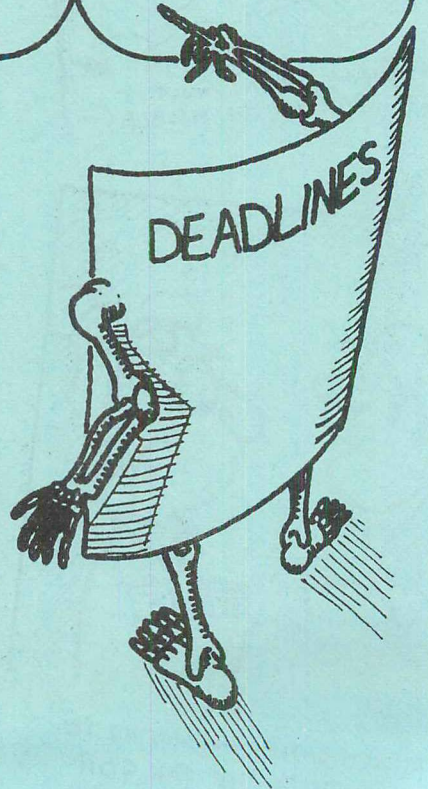
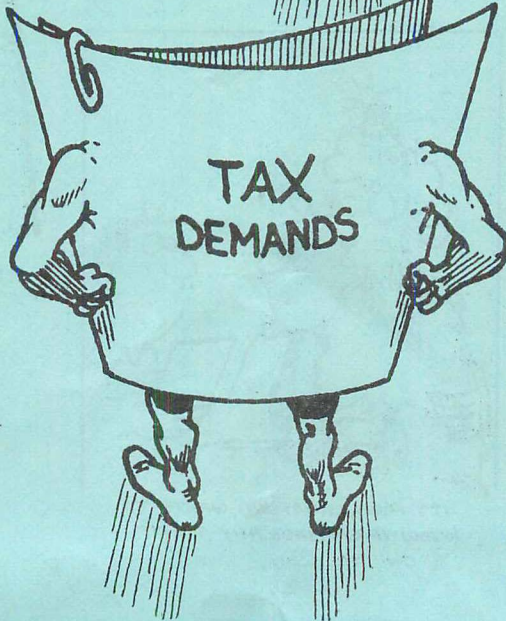
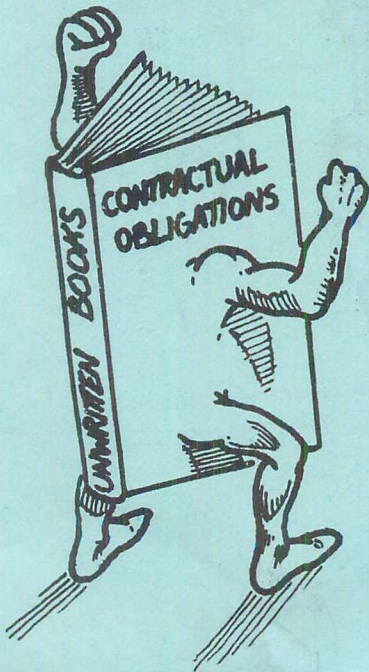
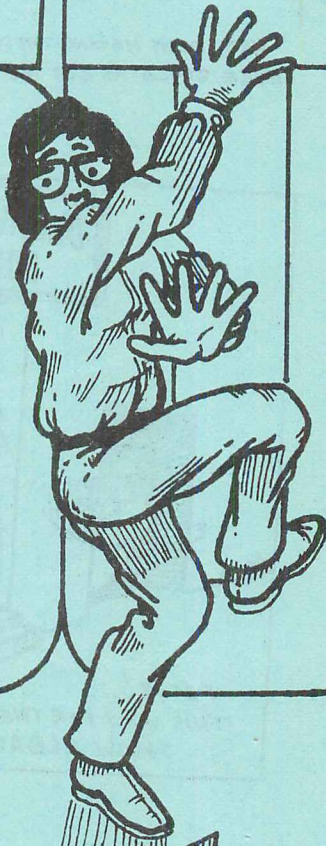
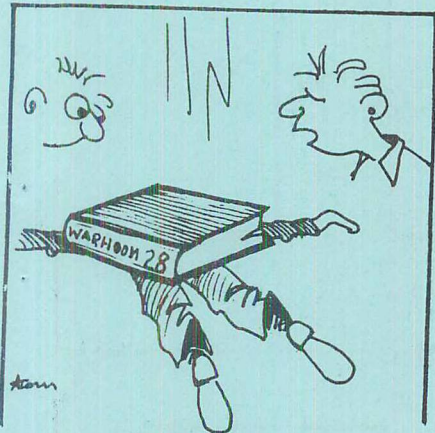


HANSEN '83...

TWIL

DOES





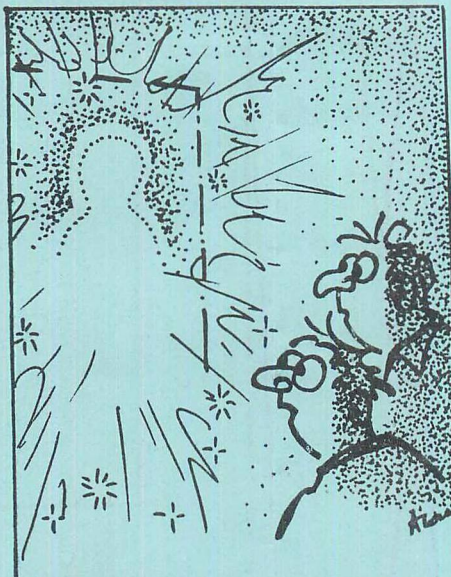
IT'S D WEST, IT JUST FELL OUT OF THE SKY ON TO HIS HEAD!



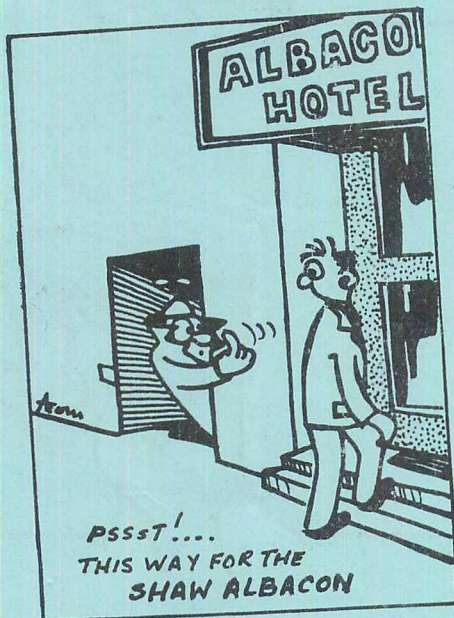
"REMEMBER, NOTHING ABOUT IT MUST LEAK OUT TO ANSIBLE!"



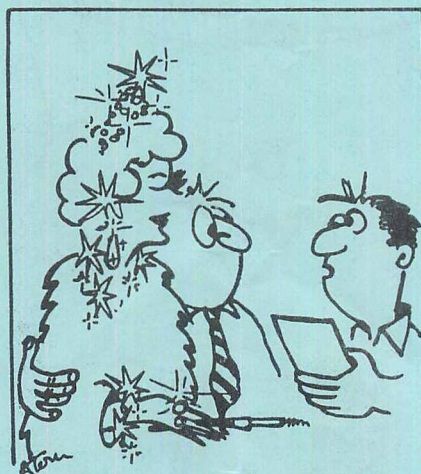
"YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT'S THE FAN G.O.H. YOU'RE STANDING ON"



"HE'S BEEN MAKING THESE ENTRANCES EVER SINCE HE GOT THE GOLLANZ JOB"



PSSST!... THIS WAY FOR THE SHAW ALBACON



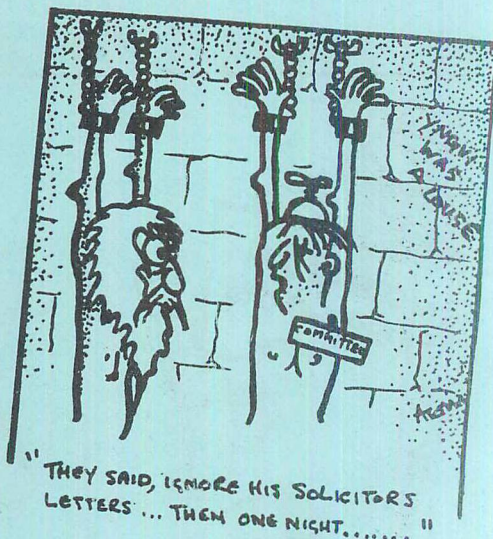
IT'S FROM LANGFORD, WANTS TO KNOW IF WE MADE ANY PROFIT ON THE CON,



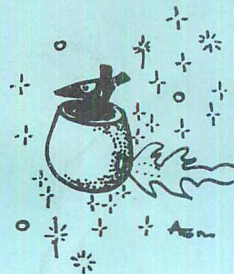
Stop! I've just thought of something I can write for the Femfan APA



IT'S GOT A FORTY PAGE REPLY TO THE REBUTTAL OF THE APPRAISAL OF THE CRITIQUE TO TED WHITE'S ANSWER TO THE REFUTATION OF HIS ARTICLE IN ANSWER TO D WEST'S STATEMENT ON.....



"THEY SAID, IGNORE HIS SOLICITORS LETTERS ... THEN ONE NIGHT....."



Between Scene 19 and Scene 20 the curtain is lowered to indicate the passage of time. Years pass; fannish empires rise and fall; the Albacon II², Sixth Fandom, Convention Profits and Paul Turner debates hold their brief sway and are forgotten. But now, signs and portents are in the air. Greg Pickersgill is seen on Holborn at 5 pm of a One Tun evening, walking the other way. Richard Bergeron has discovered the 'en-smalled fanzine', Joseph Nicholas is working on the ensmallled sentence, Malcolm Edwards convalesces from his invention of the enbigged fanzine which is always 36 pages too long. Something is stirring in British fandom, something ancient and very terrible, dimly remembered only by gaffers in convention bars who swap their wheezy reminiscences of the bad old days. From its grave the age-old horror rises, no longer a mere phantasm of the dark but a tangible form revealed in leprous morning light, a ghastly revenant whose existence can no longer be denied. It is Peter Weston. Meanwhile, at 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK, Dave Langford produces his twentieth issue of the long-forgotten TWLL-DDU and nobody takes a blind bit of notice. Except possibly Rob Hansen (cover), Atom (inside cover) and the sempiternal Litho Boss (if black spots form before your eyes, do not adjust your TD cover; there is a fault in John Harvey). This issue dated 1 April 1983, and not available to anyone—but you are the lucky exception. Ways to become a lucky exception do not necessarily include subscribing to the wonderful newszine ANSIBLE (sixteen issues published since TD-19, rush me £2.00 at once to subscribe), but a donation of 50p or £1 to TAFF can help...

Another typical Saturday in the new Langford home. Awakening with the usual glad moans and stumbling on autopilot to make tea with one hand while sifting rejection slips with the other, I find myself peering at the front door. Why am I peering at the front door? The bell must have rung; still dazzled by this shrewd reasoning I open it wide, remember the vile state of my old dressing-gown, and close it again, but not before a man in overalls has cheerily said "Scaffold" and I've replied "Um." Hideous clangs and crashes begin to sound in the garden, as though people are re-enacting a battle with naked steel, or a Novacon committee meeting. "Scaffold," I mumble, nodding wisely to myself as I pour boiling water with casual accuracy into a teapot as yet strangely devoid of tealeaves. Outside, someone is dropping brass bands from helicopters. Hot water overflows to fill the teatray as I fuzzily wonder what sounds like brass bands being dropped from helicopters.

Something connects, and not merely the overflowing water with my foot. Without perceptible transition I'm upstairs shaking the inert light of my life and shrieking, "HAZEL, HAZEL, THE ROOF'S COME!" She grunts, burrows into the bedclothes, irrefutably points out that it's

far too early in the morning and anyway they would have phoned first. As I fling back the curtains, huge iron poles sway terrifyingly just outside, and can this be the moment to explain that the bedroom clock is three hours slow because I turned off the power last night to wire up our twenty-ninth, thirtieth and thirty-first new sockets? The scaffolding poles are waving and clashing monstrosly in mid-air; Hazel stares transfixed, and vanishes under the blankets with screams of "Take them away, take them away." I have to shroud the windows, bar the doors and dangle cups of tea temptingly out of reach before Hazel can be coaxed inch by inch from bed to face the horror now engulfing us.

Because 7000 books have spent nine months (all the time since we moved here) in dusty cardboard boxes on the second floor, we feel it's time to erect shelves in the Grand Library, or what mundanes might call the front bedroom. Because this room has more damp patches than the Cabinet, we first need to redecorate a bit, or three bits, or even the lot. Because the dreaded damp comes from above, it seems like folly to redecorate without first titivating the roof and chimney-stacks. This chain of logic leads inexorably on to the arrival of three tons

of scaffolding one bright morning, to a mad search for my hearing aid in order to open communications with the strange race of scaffoldmen, and thus to the little tube thing between the aid's electronics and my ear getting broken in the general frenzy.

Not yet having mastered sign language from Avedon Carol's postal lessons, I thrust Hazel through the back door into occupied territory while refusing to show myself. (My naked ear, I explain, is sensitive to cold if nothing else.) Presently she reports that the loudly clanging and banging ones are Annoyed to learn that their tottering edifice has to reach all the way to our roof. Apparently, being scaffoldmen and by no means roofmen, they'd vaguely hoped to get away with a mighty framework towering perhaps four feet high.

I cower in the office, modestly hiding under the desk whenever the scaffolders peer through the window to make notes on the value of typewriters and other expensive things for the use of their more burglarious colleagues, and tap out the customary abusive letters to all the publishers who are remaindering me in breach of contract. ("We're getting old and jaded," remarked octogenarian Rob Holdstock at a recent Pieria gathering. "Time was when we'd be all starry-eyed if one of us had even sold a short story. Now we sit huddled together at Pieria 36, talking about our remainders. Oh god—" So saying, he took out the portable grave he always carries, and placed one foot in it.)

By early afternoon the scaffolding is up, already radiating that generic Scaffold Look of having been there for ages and of being a fixture through many grey years to come. I descend cautiously, to find Hazel being all dynamic again, turning out a grubby shed which came with the house, as did all the things you find in old sheds only worse. There's nothing quite so fascinatingly vile as the prehistoric suit we found stuffed under the eaves on the top floor (its pong and its perforations we could take, but also in situ was the newest generation of white wriggly things responsible for both), but Hazel is still daunted by the complications of earthworms which writhe like spaghetti from under everything, by yellow slugs not as big as rats, and by a horde of woodlice which according to her numerical estimate would run short of standing room on

Zanzibar.

While I exercise my chauvinist privilege of overrunning this lot with fire and the sword, Hazel assembles a wondrous treasure-trove of goodies from this same shed. Ninety-seven buttons, many old razor blades, numberless jamjars, a stainless steel pedal bin (does not work), a metal thing which looks like a Polaris nose-cap and which I nervously ignore as I'm no longer supposed to know about these things, a kinky rubber device for simulating woodgrain in paint or on Joe Nicholas, a home-made pottery lamp resembling both a lopsided UFO and an immense cowpat, a deckchair which is to deckchairs what *Fanzine Fanatique* in its heyday was to fanzines (I burn it hastily), and a further exciting selection of paints, door bolts, cup hooks, coat hooks and sacred horticultural objects which only require strong masculine hands to apply them, clean them, put them up, repair them, dig them in, and so on...

Tactfully and typically I retreat, nearly banging my head on the scaffold, with murmurs of "It's about time I started work on another fanzine." Hazel's practised sarcasms fall on deafer ears than usual, the Hearing Engine still being bust, as I stumble like a long-deprived junkie to the typewriter and set down the events of another typical Saturday in the new Langford home.

Getting Educated

OR: BITS FROM THE PRE-TAFF REPORT

I'm working on that TAFF report. Honest. Bits 1-6 have appeared in Twll-Ddu 19, Boonfark 5 (Dan Steffan), Nabu 11 (Ian Maule), Warhoon 30 (Richard Bergeron), Tappen 3 (Malcolm Edwards), The Zine That Has No Name 3 (Skel)... Bit 7 should be coming soon in Mainstream (Jerry Kaufman & Suzle), and Bit 8 when I write it will appear in Wallbanger (Eve & John Harvey). That's it. That will complete the bloody thing at last, and I'm already arranging for the revised and collected edition—real soon now. Before I went on the TAFF trip I went on another which lasted three years, and some little while ago I wrote a tentative 'first trip report episode' for DNQ or something from the Taral & Victoria Vayne stable—something which never appeared—something from which I've now snatched back that episode as the basis of an Improved Version of my Oxford report:

The crocodile caught my eye at once. I realized that any lack of spiritual fulfilment in my previous eighteen years could be ascribed to the absence of a stuffed crocodile over my desk. Dumping a few hundredweight of luggage on that desk to mark it as Langford's (a mysterious room-mate was in the offing), I looked eagerly around for the first impressions so vital to any autobiography. It was princely accommodation, not so much because any attempt had been made to stop up the draughts or cull the mice as because Edward VII (then Prince of Wales and not yet First Bounder of Europe) had been stowed in this very building, years ago—Frewin Hall, annexe of Brasenose College alias BNC. With that keen sense of history typical of England, the BNC authorities had painted over all the oak panelling in Edward's palatial sitting-room and converted it to a breakfast room for quantities of students: before, of course, it had been too luxurious by far to waste on hoi polloi. But my shared study had real oak panels containing real woodworm, and as well as the crocodile there was a real stuffed antelope labelled *Blue Nile 1901* whose nostril trickled disapproving sawdust whenever you did anything violent such as breathing or allowing your heart to beat.

Then there was no more time for first impressions because Martin Hoare—who'd been there a year—came bounding in to explain how things really were.

"Disley," he said, "used to be in your room. He hired the croc to a photographer for two whole terms until they complained and said it was on the Frewin inventory, '*crocodile, stuffed, one*'. He used to take it to pubs and give it double rums, that's why the mouth looks a bit rotted—but happy..."

There followed a conducted stagger about BNC, where Martin and I were supposed to have all knowledge (of physics) decanted into us. Martin had other views about decanters and his tour was a little idiosyncratic: "This is Hall—that's the Brazen Nose over High Table, the old college doorknocker—the paintings all lean out because of the piles of buns and things behind them—you'll see a bunfight at dinner before too long—some of them throw buns soaked in beer, and you can order beer in Hall and it comes in old silver pots with dates like 1670 on the bottom..." (I later got to know the silver quite well, but never saw a bunfight.)

Or: "Here's the Junior Common Room—they mostly read newspapers here—you have to move fast to get *Playboy* and *Private Eye*—see how there's three copies of the *Times* and none of them unfolded? Don't miss JCR meetings when they happen, there's all these boring speeches by lefties but you get free beer..."

Or: "The New Quad—this is where the Vampires club had a contest tossing beer-mugs over the college wall into the High—only they were too pissed to throw far and most of them just went through windows—the Dean banned the Vampires forever after that—you can played croquet here in the summer—and watch for the cocktail party every year out on the grass—get pissed with the dons on Jack's secret punch, it's like rocket fuel..."

Or, inevitably: "The Buttery's down here—mind the steps—I should have told you to mind your head too, are you all right? The usual for me, Jack, and what's yours Dave?"

Mine, at the time, was cider; the cost was 8p a pint. It seemed that Oxford's rigorous intellectual life had its compensations.

BNC and Frewin Hall seemed stuffed with eccentrics, perhaps because loathsome bits of the personality which were squashed flat at school can at last burgeon, proliferate and generally hang out in the university atmosphere. Of course I was perfectly normal in those days, not yet having been corrupted by fandom, but they unjustly called me odd because I read stacks of SF and sometimes could even be found guiltily trying to wr*t* it. Luckily for shy retiring me, my room-mate Stuart was quiet at first, having no weirder habits than endless forging of *Arth. Guinness* signatures as seen on the famous label. (We could only assume that he hoped to find one of the Beer King's lost chequebooks one day; I hadn't the heart to mention that Arthur Guinness was dead.) Later he became prone to fits of furniture-smashing and college-dismantling under the cruel aegis of BNC Boat Club suppers: a dinner jacket and a few bottles of wine bring out the beast in a man. He also took to bicycle-repair work, strewing the organs of partly convalescent bikes and even tandems across the floor for my naked feet to discover in the morning. Reasoning that this was a natural spinoff from his studies as an engineer, I gave thanks that he wasn't doing medicine. (He now erects mighty

bridges and flyovers, I understand—am still nervously looking for one with the characteristic deformities he built into those poor bicycles.)

Huxley the Mad Mathematician, another Frewin inmate, introduced himself after a few days by flopping on the sofa and reciting 'The Walrus and the Carpenter' complete and unexpurgated. This roused my competitive spirit, not to mention raging jealousy, and during the next vacation I memorized all 141 verses of 'The Hunting of the Snark' as the only possible comeback... Meanwhile, from the higher reaches of Frewin there came an eerie wailing which warped men's minds with its baleful spell of insomnia: in a third-floor room converted from an old chimney, seekers after truth would find strange Dave Scoins improvising on his Northumbrian Pipes. These are either the rude ancestors or the decadent aftermath of bagpipes proper; their screech and moan became part of the Frewin atmosphere, so that visitors' apprehensive enquiries would be met by blank looks from residents, and puzzled remarks like "What eviscerated cat?"

At Frewin I picked up the enthusiasm for fiddling with mains electricity which, much later, caused me to rewire huge tracts of 94 London Road before even considering fancy touches like paint, or wallpaper, or plaster. The first fruit of this was the immense Christmas tree of adaptors and extensions whereby Stuart and I drew unbelievable torrents of power from a single 2½ amp socket which proved to be unmetered. (BNC had just installed a bank of fourteen power meters in the Frewin hallway, a Big Brotheroid attempt to monitor our slightest doings.) Gadgetry connected usually included a 3000 watt electric heater as well as sundry lamps, kettles and even a toaster until my fellow-idiot made his disastrous experiment with toasted cheese. Did you know it's easy to boil eggs in an automatic electric kettle, merely by dangling them in a cradle of paperclips whilst holding down the little button which is trying to pop out and turn the kettle off? Extra room heating was supplied by the warmly glowing wiring conduit leading to that fateful socket. I never worked out why the fusebox failed to disintegrate in smoke and pyrotechnics, the way the USS Enterprise controls signal that someone hasn't fastened his seat belt... Even better was the wall-heater in the tiny

alcove which, too small to serve as a cupboard or toilet, had been drafted as a second bedroom when Frewin 1 became a shared study: we tossed for the big room actually leading off the study and I lost. But I won, acquiring a wall heater which was connected to another meter altogether, that of the hell-room Frewin 14 where hot and cold running water was provided on every wall and from which generations of students—including Martin—had been removed with interesting respiratory ailments. It was now empty, but as I basked the meter spun, provoking new legends of haunted rooms where vampiric Things sucked hungrily at the power sockets.

(Two potent memories of that micro-bedroom linger. One concerns the recurrent habit of Stuart and his BNC Boat Club friends of smashing down its door after their every dinner or celebration—and the enormous contrition with which they'd make their hungover apologies and pay for the shattered timber next morning. [I wasn't that unpopular, but mine was the first door your average questing drunk could find on entering Frewin.] And I remember sitting in bed all day under that heater, dosing a cold with small quantities of rum and for the first time reading the Tandem paperbacks of James Branch Cabell. Whoopee!)

Something with terrible and lingering effects happened in my very first week at Oxford, so early in my college career that I hadn't even learnt how to skip lectures. On the BNC notice-board, half obscured by flapping invitations to archery, go, Trotskyism and true religion, I saw a strange cartoon. At first blink it appeared to be a sphinx; at second, its single eye and silly grin hinted that SF was in the air. The text was: *SFinx*. No address. No explanation. Mysterious. By and by I was caught in the rush to 'Freshers' Fair', a free-for-all in which university clubs showed off their salesmanship by enticing neophytes to join more clubs than they could possibly afford or attend. For some cunning psychological reason this event is always held in the vasty halls of the Examination Schools, where at the end of three years there occurs the event of which one does not speak... Inside was a great groaning and heaving of too many people carrying too many flyers and membership cards (afterwards the street outside, the High,

looked like a paperchase). The crowds carried me helplessly this way and that like some pitiful fanzine borne on the vast tossing sea of the postal system, until with an agonizing switch of simile I was ejected like some unusually athletic grapefruit pip into a circle of calm. You may well ask what could be so horrific and weird that even the indiscriminate hordes drew back. The *SFINX* stared at me, antennae akimbo: this was it. It was (I read) THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY SPECULATIVE FICTION GROUP! The young lady behind the stall encouraged my advance with a smile, so that the pound notes slithering from my wallet almost burst into spontaneous flame with the speed of their motion: in less time than it takes to hurl oneself under a bus I was a paid-up member of OUSFG, clutching their fiction zine *Sfinx* as though desperate to rush to some nearby toilet and inject it into my veins. And the lady was DIANA REED, who was EDITOR OF *SFINX* and WROTE SCIENCE FICTION and I almost swooned.

Thus the first, fateful steps towards the abyss. Ahead lay the doldrums of the BSFA, a waterless waste of rejection slips, and—singing high and clear with just a hint of hiccups—the eldritch call of fandom itself. Had I but known...

There were other strange initiations to be undergone—like that of the massed BNC physicists, which proved far more insidious and cruel than those hearty affairs described in boys' books (roasting over open fires, tossing in blankets, hearts torn out with obsidian knives, all the routine stuff). We newcomers were lured with invitations to a sherry party organized at the expense of older, wiser physicists who'd survived previous years' ordeals. The party was to last one hour, ending in time for formal Hall dinner at 7.30 pm. The 'formal' bit consisted of throwing on a soup-stained gown over one's tie-dyed t-shirt, ragged jeans or whatever. Thus formally attired, we filed into the room, wondering at the strange smiles on the faces of our seniors; there were about eighteen present, all told.

On the table stood eighteen large bottles of sherry.

Of course, having left school, we were all men of the world; most of us had from time to time become quite merry on strong liquors such as cider or even beer. Sherry was a drink for refined ladies of various

sexes, and held no terrors for such as we. I remember that the room became very noisy in a very short time. The first body thudded to the floor in something under twenty minutes. People kept tripping over him and spilling drinks; some of them managed to stand up again. The carpet was crunchy with broken glass and the air had transmuted to sherry-flavoured fog. Suddenly the bottles were all empty and it was time for Hall. The people sunk in reveries about the room were perhaps dieting strenuously, though one diehard crawled implacably towards the door: he hurt his head on the jamb and subsided. Feebly twitching bodies were heaped in a log-jam at the foot of the stairs, a menace to all who passed. Another abrupt transition and I was sitting in Hall, confronted by a steak-and-kidney pie. It stared coldly at me, easily resisting the feeble passes of my knife. A colleague was outstared by his own pie and had to be removed, along with a meal now seemingly coated in thousand-island sauce. Was this what Oppenheimer had meant when he declared "The physicists have known sin"? An unforgettable initiation, the sherry party; already I was looking forward to next year's and the time when I could watch the freshers with a strange smile.

Later that evening I tried to attend a society meeting (The Scientific Society: Mr Darwin's Startling New Theory. Well, Oxford science was a bit like that sometimes). The venue was an energetic building which stayed always just ahead of me as I weaved through every street in North Oxford. I never caught up with the meeting, but I worked out the secret of the universe two or three times and failed to write it down. Returning to Frewin with smoke and flame emerging from my shoes, I played a hazy game of chess with the aforesaid Stuart. Legend has it that I won; memory refuses to make any statement, but somewhere I have or had a chessboard whose every white square is vindictively signed Arth. Guinness.

Such befuddlements don't account, though, for my vagueness concerning OUSFG meetings, which have all coalesced into a single memory of too many people talking too loudly in too small a room. One trouble was that I hadn't mentioned being more than somewhat deaf: most school contemporaries had seemed to regard the affliction as akin to epilepsy,

infectious hepatitis or criminal lunacy. Others dismissed it as the shabby excuse of a misanthrope and poseur who despicably pretended not to throb in ecstasy at the merest chord by the Beatles or whoever... OUSFG, unaware of the truth, generously took me for a moron—little knowing the richly exotic aberrations concealed by my silence, little knowing that one day, armed with a better hearing aid, I'd be OUSFG President and institute a new tradition: compulsory recitations of 'The Hunting of the Snark'. For the time being, I sat and watched.

There was Kev Smith with a translucent moustache, looking deceptively harmless and vague: the coming of the Terrible Beard was still in the future, as was its going, pursued by a fleeing hairline. Rob Jackson, huge and giggling, was himself invisible in thickets of beard; he did serious and cosmic-minded things such as writing stories for *Sfinx*. Diana Reed's firm rejection of K. Smith's submissions to this ficzine gave no hint that more than a decade after, their slow-blossoming romance would [insert suitable Barbara Cartland bits here]. Secretary and later President Allan Scott was distinguished by a sheepskin waistcoat thing, reputedly carnivorous, and an endearing habit of absent-mindedly laying about him with a four-foot broadsword. Big Mike Rohan occupied a conspicuous fur coat which made him very much bigger until one day he set fire to it with his pipe; I once shared the back seat of a Mini with the coat and (less prominently) Mike, and anyone who's been trapped under a bear will know the exact sensation. Chris Morgan spent his time looking satanic and communicating endless lists of award-winning or Robert Silverberg novels which everyone should read. Debbie Hickenlooper was (surprise!) from the wonderful USA and achieved fame for a declamation of 'Jabberwocky' in German which sounded like something between a hailstorm and a catfight in a car-wash. Deb's imperturbability gave no hint that years later she and Mike Rohan would become spliced, unless you count such subtleties as their moving into the same flat before I left Oxford. And somewhere in the background lurked Phil Stephensen-Payne, then just Payne, who'd discovered fandom and was keeping it to himself. Only recently did Kev and I unearth his letters in old fanzines, complaining of how horribly sercon was OUSFG. I still don't know whether he

was protecting us from the cruel outside world or vice-versa.

(What about Hazel? you ask. This was OUSFG as I remember it near the beginning; I didn't meet Hazel until my last year at Oxford, whereupon it was the work of mere weeks to arrange the engagement, fix the OUSFG voting to make Hazel President after me, sell my first SF story and almost immediately get arrested for criminal damage and suspected affiliations to the IRA. That's my life.)

Besides SF, there were more traditional Oxford activities—times when despite being prosaic modern-day students some of us would assume the personae of legendary Frivolous Young Gentlemen. I say gentlemen because women weren't let into BNC until 1974, making BNC practically one of the daring pioneers of Oxford co-education—Kevin used to sound vaguely proud that his place, Oriel, was the last of the all-male colleges. BNC was short on exotic traditions, but they kept up the rite of Ale Night each Shrove Tuesday. After a Hall dinner featuring pancakes, the gowned but otherwise disreputable students would stand on the tables drinking or gargling hot spiced ale made to another of those secret recipes handed down from the Borgias. While not glugging the potion they would tunelessly sing their way through a pamphlet of specially written songs printed at College expense for the occasion. Invariably these songs were insulting to dons and selected members of the student body, and the rilly triffic part of the tradition was that the dons had to sit there at High Table and pretend to enjoy it as their sexual and intellectual prowess was noisily questioned. In my 2nd year, writing under various names, I managed to provide seven out of nine sets of Ale Night lyrics, proving to myself that I had all the hidden talent of William McGonagall. In my final year the appalling songs all lewdly foretold horrifying results and the total destruction of all civilized ways when, later that year, our college Let In The Women. Shock horror, etc.

Once I found myself assisting in the transport of an immense water-buffalo's head from a remote college to the railings outside the Museum of the History of Science in Broad Street, where it hung rather neatly (I have pictures taken at 5 am to prove it). Did it really seem

like a good idea, even then? As Jerome K. Jerome observed after writing *Three Men in a Boat*, at the time it seemed like the only thing to do. It was the same with the placement of a patriotic leek in BNC Hall on the eve of that great Welsh festival, St David's Day. There seemed no alternative but to improve the hall's carved wooden unicorn—co-supporter of the college arms, thirty feet from the floor—with the happily phallic national vegetable of Wales. My accomplice Warren, another of the BNC physicists, balanced aloft on the huge ladders we'd managed to sneak in, leaning hard against the loins of the unicorn and struggling to affix the leek with sticky tape.

"Hey Dave, it's got one already. Carved in the wood."

"A leek?"

"No, not a leek."

"That's all right, then."

It took a long time. A nail or drawing-pin might have done the trick at once, but we vaguely understood the rules of this game and avoided any such naughty defacement. Even the people who dismantled a Mini and reassembled it on High Table of one college, causing untold inconvenience, had taken immense care not to scratch the old oak table. So we took our time, afterwards putting the ladder back very carefully. Subsequently, over a pre-dawn cup of coffee, Warren said most seriously: "I think that was a good silly thing to do, don't you?" Quite.

A lot of other things happened because they seemed the thing to do. I joined the Oxford Union and had another foretaste of fandom in its elections: as in the Doc Weir Award, the pre-1977 Nova or the Hogus, it was accepted that the committee would fiddle the voting with a creative frenzy worthy of the great Moriarty—as opposed to the languid nonchalance with which one was expected to treat yer actual academic work. It was also accepted that anyone involved in the Union's petty politics wasn't really worth crossing the street to spit on: in a neat reversal of fandom BNF situation, the President of the Union would have much kudos outside Oxford while being more or less reviled by university members. (The poor sod might as well get used to being despised, since ahead lies the traditional sorry end—Prime Minister or worse.) The great advantage of the Union was its location, so close to Frewin Hall that during the famous debates

one could stand in the back garden and—with the aid of a small air rifle—make each of the debating hall's drainpipes go *Ping!*

Three years of Oxford are impossible to structure into a neat article, at least for me. As with OUSFG meetings, the astonishing events of nine terms are jumbled in my memory, crowding together like clichés in *Star Wars*. The amazing punt expedition to the source of the River Cherwell! The lecturers like Roaf, who scrawled the entire Greek alphabet on the blackboard whilst hiding it with his body and mumbling advanced mathematics at his feet while keeping his back forever to the seekers after knowledge! Tutors: the egregious Dr Peach assessing a lengthy essay's worth between finger and thumb ("A bit *thin* this week") before casting it aside unread, the charming Dr Altmann whose accent no-one could follow and whose handwriting no-one could read! BNC Players' regular demands to use the Frewin 1 study as 'offstage' in their open-air productions, and the impossibility of describing an experiment to measure the helicity of the neutrino while the Statue is fidgeting and awaiting his cue to drag Don Juan off to hell... All too much. There will be more of this.

When I visited Frewin again not long ago I found that the college authorities, with that keen sense of history typical of England, had ripped out and were about to burn all the oak panelling of Frewin 1: this was called renovation. The buggers can't take away the memories, though, so there. I started wondering what else I still had from the Oxford years. Culture? Well, look at me now, and weep. (Or as an uncle of mine wrote in disappointment to my mother, "I was sad that David still retains such a strong Welsh accent rather than the more cultured one I'd hoped for after his exposure to Oxford..." H'm.) Physics? Pull the other one: five years' hard labour on the Aldermaston computers soon took the keen cutting edge off *that*. What people most notice as Different about Langford is, actually, table manners. BNC Hall has left its mark. I only have to shut my eyes and there I am again, settling at the long bench while others vault the tables as the only way to the bench on the other side, and here comes

one of the college scouts balancing fourteen soup plates up his arm, a sight that still boggles the brain. Down they go on the long table, bang bang bang, and there's a multiple slurping-against-time to get the soup down before another chap following ten places behind whips the plate away again. Bang bang bang again as the plates with the main course arrive; there's a small scurry for the doors by certain folk if the meat's one of the BNC unspecialities like jugged hare ("not cooked but frightened to death on the plate," as more tactful gourmets phrase it). Now, a terrifying air of expectancy, as of starved lions watching the first Christian being poked into the arena... and the too-small dish of vegetables arrives, and twenty hands flash forward, and from there on it's every man for himself, survival of the fittest, nature red in tooth and claw, spectacles of carnage best not described...

Oxford has left this mark on me to brand me as her own. Programmed Pavlov-style by three years of BNC Hall, I'm still the fastest and messiest eater I know. Except possibly for Martin. Bloody culture.

We Vaguely Remember Hearing From:

Ian Abrahams, ARNOLD AKIEN (who addressed 17 pages or so to the 'libertarian' books mentioned last issue, concluding:) "The rubbish in these exotic volumes is dangerous all right—to the cretins who read *How To Kill* (in four volumes) and then believe they're equipped to defend themselves against all comers, whereas in fact the average thug would wipe the floor with them. Have no fear about the next belligerent drunk you meet down the Underground having read *How To Kill*: he's far more likely to be an illiterate who will simply hit you with a brick. There, does that make you feel better?"

→ Harry Andruschak, MICHAEL ASHLEY—"Was that your oafish brother 'Jon' poncing about in *NME* the other week? Reminds me, saw some Mekons graffiti at university. This cheered me up until I realized that I'd done it myself a couple of years ago", MAL ASHWORTH—"I recognize you for what you are, Dave Langford!" (expletives deleted), Jim Barker, Paul Barnett (who developed an interesting theory about the Glasgow Bob Shaw's being a 'tulpa' or *Man In Black* having no real existence—a mere

projection from the presumably masochistic subconscious of Duncan Lunan. Luckily for everyone I've lost the letter which expounds all this), Allan Beatty, Eric Bentcliffe, John D Berry, Pamela Boal, Simon Bostock, Brian Earl Brown, Vinç Clarke (who wanted more page numbers and fewer obscenities like 'science fiction'. Page number follows: 9), John Brunner, Mary & Bill Burns, AVEDON CAROL (who reacted to a quotation from one of *Little Brother Jon's* letters—"Don't tell our dear Mother about [his current lady friend] because I am trying to convince her that I am a Homosexual")—"Your mention of your brother's attempts to convince Mom he's gay explains something for me. I am told that at Ratcon Larry Carmody was running around bragging that he was the only TAFF candidate this year who'd been feminist enough to have a female nominator. Of course Linda Bushyager might object on Taral's behalf, but never mind that—I was thinking about some of my own nominators and trying to explain to myself where Larry got the impression that none were women. With D.Potter and Chris Atkinson it was obvious—D. is about 6 feet tall and black, and as everyone who's heard the joke must know, what you call a six-foot Negro is 'Sir'. Also Larry doesn't wear glasses, and since all fans suffer from poor eyesight this explains how Larry managed to be a NY fan for years and still believe D to be a man. Chris has the same name as Chris Priest, which proves it anyway, but besides that she's constantly being touted as some sort of best fanwriter in the world these days, even by Ted White, so she must be a man (and I am the only TAFF candidate to have a pregnant man for a nominator!). But in Hazel's case I couldn't figure out his reasoning until you revealed all—Hazel, of course, is Jon's drag persona. Silly old me. I thought she was your wife all this time—god knows it's the most convincing drag I've ever seen, and a far better act than any of the transsexuals I've known." (Hazel comments: "Fie.")

→ CHERYL CLINE—"I have the same audiologist as Poul Anderson... This guy is great for sending me offbeat stuff like a booklet explaining (on about a 3-year-old level) how to take care of hearing aids. It's illustrated in full colour with drawings of little hearing aids with hands and feet. My favourite goes with the tip 'Should your aid get wet, do not put it in the oven to dry it out.' There's

this poor hearing aid trapped in a glass-fronted oven, looking frantic, sweating and beating on the glass, screaming to be let out... I was thinking of a Deaf Club. What you'd get, see, is a card that says 'I am deaf, please do not shout' if you're deaf, and if you're hard of hearing, 'Speak up, idiot!' You'd also get an 8x10 xerox portrait of Alexander Graham Bell, a full-colour rubberstamped poster artistically displaying the Manual Alphabet, and a button that says 'What?' There could also be an auxiliary for people with perfect hearing who don't want to be left out of anything. They'd get all of the above, plus a pair of industrial ear plugs." (Next TD will be a special issue for the deaf, with inbuilt microchips completing the fanzine experience by blaring forth the parts deaf fans miss—rustling pages, squeaky staples, ink gurgling through the paper's interstices, all that.)

→ Dave Collins, BOB DAY—"Why did General Zog in *Superman II* look like D. West?"
Dorothy Davies, Leigh Edmonds, Lilian Edwards, Malcolm Edwards, Keith Fenske, David Sivvens Garnett, Mary Gentle, Seth Goldberg, William T Goodall, Philippa Grove-Stephensen (whose literary researches had just disclosed a great chunk of *TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE* which divides into perfect blank verse in the metre of *HIA-WATHA*. She wants to know if everyone knew this ages ago. Not me!), MARGARET HALL—"You physicists have a tremendous advantage in writing SF. Geology is the only science I've studied to any depth (sorry), but it doesn't really lend itself... Take plate tectonics..."

'Mr President, sir, I have some terrible news.' The general could not hide the trembling of his hands. 'Our allies are withdrawing from us. Europe is retreating.' 'What!?' The President leapt to his feet, reaching for The Button. 'Leaving us to stand alone against the commie menace! Nuke the treacherous bastards!' '—And there's worse, Mr President. The Russians are approaching—we're on a collision course. It's plate tectonics, sir.' 'Why wasn't I told of this new secret weapon before? How long has this been going on?'

'Millions of years, Mr President...' The only twllau ddu we are familiar with are old slate and gold mines in the area." (i.e. *Gwynedd*)... George Hay, Jack R Herman, Joy Hibbert, Terry Hill, Linda James, Phil James, Garry Kilworth, Jay Kinney, Christine Kulyk, Chris Lewis, David V

Lewis, Mary Long, STEVE MACKEY—"I was actually a bit disappointed with Twll-Ddu, for it seemed so very ordinary, as opposed to what I would have imagined from someone as respected as you. Of course it was good, and even enjoyable, but..." (I actually had a couple of letters like this, pointing out that such was my colossal, towering reputation that unless TD eclipses the entire previous literary output of Western civilization it'll seem anticlimactic. My tentative solution is to start again as a new and different fan who can be hailed as unexpectedly brilliant or something. The Paul Turner experiment didn't work out too well [the telecontrol systems broke down and the device ran wild], but I'll try again soon.)

→ Matt Mackulin, KEN MANN—"The issue struck me in the same way as watching a series of parlour-games performed by Young Conservatives—unfunny wit, shallow and banal. So what's new in fandom?" (I won't be asking you to the Hunt Ball.) Jean Maudsley, Helen McNabb, Chris Morgan, Barney Neufeld, Joseph Nicholas, Marc Ortlieb, John D Owen, Jonathan P R Palfrey, Phil Palmer (who wanted more enthusiasm for murderous books and repressive techniques), David Redd, JEFF SCHALLES—"Have patience, and sooner or later I will send all of you British sots pictures I took of you at Noreascon and after. I have some frightfully funny shots of Harry and Jim one night at Dan Steffan's house when Jim threw up on their cat and Harry threw up most everywhere else... Have you noticed that non-drinkers are very nervous people incapable of completing a thought-chain more than three sentences long? They have strange senses of humour, too, finding things funny like pulling the wings off of parakeets and hiding the bottle opener."

→ Joyce Scrivner, Bob Shaw, Moira Shearman, Nick Shears, John Shire, Cyril Simsa, Jon Singer, Peter Singleton, Steve Sneyd (enclosing a 'fairly authentic artists impression of the Yearly Mail Ideal Home Show being held underground in postatomic conditions'), Phil Stephensen-Payne, Paul J Stevens, Taral, Sue Thomason, Martin Tudor, LISA TUTTLE—"Extremely fucking funny", Roger Waddington, Jon Wallace, Harry Warner Jr, IAN WATSON—our Food Correspondent—"Surely the best thing to do with marrows is remove the contents totally, stuff with fine minced spiced

viands, cook, then chuck the outside away too before serving?", Roger Weddall, D. WEST—"Came across an interesting little paper by Desmond (*Naked Ape*) Morris the other day entitled *Homosexuality in the ten-spined stickleback*. Seems Morris took all these innocent young fish and depraved and corrupted them so much they began indulging in no end of unnatural practices. Amazing what these scientists get up to. There ought to be a law against it."

→ WALT WILLIS—"Never use a fmz as a marker in a car maintenance manual." ...I think this was a subtle apology for a late LoC. Really really late letters were arriving even as I typed this, from Bill Gibson (who mostly discussed True Rat and the Rich Coad Memorial Stack of Ratfanzines) and Dave Rike (who thought the Malcolm Edwards line "I've always wanted to run my hands over your naked body" [addressed to Peter Weston] would be a triffic t-shirt slogan). Other names omitted or placed out of alphabetic order represent not errors but a frighteningly subtle cipher system whereby future historians will be able to deduce that TD20 was in fact written by Joanna Southcott, Prince William, or John Brunner's word processor in its spare time.

Through Time and Space With the Chevalier de Méré

One day not long ago I wandered into a games shop and saw a round dice. What a jolly good surreal joke, I thought as I stood there chortling out loud: in the same class as the spiked flatiron, the fur teacup, or Darrell Schweitzer's lengthy articles proving J.G. Ballard is not worth writing lengthy articles about.

It's a mistake to chortle in shops like that, since the assistants—who've already been following your every move with narrowed eyes, at least if you're me—start converging and pointedly asking what games you want to buy. Is this overt suspicion because people keep escaping with two-foot-square game boxes secreted under their fingernails, or because the assistants are obscurely compensating for guilt at charging £7.50 and up for immense boxes containing a few bits of cardboard? As nonchalantly as I could, I rebuffed them and went on an embarrassed browse while thinking about that round dice.

The thing's only a joke but you could

make it work, I realized. You could make it hollow and have six little pits inside, and a marble or something in there too, so it would always come to rest wobbling with a number uniquely uppermost. What a clever sod I am, I thought. I could patent that... manufacture them... fame, power... buy out TSR... rule the world. At this euphoric point my circuit of the shop brought me back to the tray of round dice, and condescendingly I picked one up, and it rattled because there was a marble or something rolling in and out of little pits inside. Out of sheer pique I bought the thing and left, subsequently reasoning my way to the conclusion that round dice would be so hard to balance properly—or so easy to load—that they'd never catch on and that no sensible person would buy one.

If I were more sensible I mightn't end up in these situations. I mightn't get squinted at for chortling over local newspaper placards which seem irresistibly funny but only to me. SHOP BAN ON UNRULY CATHOLIC SCHOLARS, I read the other day: chanting lewd litanies, were they, or promiscuously crossing themselves before counting their change? While it's taken me six years to learn that DISASTER FOR ROYALS does not mean that a DC-10 has fallen on Buckingham Palace but that the local football team has performed as usual. On a grimmer note were the renovations to public toilets on the junction near here: what relics did they find in the U-bend to provoke the graffito splashed on adjacent buildings: THERE ARE HUMAN BONES BURIED UNDER THE JUNCTION? (And why am I the only person I ever catch staring at this?)

Could be that ten years of fandom have done things to my brain, so it rolls and rattles between little pits inside the skull. (Most mornings it certainly feels that way.) I worry about things. Like this: Hazel can't light a certain gas-fire in our possession, but I can. She had a running joke about its being the alcohol on the breath that did it, and of course this was only a joke, until... There was this gasman in my office, see, connecting up the gas-fire we'd brought from the other house. He pointed to the cable trailing from one side and said, "Electric ignition. Bet that doesn't work on this antique, not since Natural Gas."

"Oh yes it does," I averred. "It lights if I turn the knob and sort of blow at the

same time."

He looked at me sidelong for a moment, as though I'd mentioned that among my hobbies was impaling gasmen and drinking their blood. "Yes," he said in a certain tone of voice. "Some people can do that."

Then he silently went away, leaving me with a brand-new worry.

If I were even slightly more sensible and less prone to worry I might perhaps not have spent parts of this morning crouching in pouring rain atop twenty-five feet of scaffold, clearing portions of our former chimneys from the gutter in order to slow the torrential overflow which fell with unerring accuracy on the flat roof over the downstairs bay window whose watertight seal had been cleverly cracked by a misplaced scaffold pole, permitting all the rainfall on a roof approximately the size of the Amazon basin to irrigate our new carpet.

...And surely, with only the merest extra quantum of common sense, I wouldn't be typing what according to the files and records is my hundredth fanzine. Whimper. Nothing exceeds like excess. Twenty *Twill-Ddus*, six *Drilkjises*, nineteen *Cloud Chambers*, thirteen *TAFF/GUFF* flyers, thirty-two *Ansibles*, ten miscellaneous and why on earth do I still feel no urge to stop? Ah, but when the moon is full there comes the *change*, as Langford collapses behind the sofa, comes up all hairy and fanged, and driven by frightful compulsions begins to type yet another segment of *TAFF* report. (30,000 words of the bloody thing I've done now, amid much else, only for Joy Hibbert to tick me off for only doing *Ansible*, and request that I pull my finger out. Poot.) With alarm I look ahead to becoming a long-runner like *The Mousetrap*: by the 250th performance I'll be an inescapable part of the fannish scene, my fanzines traditional British landmarks which nobody reads. Only occasional foreigners will come to peer curiously, while rude people like D. West threaten to spoil their fun—like undertipped cab-drivers outside the *Mousetrap*'s theatre—by revealing the punchline of one of my jokes, or of both.

As I started typing this, the poxy round dice fell off the edge of my desk and cracked. That's my life.

"It really is amusing watching the Americans try to fathom West." (Mike Dickinson)

Straight Onto Stencil

Asimov's Literary Secrets Revealed

Martin Hoare, whose shadow never grows less, passes on an advert wherein Isaac Himself plugs the cheap'n'nasty TRS-80 word processor. It is a fearful sight, the Asimovian smile looking more than ever as if locked into place with the aid of the wires and clips and sutures described in *The American Way of Death*. But if you can ignore the rictus long enough to study the text, you learn that with the wondrous prosthetic aid of the Machine our hero can "assign frequently-used words and phrases to a user-defined key. So whenever I press that key, the word or phrase is displayed instantly!"

This may explain a lot. Imagine some of the more commonly used keys. Number one would yield: "Had it not been for master psychohistorian Hari Seldon's Plan, thirty thousand years of anarchy would have had to elapse before the publication of the sequel." Number two, for autobiographies: "...I said at once, and everyone laughed at how neatly I'd turned the tables on Harlan/that importunate fan/the President of the USA/God." And number three, for press releases to *Locus*: "I believe, and I think I can say this without fear of contradiction, that no book—let alone a serious work of SF—has previously been on the *New York Times* bestseller list..."

Famous Dave For TAFF

The famous, fabulous and unfathomable D. 'Dave' West wishes as usual to refute everything: specifically, ill-founded rumours in the gutter press (*DT*, *Izzard*, *Ansible*) that he might even consider with half a braincell the possibility of standing for *TAFF*. He makes feeble evasions about not liking travelling and being alarmed by the nauseous properties of funny foreign food and funny American beer—but here at *TD* headquarters it's an open secret that D is filled with deathly fear of meeting US fans, an encounter which might harm his ability to make vast unflattering generalizations about them.

Instead, he points out the existence of *DWFF*, the D. West Fan Fund. "I am not a candidate but *the prize*, the purpose of the Fund being to allow some worthy foreign person the chance of a pilgrimage to Bingley. Unlike *TAFF*, there are no tiresome voting regulations—anyone can vote as many times as they like for anyone at all (including themselves) provided they

make a contribution to the Fund of not less than 50p per vote. The DWFF Administrator (and Hon.Sec. of the Famous Dave Appreciation Society—membership only 50p) is Jimmy Robertson (c/o O'Brien, 27 Green St, Glasgow, G40 2HN), to whom all correspondence, votes and money should be sent as soon as possible. NB—voters should also send at least one recent photograph of their preferred candidate, in order to help me decide whether or not to be prepared to leave town." (D.West)

It all sounds suitably devious and corrupt, but not as much so as Marc Ortlieb's MAFF (Mid-Atlantic Fan Fund, intended to leave the lucky Australian winner somewhere halfway). Because I am nice, and kindly, and generous, and because I had this Australian banknote which even the drunkest Reading bar staff couldn't be persuaded to accept, I rushed a MAFF vote to Mr Ortlieb, voting of course for Mr Ortlieb, who as the founder of the feast deserves some egoboo. The loathsome response: "It's a good thing I took my glasses off before I read your vote, otherwise I might have registered a vote for me to win the fund, and might be in the terrible position of having to contemplate presenting myself with the bogus air-ticket and concrete slipper, and I'd hate to have to do that. Sydney fan Vera Lonergan already figures that I'm doing all sorts of devious things to aggrandize myself, and it wouldn't do for me to win the fund I myself am running... Your money I've sent to John Foyster as a donation to GUFF." (M.Ortlieb) Bloody hell, say I.

You Will, Oscar, You Will

This conversation keeps happening and I wish it wouldn't. I'm in some place where intoxicating liquors are sold, or alternatively in the One Tun, and someone pokes me from behind, saying "Mumble mumble."

I turn. "What?"

"Oh ho ho ho," says the someone, going into this mega-comedy routine. "Heard that all right, didn't you, ho ho, that's Langford for you, only deaf when it's his round, never misses the offer of a pint even when you whisper, chortle chortle, you heard me all right and turned round quick as a flash didn't you, giggle giggle, only deaf when it suits you, what's yours then?"

Actually this particular shaft of keen wit began to pall on me in about 1970, and is totally unjustified since I've definitely bought at least two rounds since. It's almost enough to make me refuse a

pint. But not quite.

Clash of the Titans

The scene was the Harveys' party. Naked machismo was in evidence as two stalwart fans engaged in savage physical combat, locked immobile on the floor in that most brutal of contests—mixed arm-wrestling. Both mighty-thewed contestants had been described as 'pretty', though by different commentators: Joe Nicholas (Rider of the Purple Prose) versus Jan Huxley (who'd probably be the tallest person in British fandom if it weren't for the brutal, sexist oppression of Chris Hughes). Prone on the Harveys' much-abused hall carpet, they writhed and sweated and groaned while battalions of eager spectators alternately ignored them or tripped over them en route to the drinks. The seconds, the minutes, the hours went by. The hand that had mastered the two-page subordinate clause and the transfinite parenthesis seemed equal in puissance to the hand which once had held the puppet-strings of the entire Unicon membership. Years went by, decades went by, and at last something snapped. A hidden hand intervened, tempted by an expanse of naked flesh between Joe's shirt and trousers; half a pint of beer spontaneously flew to meet this section of his quivering back. A loud cry, a flurry of confused motion, and Jan had—as it were—won. This victory is disputed by Joseph.

The Marching Meritocrats

Left, right, left, right! Here we come, rank on endless rank, in perfect step, the illimitable armies of Fannish Meritocracy! A vast and monolithic horde, each irrevocably committed to our quasi-fascist ideology [sic], united in thought and word and deed as we advance against the foe. Pickersgill and Nicholas and White march arm in arm with West and Bergeron and Langford and Hansen and Kettle and a thousand more, all singing songs of praise to the twin deities Willis and Ballard. Indivisible, we press forward to annihilate any vile wretch who dares to watch a skiffy film or TV programme, or to commit a grammatical error in a fanzine, or to have liked comics or even the better Heinlein books. All must perish! Death and destruction!

—Are you feeling all right, Dave? What on earth brought this on?

Oh, I've been reading John D.Owen's fannish allegory in *Crystal Ship* 7. Isn't it great? Doesn't it give you a feeling of

power? Not until John opened my eyes did I realize that fandom was like *this*. Burn the crudzines! Kill the Trekkies! Spit on a neofan today! We speak with one voice, Nicholas and West and White and I!

—You silly twisted boy. You weren't too keen on Ted's meritocracy theory; and you read a Philip E. High book the other day, not to mention buying two of Fan-thorpe's. Even the fashion for rude fan-zine reviews has been over for years.

Gad, sir, how dare you dispute the great John D. Owen's portrayal of a super-elitist fandom whose mighty power is swift to crush and silence any heretic or dissenter such as John D... excuse me. My brain hurts; I'm going away to lie down for a bit. Left, right, left, right—

Gourmet Corner

Last year we had a plague of marrows, planted by 94 London Road's previous owner. (Ian Watson reported that Moreton Pinkney was even more plagued: "the entry to our post office is blocked with a mound of them and a sign, PLEASE TAKE ONE.") So Hazel got out her favourite international cookbooks, the sort that give you tasty recipes for fried witchetty grubs (sausages may be substituted): the low point came with Marrow à la Chad, a real Chad recipe which involved marrows and peanut butter and things. It tasted of peanut butter, only worse. Looking at it, I realized that we'd achieved a detailed genetic reconstruction of the Crot-tled Greep. Maybe Ian's suggestion in the letter column is the best, after all.

At Christmas, Katie Hoare insisted on making her famous traditional mulled wine. Bottles were opened and splashed with abandon into a giant glass bowl; curious decoctions of sugar and spice were added; it was all triffically Dickensian. Then came the traditional mulling ceremony, as Katie confidently hefted the brimming bowl and stuck it in the microwave oven...

After New Year's, I was trying to make breakfast for certain hungover remnants, and Judith Hanna decided that now was the time to exhibit her skills and make some Australian Rarebit. Under her capable hand, pounds of cheese and pints of milk were reduced in seconds to a thin slime which coagulated to a plasticene-like lump swimming in repellent yellow liquor. We poured the fluid into an unwanted tree-stump outside, and ate the rest on toast. The breakfast party (also including Messrs Nicholas and Akien) survived, eventually. The tree-stump, however, perished shortly

afterwards.

At the Jacksons' party mere days ago, Katie had another encounter with drink, opening a beer-bottle which went off like a Molotov cocktail. She stood aghast, dripping from head to foot and looking like the Creature from the Vat in some Hammer film set in a brewery... but rescue was at hand! Medical reflexes going off like fire-alarms, bold Dr Jackson snatched up a box of tissues and sped towards Katie on an errand of mercy! In his haste he stumbled; no, he was going to help drain Katie's shoes; no, actually he was earnestly mopping the three drops of beer which had reached the new carpet. Katie managed to find a towel eventually.

My Part In The Great Cover-Up

I got a letter about Chris Morgan's and my book of 'definitive mistakes and misguided predictions', from one Gordon W. Creighton, MA, FRAI, FRGS, FRAS, HM Diplomatic Service Ret'd. Thus:

"I was extremely disappointed to find no mention, in your 1982 edition of *Facts & Fallacies*, of the recent statement, made on BBC2 TELEVISION, at 10.15 pm on Wednesday, March 10, 1982, by Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton, GCB, recently First Sea Lord, Chief of the Defence Staff, and Chairman of the Military Committee of NATO, that *UFOs exist and that there is an official cover-up on the subject*. Despite the positions which Lord Hill-Norton has held (and very recently too) it is clear to me that he is an ignoramus in comparison with authorities of your Stature, and it is my earnest hope that when a suitable opportunity offers you will show him up..."

Hindsight reveals a certain attempt at Biting Sarcasm here, something I possibly failed to notice when in the flurry of the house-move I sent a nice reply, promising to show up the Admiral in volume 2 if any, and adding that 'UFO' had become an overly loaded term (I was quite prepared to believe in lots of UASs or Unidentified Aerial Sightings—or reported sightings)...

"Dear Mr Langford: With reference to your letter of 8 July, I find your description of Lord Hill-Norton's very carefully considered statement ('a little gaffe') most enlightening. It either shows crass ignorance on your part or—and this is far more likely—that you have your job to do in seeing that the truth is not told. I expect to publish something about your reaction to the Admiral's statement in due course."

He had me there.

Dear Mr Creighton [I wrote], Thanks very much for your letter... Of course your comment on my own corrupt nature is all too perceptive. The international MOD-CIA-Illuminati conspiracy has little better to do with its money than disburse vast sums to obscure authors like myself in order to maintain the cover-up. I hope you will not reveal to the world than I am in receipt of several hundred thousand pounds annually from such sources, in exchange for which I write under a host of pseudonyms to obfuscate the Truth.

I look forward with delight to your planned publication of comments about me in internationally influential journals, and trust you'll be careful to mention Facts & Fallacies as often as possible. May I in turn publish something about your reaction to my letter...?

Crassly yours: David Langford.

I hoped for a really wonderful correspondence during which I could make ever so many further revelations about my vile employers and the faceless Man of Mystery who leads them from under the cover of his codename 'Bergeron'. But for some reason I've heard no more from Mr Creighton, not even a denunciatory clipping about me from the Loony Ex-Diplomats' UFO Intelligencer or similar shaper of world opinion. Shame.

TAFF Report: Ninth and Last Instalment
So there I was in 1982, enjoying Silicon 6 at several removes through that translucent humming cloud engendered by fizzy beer, all TAFF responsibility having rolled off my back like a duck and onto Kevin Smith's, when who should accost me but John Foyster and Joe Nicholas and Judith Hanna.

"We have this problem," they unctuously said. I quailed.

"What we need is good prominent fan to stand for GUFF on account of we haven't been able to find any yet," they ominously continued. I winced.

"Er, Dave...?" they irresistibly concluded.

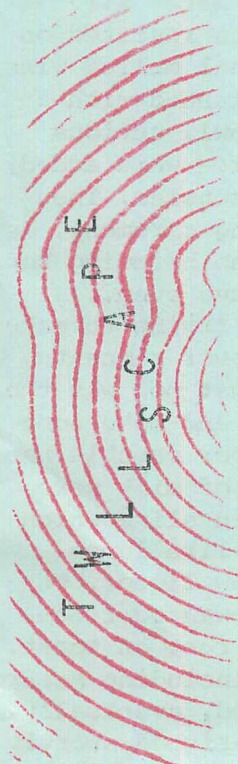
Mere aggregations of capitals, asterisks, multiple underlining and fifteen typefaces could not do justice to what Hazel said.

Final Credits

Keith Freeman brought paper and ink. Words are from *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, mostly. Hazel provided moral support, the Harveys bits of old duplicator and our shed the rubber stamp.



LEE HOFFMAN
350 NW HARBOR BLVD
PORT CHARLOTTE
FL 33950



from THE SEARCH FOR LOST CITIES by James Wellard:
"So if you arrive by car in Reading, you will undoubtedly get lost, for you must keep whizzing round the maze, without ever quite knowing where you are or where you are going. You must find a way to escape before you become disheartened... Your best hope is to find that rarest of species in Reading, a pedestrian. With luck, this survivor of an antique age may be able to answer your question: How do I get to Calleva Atrebatum alias Silchester? The answer..." Forget it. Ask for—

TWLL-DDU 20 from Dave Langford
94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, England PG1 5AU