Berry's collection of Astrophilately: he may have described it in a fanzine but I wouldn't try to do so.

[And now that I think of it AUTObiography is a poor title when one is writing about stamps. Perhaps

# PERF DEFS & FDACS

would be a more appropriate title. No?]

I did not start my collection with the one-cent British Guiana. In case you don't know this is a small, eight-sided, dirty, faded scrap of paper. It bears the words: "British Guiana Postage One Cent Damus Retimus Que Vicissim," and the post-master's initials, EWW, scrawled on it. Its value is said to be nearly £100,000. This is absurd: me, I wouldn't give a penny more than £5,000 for it.

Collectors are a queer lot: as well as having their own esoteric nomenclature they seem to go more for defective instead of perfect stamps. As PUNCH put it:

Philatelists are crazy, mixed-up people. Heaven has lately been bombarded with their confused prayers for the disfigurement of Sir Winston Churchill. . . "Dear Lord, who made heaven and earth and the British Guianas One Cent of 1856 now worth £200,000, please arrange that the Churchill Commemorative stamps I buy on the day of issue be spoilt by every possible error of printing, watermark, gumming and perforation. May the printer who runs off my sheet be inefficient, three-fingered, drunk, colour-blind and afflicted by ague. On the other hand, O Lord, may the postman who datestamps my First Day Cover be the soul of efficiency, diligent, meticulous and so devoted to his duty that the awful botchery of my stamps shall receive a date-stamp of transcendent clarity."

I forgot to mention back there that the One Cent also has a picture of a sailing-ship.

Talking of old, faded, dirty scraps of paper reminds me that for many years (maybe 30, maybe 50) I have had a few printed sheets like that. They are obviously torn from a book, but there is no indication whatever of the name of the author or the name of the publisher. I don't know who dumped them in the attic but I wish he (or she) had left some indication of their origin. I would be very glad if anyone could tell me anything about them. Here is the first story and it's called

# THE GIRL AND THE GLOVES

NATURALLY, he was a little surprised when the school-girl, swinging her school-books in a strap, stepped up to the counter and asked him timidly if he kept gentlemen's gloves, size eight. But, he reflected, she was probably executing the commission for her father.

As a matter of fact, she was merely filling in a little time between the end of school hours and the beginning of luncheon with the pastime which pleased her most — the pastime of making people feel mad.

"Certainly," he said, with a patronising and encouraging smile. "What gloves would you prefer, Miss? Dogskin is being worn a good deal just now."

"Thanks," she said. "I don't think I should like gloves which were made from the skin of poor little dogs. It seems so cruel."

He smiled afresh.

"That is merely a trade term," he said. "They are not really made from the skins of dogs."

"I don't think," she said, "I want to buy gloves that are not what they pretend to be. It seems so dishonest."

"Just as you wish, Miss," he replied, indulgently. "We have every kind of glove in stock. Of course, dogskin is a good deal worn——"

"That's just it," she interrupted him. "I don't want a glove which is a good deal worn. I didn't know you sold second-hand articles. Haven't you got any new gloves?"

His smile was a little sickly, but he still smiled it patiently.

"Ours are all this season's goods. Would you care for a doeskin or a suede?"

"Suede sounds very nice," she said. "What does it mean?"

"Oh, it's merely a trade term for a special sort of glove. I feel sure you would find the suede very satisfactory."

"Is suede the name of an animal?" she asked.

"I really can't say. Let me show you some of them, and then you can——"

"I should like to know, though," she said. "Suede sounds rather like the French for Sweden. Is it?"

He fell back on his original earthworks.

"These trade terms," he said, "are merely——er——as a matter of fact, trade terms, and to be taken as such. Permit me."

And he whipped off the cover of a box.

"Would those suit you, do you think?"

"No," she said, "the grey is too dark."

He then fetched down another box, in which the grey was too light. He then went up a ladder, and fetched a box of fawn colour, which were too light. He then dived under the counter, and procured another box of fawn colour, which were too dark. The school-girl kindly said that, as she didn't want to give any trouble, she would have to make those do. That was all right. The smile came back to the man's face.

"These," he said, "are seven-and-six the pair."

"Then I will take one," she replied.

"One pair? Precisely."

"No, one glove. Right hand, please."

The smile died out again.

"Oh, we can't do that," he said. "We are never asked to do that. We never split a pair."

"No," she said. "Split gloves wouldn't be much use if you did. I want one glove, please; right hand."

"But don't you see," he said, exasperated, "that one glove is no use to us?"

"I'm not trying to buy gloves that will be of use to you. I'm buying them for a poor man who has only got one hand. So two gloves would be of no use to him."

"Well, I can't help it," said the man, snappishly. "We can't separate a pair."

"Of course," the girl said, "I should have expected to pay the price of a pair for the single glove."

The smile came back again.

"I see. That quite alters the case. We shall be delighted—the right hand glove, I think you said, Miss?"

"No, thanks," she said. "You told me you could not separate them. You told me that twice. Now, I don't want to make you tell stories for the sake of seven-and-six. I will go and buy the gloves somewhere else. But it does seem a funny thing that when you advertise every kind of requisite you can't really sell anything. Good morning."

She left the shop and got into a tram. The only other passenger, a somewhat nervous old lady, immediately got out. A girl who laughed loudly and intermittently with no visible cause could not possibly be sane.

--end--

Well, do you recognise it? If you do let me know.

And now for the piece de resistance.



I have always been an admirer of John Berry's stuff and, in particular, this short piece, taken from HYPHEN 13:

# RUST IN PEACE

IN AN OUTCROPPING of the Mountains of Mourne a stream rises. As it flows downwards it is joined by other small streams, until eventually, as it reaches the green fields of mid County Down, it is a fair sized river. The river Lagan. It flows serenely along in a northerly direction, and a few miles from Belfast it swings west and forms the boundary of Counties Down and Antrim. About six miles from the centre of Belfast the river passes along a lovely stretch of rural countryside. At this point is a bridge. It is known as Shaw's Bridge. It is famous. Chuck Harris has been there.

But it also holds a grim secret. Woe that I ever became a conspirator in the dreadful happenings I am about to relate. I will never forget that dirty night when.....wait, I want to tell you everything. I want you to get the following events in the proper perspective.

It all started one night in Oblique House. We were discussing Bob Shaw's bicycle.....

"But what I want to know is, what holds it together?" asked James for the third time in rather a mystified voice.

"String," I answered. "I know. Once I asked Bob for the loan of his pump, and when he untied it, the front wheel fell off."

BoSh half rose from his chair in anger.

"I deny my front wheel was fixed to the frame with string. That is an unfounded exaggeration. The back wheel, maybe. But not the front wheel."

He sat down again, his lower lip puffed out in indignation. He pushed a full teapot away. A danger signal. A hush fell over us.

He spoke softly enough, but his eyes glared accusingly.

"I'm just about getting fed up with people casting aspersions on my bike, just cos I paid 3/6 for it thirteen years ago," he said. He pointed an aggressive finger towards us. "It's as good as the day I got it. The dustman said it was a bargain."

"That alters things," said Walt. "If your bike is as old as that, isn't it time it was laid to rest? After all, the machine has suffered enough physical hardship all these years without considering the mental anguish it must have endured."

"I agree," said James, "and I suggest we ceremoniously fling it on the nearest rubbish dump."

"No, oh no," sobbed Bob. "Not fling my bike on a rubbish dump. If it must go, it must — but let it go in the best fannish tradition."

Walt suddenly snapped his fingers.

"I have it," he shouted. "Let's all go to Shaw's Bridge, and dump the bike in the Lagan somewhere nearby. I will compose a short service to

deliver as we line the towpath, and Bob can take the bike on its last triumphant journey to the bed of the river. What do you say, Bob?"

Bob's eyes began to light up. He looked at Walt with a new respect.

"Yes, I like it," he sighed. "The bike is worthy of it. You know, I often think how clever it was of them to dedicate that bridge to me before I was born. Kinda symbolic."

We all nodded.

"How about next Tuesday night?" asked RG.

"Yes, that will do," said Walt. "Dress is....er, let me see....raincoat and gumboots. No flowers, but if you care to bring along a few cans of lubrication to pour on the water, that's OK."

It was a moonlight night. I don't live too far from Shaw's Bridge, so I cycled over. I arrived on time, and saw a car parked under a row of trees. I leaned my bike against the river bank and sidled over.

Everyone was there except Bob.

"Where is he?" I queried.

"He said he would ride over, as a last token of respect. He should be here soon," said Sadie.

Ten minutes later, a horrible squeaky noise issued from the Belfast direction. We exchanged knowing glances. Fifteen minutes later he arrived, and stopped by the simple expedient of kicking away the back wheel. Pausing only to re-adjust the back wheel, he jerked spasmodically towards us. (I forgot to tell you the bike had no saddle.)

"Well, this is it," he said simply. "Let's get it over with."

"OK," said Walt, "fire the salvo, Janes."

Janes disappeared behind the trees and, seconds later, thirteen rockets blasted to the heavens, one for each year of the bike's co-existence with Bob.

It was a great moment — symbolic, as Bob had said.

Then Bob came to me. The rest of them turned away.

"This is for you, John," he sniffed. "It's not much, but I know you will treasure it."

He handed me the pump. I put it in my pocket. I didn't say a word. He knew how I felt.

We lined the towpath. Walt, Sadie, R.G., Madeleine, me, Janes, Peggy and Bob.

"When I've finished the short address," said Walt, "I want you all to hum the first few bars of Dragnet. That will be the signal for Bob to ride the bike into the water, to its final resting place."

After a few moments silence, Walt read the address.

".....and so, Roscoe," he concluded, "we ask that this long-suffering velocipede shall rest content in the shadow of Shaw's Bridge, until rust has finally merged it with its parent earth."



"That won't be long," someone muttered. Honestly, some people have no respect for a service of dedication.

"OK, folks," said Walt, solemnly, "Dagnet."

As we hummed the opening bars, Bob picked up the bike from the bank, and slowly rode into the middle of the river, gradually disappearing until only a trail of bubbles showed where the bike had finally finished its labours. For a moment we began to think that Bob had taken it too seriously and gone down with his bike, but a few seconds later he appeared on the surface and swam to the bank. We wrapped him in blankets and hurried him to the car. They all piled in, and drove away hurriedly, shouting "Goodnight" to me,

I was deeply touched with the real life drama of the whole episode. You know what I mean. It was truly fannish, somehow.

I pulled my bike from the bank, ran down the road for a few yards, and vaulted onto the saddle. You've done it yourself.

I shrieked aloud in torment. I had landed on a perpendicular tubing. The hair rose on the back of my head. I got off the bike, rushed back to the bridge, and discovered I still had the handlebars in my hand.

I thumped my fists against the parapet.

"You fool, Shaw," I shouted. "You fool!"

- curtain -

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