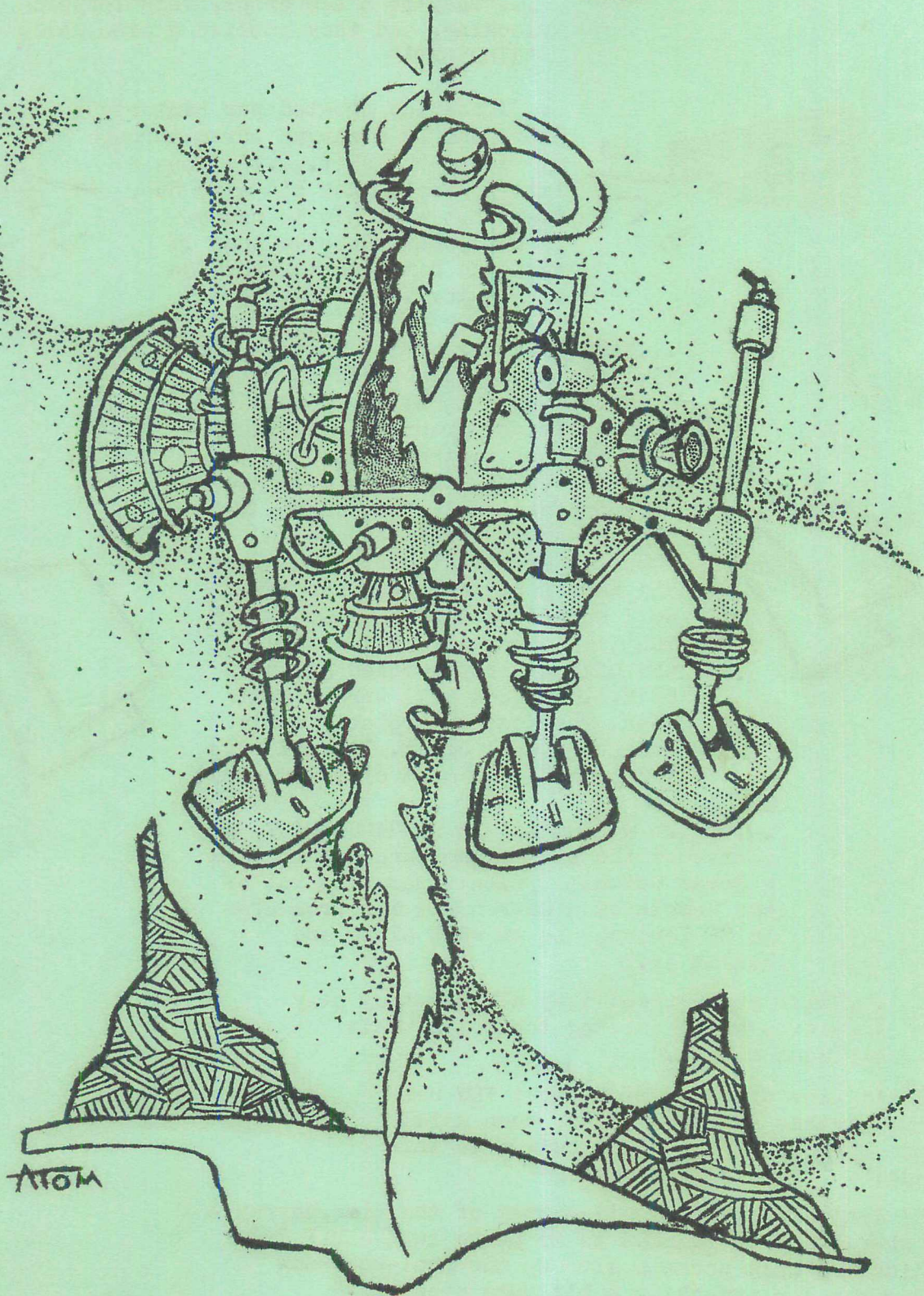


# WALDO 7

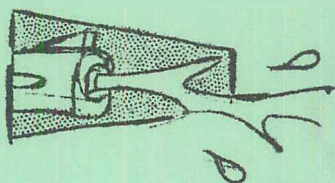


ATOM  
NEXT

..."I have this watch that is powered by a 'Lithium Crystal' and every time I set the alarm I expect to get beamed up to the Enterprise!"

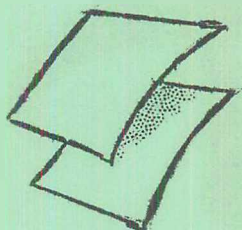
..." Oh, I think Video Recorders do have a useful purpose. I now have the alternative of recording a program but not playing it back - thus consigning it to a very special limbo".

..."They're a new group, very forward looking, and they publish a zine called 'HINDMOST!'"

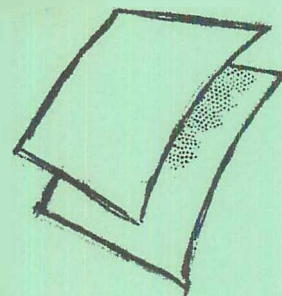


..."Chuck was greeted per historical precedent by a zapgun burst through my letter-box slit....I'd been a little afraid that his wife Sue, might not want him to resume fanning, but she says that it would do him good to exercise his brain..."

*Handwritten signature*



..."And speaking of s-f writers, my sister's youngest son had to write a school essay about any reasonably famous living person, and having left the job to the day before the deadline (obviously he's going to be a professional), was unable to dig up enough about his chosen subject, Mrs. Thatcher. Like where and when (and why?) was she born. So I suggested instead that he did the life of an s-f writer. And so the suitably bowdlerised history of M.J.Moorcock will unroll next week. The teacher probably won't believe a word of it. I'm not sure I do, and I saw most of it happen."



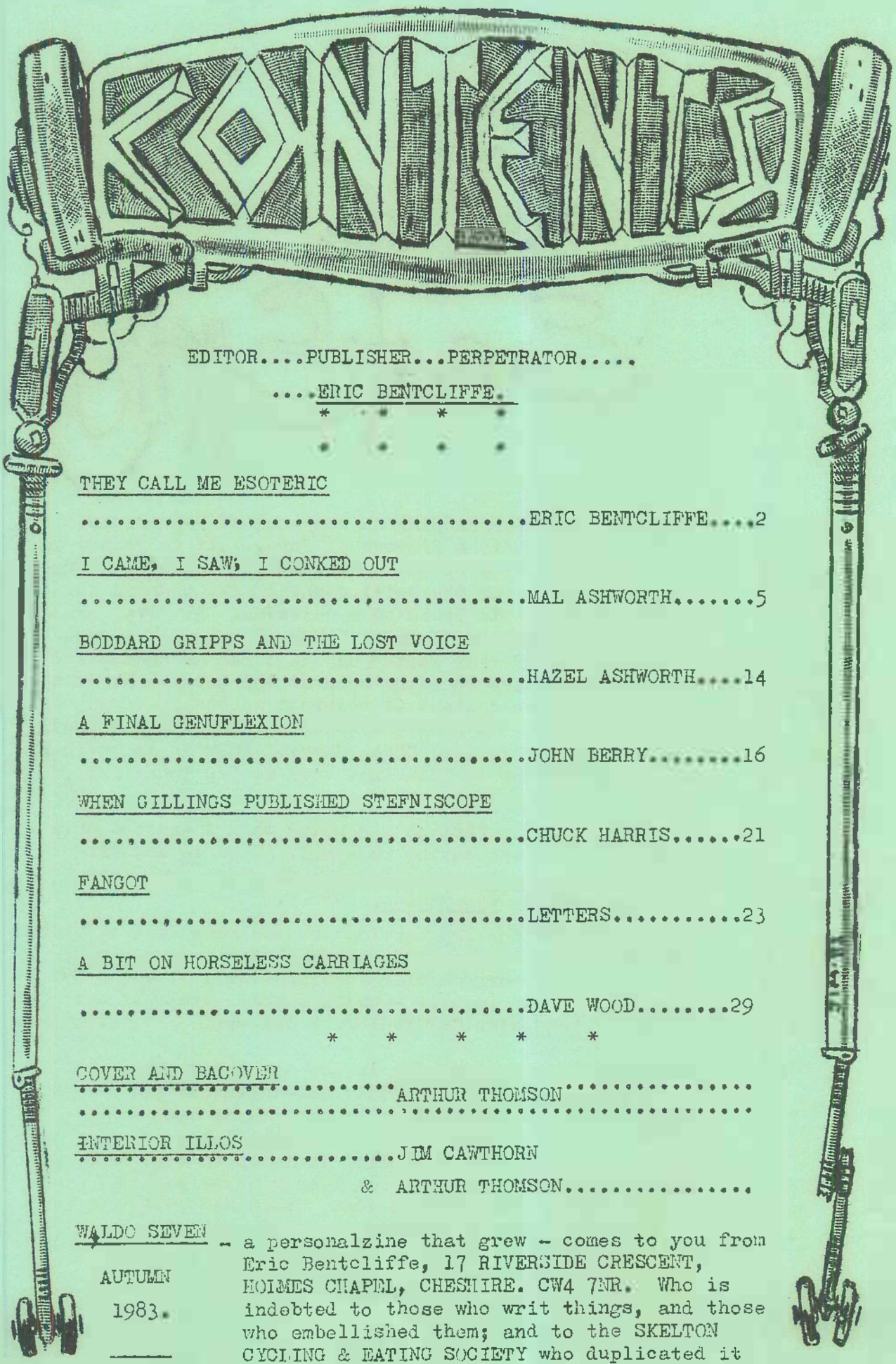
..."There was an ad' in EXCHANGE&MART, we contacted the bloke, who turned out to be a Roman Catholic priest operating out of the bowels of a Church not far from ATom in SE London, and we went along and bought it."

..."Have you noticed they all say they play pop-music while pubbing their ish. This explains much..."

"I don't know what you mean about TEW not having a sense of humour; I've been mildly amused by both of the jokes he's made this decade."

..."I don't really feel old - most of the time, anyway - but when I see obituaries to my peers in ANSIBLE I do realise I should perhaps give up the real-soon-now philosophy for something a bit more specific."

//Vin~~g~~ Clarke, Jim  
Cawthorn, & Anon.//



EDITOR.....PUBLISHER...PERPETRATOR.....

....ERIC BENTCLIFFE.....

\* \* \* \* \*

THEY CALL ME ESOTERIC

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INTERIOR ILLOS

.....JIM CAWTHORN  
& ARTHUR THOMSON.....

WALDO SEVEN

AUTUMN

1983.

-- a personalzine that grew -- comes to you from  
Eric Bentcliffe, 17 RIVERSIDE CRESCENT,  
HOIMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE. CW4 7NR. Who is  
indebted to those who writ things, and those  
who embellished them; and to the SKELTON  
CYCLING & EATING SOCIETY who duplicated it  
all.

# They Call me EsotERIC

WHILST THIS HERE FANZINE is composed of 99% original material, it will inevitably have a Flavour of Yore....It is rooted in my fannish past and that of other of the contributors, whose re-emergence from the Glades of Gafia (or the potting-shed) have tempted this just-occasional-personal-zine into becoming a gen-zine. It gives a nod or two in the direction of WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE as well, of course, since it was the working up of that Fanthology that had me contacting certain of these former gafiates standing here at the bar.... Nevertheless, I think that most of the content is relevant to today; certainly Mal's reportage of the ALBACON is none the worse for including several jokes he first used in the 50s....and Chuck Harris' POEM is as entirely meaningful to them that fan now as them that used to fan then; only the names have changed.

It wasn't my intention to publish a genzine when I started out, but despite the fact that I kept saying to myself 'This is a small personal-zine....This is a small personal-zine; it grew. But then I can't be expected to foresee everything, surely.

Now, I'm not really in the Prognostication Business even if I do (still) read that Crazy Buck Rogers stuff...but, back in November of 1972 when I was publishing a more regular fanzine - well it was only two pages per issue but it was regular - which shared envelopes with Peter Roberts excellent news-zine CHECKPOINT, I did write the following.

" It would appear that something in the atmosphere is causing a re-emergence of formerly old-and-tired fen and this can only be assumed to be some major new pollutant which stimulates the pre-frontal lobe. Whether DOOMWATCH should be called in is up to the young-and-hairy, but already such measures may be too late. Apart from myself...Jan Jansen has just rejoined OMPA and was in attendance at the recent NOVACON; Don Allen is 'looking at duplicaters'. And, also at NOVACON was that Stateside publishing -giant of the forties, Ian Macauley. As I looked at him over my rather soggy cornflakes I realised that 6th fandom wasn't dead, only slightly fuzzy round the edges! And who, I wonder, will be next to re-appear on the fannish scene ?

Will Mal Ashworth come hollering out of Wharfedale ?  
Is Chuck Harris tired yet of being fandoms currently  
least-published sex-fiend ? For how long will Ghod  
be dormant in Stormont ?" 3

My prognostications were a bit premature in regard to Mal and Chuck I must admit, but even Hari Seldon wasn't quartz-reliable and I did achieve 100% accuracy in my prediction eventually! Regrettably, in the time it took my forecast to come about, Don Allen and Jan Jansen have vanished back into the glades of gafia once more and Ian Macauley; most probably the Novacon breakfast-sausages were in part responsible for the latters re-disappearance: they never were advisable on an empty stomach.

Anyway....eitherway....its all as good an excuse for a belated issue as I've ever had. I mean, I couldn't foresee that Ving Clarke would also re-appear like a friendly gnurr from the voodvurk and keep me talking, could I ? Don't call me omnipotent.

Continuing with the theme of Prognostications - partly because its a word I keep hoping to use in Fan-Scrabble but can never find enough letters for - but also because thoughts of the future have been buzzing around in my head of late, and it hurts.....due in the main to a nasty habit I have of carrying certain of todays Impassioned Causes to their logical/illogical conclusions and discovering that these are not the advertised ends.

For instance...I have a certain regard for the opinions and disciplines of vegetarians but should everyone follow their urging and give up eating meat what happens to all the species that are bred, well-fed and, generally, well-looked after to satisfy current culinary needs? Quite obviously nowone is going to breed other than a very few for their bovine beauty and woolly wonderment (even if it does give a whole new dimension to the slogan 'That's the wonder of Woolly's'). The profit motive will be gone you see, and like it or like it not that is the reason for a great deal (!) that's done in this world. I also ponder upon the position on all this of that other Pressure Group that has just entered my head; the one that maintains that only purely natural products should be used to fertilise the land - ahem, I mean, where are they going to get the shit! Oh, but yes, of course..... mankind is now vegetarian so his (and her) excrement can be used. It only remains to organise a suitable door-to-door collection service.

Look, I'm not poking fun for the sake of it...I'm not being deliberately nasty to the campaigners mentioned even though I do deplore the current trend of Government by Pressure Group - I do not wish to be forced into eating up all my veggies by a crowd of militant do-gooders! I really don't know what their policies could lead to and neither, I most strongly suspect, do they. They know that 'It's a Good Thing to stop eating meat', or 'Stop using Chemical Fertilisers'...me, I just have this nasty habit of questioning things. Its probably because I read s-f and have a vaulting mind. Me Slan, you ?

Then there's D. West, Lesbianism, Homosexuality...real racial survival characteristics these, but perhaps I'd best leave something for the next issue.... Hopefully, this issue should be ready in time for NOVACON - NOVACON 13, in fact, says he rashly - which I'm rather looking forward to since I don't go to many conventions these days. There are various mundane reasons for this but, thinking about it all, another factor is fandoms continuing ghetto-mentality; conventions have become rather stereotyped and a few new themes and people are needed to provide a little less predictable an atmosphere. Back in the early 60's we did have a looking-outwards trend with Kingsley Amis, Edmund Crispin, and Tom Boardman as Con Guests of Honour - they were

from outside the then 'establishment' and they broadened the general discussion on s-f and allied subjects at the conventions they attended, adding a welcome element of diversity....new viewpoints, etc.

Convention Guests of Honour do tend to be chosen from a rather limited circle these days, particularly at the smaller conventions...that they are also usually people I like makes the phrasing here a little difficult...look, Bob Shaw, James White, and Jim Barker to name but three, are almost essential ingredients for any convention and they should be honoured regularly, but it would make con-life more interesting to have a few FCoH from out where the current frontiers of science-fiction are. Obviously, everyone will have their own ideas about where this is - personally I tend to think it has left the printed-page for the silver-screen in that that is where most of the innovation is, currently. In special-effects, in visualising s-f concepts. I'd admire to meet, amongst others, whoever was responsible for the superb space-battle in RETURN OF THE JEDI - Ed Hamilton lives! I'd also enjoy meeting some of the people who are using s-f to such good effect in the advertising world, particularly in tv commercials, eg, the brilliant British Airways 'Cities in Flight' ad - whoever was responsible for that just has to be an s-f fan from way back...or some kind of favourable mutation! I could bear listening to how that SHELL commercial was made; the one where an alien scene gradually metamorphoses into undersea, North-sea. I wouldn't mind having the Cadbury SMASH people along, providing they brought their Robots too.

And there are people writing good extrapolative science-fiction outside the 'establishment'. Much of this is near-future s-f and, indeed, can't always be easily divorced from the super-spy idiom, but one author I've come across recently I'd like to see honoured/recognised is David Graham author of "DOWN TO A SUNLESS SEA", and "SIDEWALL", the former yarn in particular, is a very well-done - a frighteningly well-done - world disaster story with a convincing background and an all too-possible no cop-out ending. He obviously has ideas worthy of discussion.

Science-fiction isn't where it was anymore, people outside the s-f 'establishment' are having visions and bringing them to fruition - oh, there is some good s-f about, but much is lacking in new ideas and new treatments; this came particularly obvious to me when I recently stopped my ANALOG sub' out of boredom; brought home to me by my realising I had some two years unread issues on hand, and no even underwhelming desire to catch up with this particular stack. I'm even thinking of selling it all (complete from 1937 apart from April '43...any offers ??) and building a model-railway instead, but that's another story.

I'm not suggesting that conventions become deliberately more media oriented in the sense that they should cater more for the Trekkies and other special-interest groups; but I do think that the immense dedication to their art exhibited by such as the STAR WARS team warrants more serious recognition...and the involvement of such people could also make conventions a great deal more lively and entertaining.

Mind you the cunning and conniving of the WALDO editorial staff and supporters-club also warrants more recognition....for the way in which they managed, eventually and after several little delays, to bring you Mal Ashworth's convention-report. This required, amongst other things, an illuminated epistle signed by Bob & Sadie Shaw, John Owen, Norman & Ina Shorrocks, Jules Verne, Olaf Stapledon, and H.G. Wells! I enjoyed it; and the other material herein, hope you do, too.

ERIC BENTCLIFFE.



MILLAND'S SPECIAL

REF ALE

DROOP SOUP

BY MAL ASHWORTH

5m.03.00

# I SAW THE CONKED OUT

As con-time approached thoughts kept sidling round the corner and into my consciousness like Dirty Pocktared vendors. Some of them may have been tempted by the interminable pre-Con squabbles and the vision of Fake Bob Shaw (who, with the only smidgin of appropriateness he seems to have shown in a millenium or so, issued a Fake Progress Report) turning the whole Albacon into a Live Theatre production of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, in a slight fit of pique. Others probably had something to do with Fine Fans like Eric Bentcliffe trying to book in rather late, not being able to find a place anywhere despite a relatively low published attendance list. But mostly they were to do with an inbuilt Ashworth syndrome that hates packing and preparing and moving further than 30 miles from home. If I had been offered the only place on the first, all-expenses paid, trip to Alpha Centauri - or even Nirvana - when the time came to leave I would be heard muttering "Oh, I think I'll leave it just for now and go some other time".

However, the cast, as they used to say before the old-time Nigger Minstrel shows, was dyed and as the Great Day approached, 16, Rockville Drive, Embsay, became a hive of feverish activity very like the Operations Centre in a 1950's End of the World SF Film.

"What clothes are you going to take?"

"Dunno. I wonder if these six four-pinters of Davenports Bitter and twenty-four cans of Hansa Lager will be enough? Well, we'll do it all in the morning anyway. Do you fancy going to the 'White Lion'?"

But the eleventh hour saw the triumph of cool British Competence - the car checked over with that unruffled panache that only comes with years of practice; tyres topped up with water, a drop more oil in the radiator, a few more pounds per square inch in the transmission system. And then the actual loading, essentials first, so priority was, obviously, given to the forty-eight 4 and 5 pint empty beer cans. As you might suspect, there is a long story back of this and as long as Eric doesn't mind a six-installment Albacon Report extending well into the 1990s I will be happy to tell it; but to be on the safe side perhaps I'd better give you the Readers Digest version. I have been selling empty beer cans to a fellow in Glasgow for many years now.

Hazel gets the proceeds and she has had about £250 spending money out of the deal. Of course I have to work hard to support her in this manner by emptying the beer cans before they can be sent off, but then, Life can't be all play can it? Which is probably what you are thinking right now - can it! So - what would be only the second visit of my life to Glasgow seemed like a good opportunity to deliver the goods. And what does this fellow do with these empty beer cans?, I hear you cry, is he a hitherto unknown fan, secretly building his own tower to the moon? Nope; he - er - sells them to Americans. Now, as to what they do with them....

Hazel managed to get me out of bed, into the car and onto the road by 6.15 in the morning. This had several advantages. In the first place, I believe an occasional major shock to the system prevents ossification, staves off gout, clears the ears of wax and ensures good fortune to come. Or at least, if you'd told me that at the time I'd certainly have believed you. Secondly, a truly major consideration this, there are very few people about at that time, and hardly more cars - a delightful, nay, idyllic state of affairs I believed had vanished from the world for ever. This meant we could travel in comparative silence unaccompanied by our usual travelling songs; no, not 'The Happy Wanderer'. These are little known travelling songs, consisting mainly of contrapuntal Screaming Shinter and Fortissimo Fratterslags, rising to an inspiring crescendo whenever any other driver shows any least sign of feeling that he has a right to be on the road too. Yet another advantage of driving while still asleep is that you get where you are going before you realise you've set off; for us xenophobes that's a bonus and a half indeed.

In between snoozes Hazel had time to be impressed only by two facts. One was that we got into Scotland in only two hours of leaving home - whereas it takes us an hour to get from our present house to the Dales farmhouse we have just bought. The other was when I foolishly told her about passing over the summit of the redoubtable and hitherto Himalayan Shap Fell while she was still asleep. "SHAP FELL SUMMIT. 1036 feet", the notice said; Fooey, sumpit and nowt, I thought. This farmhouse we've bought is at 1025 feet, and that's in a valley! Of course, that's in Yorkshire! (Hazel, hailing from torrid Torquay has not yet properly acclimatised; she still has certain unresolved fixations about sheep and stunted hawthorn bushes being in some way less preferable than magnolias and palm trees.)

So we got to Glasgow and it instantly disappointed me by being just as I'd expected; did the last war truly finish 35 years later here than anywhere else, I wondered. We crashed up and down craters in rutted roads that ran out in the middle of ten miles the other side of nowhere, but still in the middle of the city, and finally I sang my songs of Screaming Shinter and Bloodratting Fratterslag as we dodged like something out of "Deathrace 2000" between buildings shored up and buildings falling down, and people likewise. Eventually we delivered the cans and re-rutted ourselves back into the city centre. There we left the car to the tender mercies of an NCP Rip-Off Emporium (Hazel averring all the time that we should have come by train and me averring, with that cool rationality characteristic of the highly trained mind of the professional logician, that she should shut up), and braved the bureaucratic rigours of the Central Hotel's Registration Desk. They let us off just short of total body-searches and two hours' grilling under the arc lights, and we flopped into our room and folded our faces round chunks of chicken.

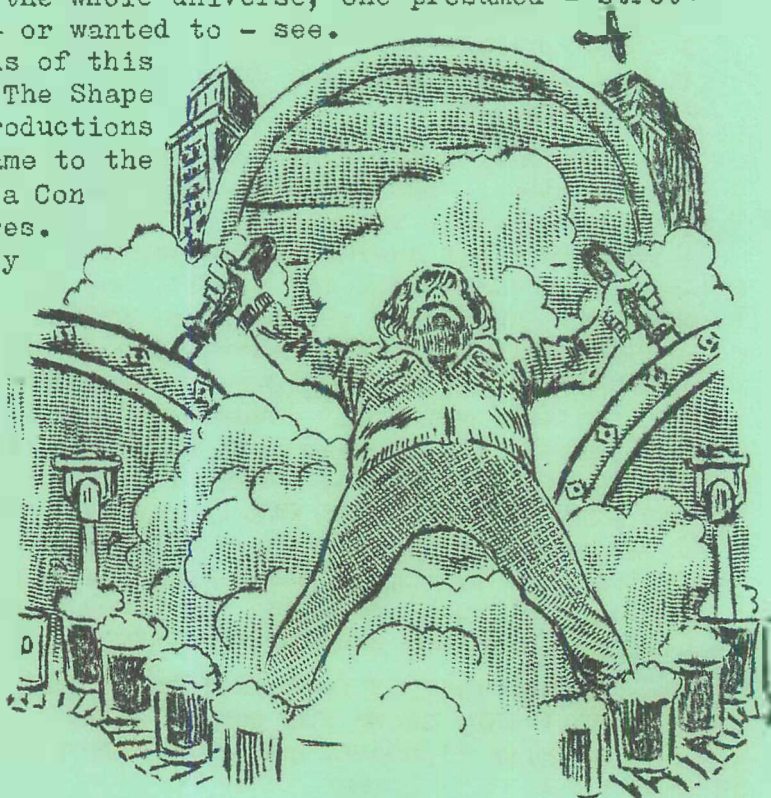
Hazel then went to sleep and I went off to the Bookroom and the Bar. The Puppet-Masters were in great form that day, I tell you. The Bookroom occupied me for about ten minutes compared with three or four hours at the Channelcon, which had variety, unusual items - and even Bargains. Those Thoughts I'd started thinking right back at the beginning of this piece now escalated into Third and even Fourth Order ones of their kind and an aura of alienation thick enough to make Karl Marx and Jean-Paul

Sarte look like Disco Bopsters by comparison, cloaked me ever deeper. Fortunately, the minute I got into the bar I met one of this countries finest psychiatrists, in the guise of Bob Shaw (the Real One, of course), who bought me a pint; not only that but it was real ale - and, even better, good real ale. The Collywobbles started to slink away into those dark holes and corners where they belong, and while I couldn't claim to have become an instant Sunny Jim ('High Over The Slough Of Despond Leaps Sunny Jim'), my snarls got decidedly muted. Standing around casually pickling a few more brain cells in alcohol, Bob and I commiserated with one another over our memories - or lack of them - compared with those amazing souls who remember every drink and every joke from aeons-old, long-gone Cons. Bob said he'd been introduced to one lady and said how pleased he was to meet her, only to be bowled over (and have you ever tried to bowl Bob Shaw over?) to be told she'd once produced a one-shot with him! As though by sympathetic magic it was round about then that young ladies from the North American continent came up and started kissing him on behalf of other young ladies who couldn't be there. I stood around trying to look Sympathetic, if not exactly Magic, but all I got was another pint. Some men just Have It and some men Don't, I guess - but at least it's the ones that Don't who keep the breweries fully employed.

This brief interlude was the equivalent of that point in the 'Shipwreck on Mars' type of film when the hero, with great trepidation, takes off his helmet and finds - Sheesh, what a relief! - that the air is breathable after all. (I'm still waiting for the one in which he finds there is no air and turns blue and suffocates.) I had eased off my helmet and found the air not only breathable but familiar; and when James White came by and told tales of a great Room Party the previous night, I felt my chances of survival rising by the minute.

Crusoe-like, having met my Fan Friday, I finally felt ready to explore this alien world, and in a fit of euphoria I even started to walk about. As a matter of fact, one had to walk about, since any two points in the Con Hotel were seperated by an Escher-like infinity of carpeted corridor, and the shortest - well, no, that's a lie; but at least the pleasantest - way between them was via several bars. The most infinite vistas of all were outside our bedroom window where the ridged roofs of the Central Station - central to the whole universe, one presumed - stretched farther than the eye could - or wanted to - see.

Hazel took a couple of photographs of this view and they make the sets for 'The Shape of Things To Come' and similar productions look puny. Around this time I came to the conclusion that perambulation at a Con has a number of distinct advantages. Not only does it allow you to vary your drinking environment, thus avoiding your feet sinking too deeply into the floor in any one place, it also helps you meet people; and, even more than that, it does, on occasions, even land you in places where some of the programmed events are taking place. In fact, there has been little mention of the activity variously known as Walking Around, Moseying, Shambling, Ambling, Bumbling, Stumbling and Staggering. So what's the Big Secret?



What are They trying to cover up, huh? It seems to me that what is needed is some positive promotion on the lines of that long-gone Coon Show campaign for "Brains - the New Wonder Head-Filler". Something like "The Transport System of Tomorrow, Today - Feet!" "This is the Age of the Instep!" "Feeling pathetic? Get peripatetic!" etc. Perhaps what we really need is a Foot Marketing Board; maybe we could even share it with the Labour Party.

Among the many amazing things my feet did for me that day was take me into the Main Hall and arrange with my knees to bend so that I sat on a chair and listened to Dave Langford tell titillating tales of his Dostoyevskyan decades as a novelist. Later in the day, flushed with the excitement of their new-found power (or possibly from being encased in four-day old socks) my feet over-reached themselves in a smartass gesture of staggering ostentation - they took me to see 'Metropolis'! Now, as every fan knows, every Con ever held always shows 'Metropolis'; it is probably the only thing which shows up at Cons with greater inevitability than Brian Burgess. And yet I - possibly alone out of the whole mighty fanation - had managed never to see it! (I don't believe in rushing off to take in every new fad and fancy as it comes along. Give 'em a while to show if they have any lasting value, say I.) And now - suddenly - my feet did this Godawlmighty Sneaky Beaky on me and tottered me into the Alternative Programme Room to see 'Metropolis'! It was a staggering experience. Those incredible sets of Cyclopean urban horror, the likes of which had surely never been seen anywhere on this planet! (It was only later in the weekend when I went out into the streets of Glasgow to get some beer that I realised the 'Metropolis' set-designers had actually played things down quite a lot.) Those insanely exaggerated gestures and pop-eyed frantic expressions gibbering at one wildly out of the screen, like a Real Ale drinker given a pint of Youngers 'Tartan'! That unbelievably surrealistic soundtrack which came across as belonging to a 1970s U.S. domestic comedy film! (Still in a state of shock it took me some time to realise that 'Metropolis' is in fact a silent film, and what I was hearing was the soundtrack of a 1970s domestic comedy film running in the Video Room the other side of a thin partition!) When I started to come out of my cataleptic state of culture shock I entered into negotiations with my feet, the upshot of which was that they agreed to keep transporting me out to the bar to refill my pint. I wouldn't say I missed much. When I got back each time the actors were still frozen in the same gestures and expressions. My, but 'Metropolis' was one way-out experience!

So was, later that evening, meeting Ethel Lindsay again after about twenty years. There she was, as large - or in Ethel's case, small - as life, completely unchanged, sitting in the Fan Room as though she had never moved out during those twenty years, chatting with a group of veteran fans. "Come on, feet" I said, and over we lumbered. I reverbrated into an empty chair next to Ethel and grinned down at her. She smiled at me, rather weakly, visibly restraining an impulse to run screaming out of the door. Or the window. Or even through the wall. But I catch on quick, even if it hasn't yet fully dawned on me that these days I look more like Chewbacca's big brother than the clean, fresh faced young fan I used to be back in 1963 or so. "Oh", I said, brightly, "you don't remember me". "Give me a clue", said Ethel, bravely. "Well - you once had me exiled to Siberia". I reminded her, recalling the typically corrupt judgement handed down by the infamous Hanging, Drawing and Quartering Judge, Charles Randolph ('Chuck' to those Who Dared) Harris, in some small fannish dispute which had once arisen between Ethel and me.

After this my feet decided to take the rest of the night off (But, ah, had I only known for what a ghastly Piece de Resistance they were saving their fiendish, pedicular energies!) and allowed me to sit in a

corner of the Fan Room bar simply having a nice time with nice people like James and Peggy White, Bill and Mary Burns, Christina Lake and others who drifted to and fro. At a very late hour I managed to verticalise and stagger back into the Fan Room itself for a 'Beer Tasting'. At least, that's how it was billed. Whether this was one of those elaborate Fannish Hoaxes will only be revealed years later for what really took place, it seemed to me, was a 'Turpentine Tasting'; I suppose it is possible that my palate had by then gone the way of my feet. I couldn't quite decide so it seemed like a good time to go to bed.

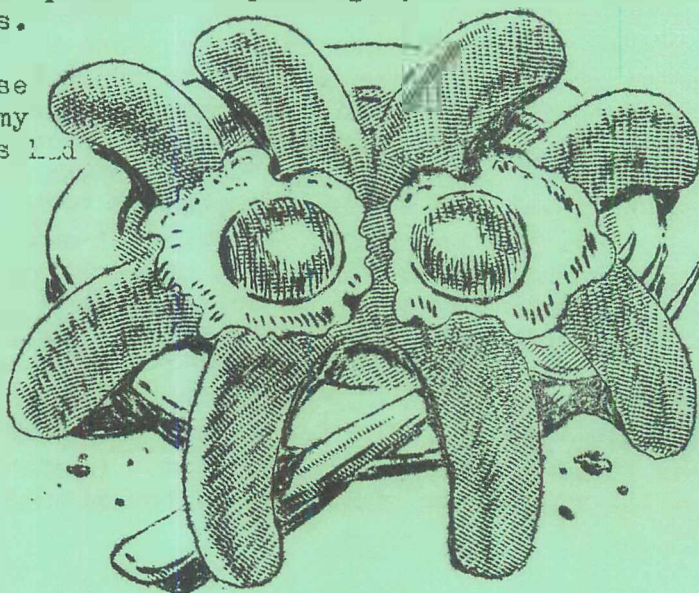
The next morning, refreshed and rarin' to go, my feet carried me down to breakfast. It was nearly the last thing they ever did; a man can only stand so much. Breakfast at the 'Central' was unique - at least I hope it was unique - in its mind-numbing horror. H.P. Lovecraft would not have been ashamed to have created that breakfast. I am not normally one of the squeamish and even with a hangover I can stand up to fur tea-cups and eggs with eyes that peer up at you from the plate - but eggs that slither around like oiled oysters, oozing themselves mucilaginously into nooks and crannies among the Sargasso-reared tomatoes, in a desperate bid to avoid being eaten are something else again - especially when teamed up with sausages and slabs of potato bread left over from the star event at the World Weightlifting Championships. In desperation I resorted to chemical warfare and dissolved the rest of this belligerent breakfast in an overkill dose of Marmalade which I'm sure must have been outlawed by the Geneva Convention. ('Dupont' was a brand I hadn't come across before.)

The Miasmatic mists of this primeval cosmic battlefield only started to clear about mid-afternoon when, by mutual agreement, my feet and I allowed my battle-scars to be healed by the gentle, low-key humour of James White's Fan Guest of Honour speech. One of the true highlights of the programme, this, and it got me to thinking what a boon to Convention organisers James - and Bob Shaw too - must be with their reliability and unruffled good humour and great entertainment value. Everyone left the hall looking quietly happy.

To counter any such soggianness my feet and I opted for a different variety as we sloshed our way, in best Retreat-from-Moscow fashion, through Glasgow's now snow-covered streets. (I wondered if disgruntled Glasgow Tourist Promotion executives eventually give up and move to an easier job like selling fridges to Eskimos or recruiting for CND in Downing Street.)

Pausing only to pay several Kings' ransoms into a small (but very secure) yellow box at the heart of a vast pile of concrete, I re-posessed my car. Vroom-vrooming out onto the streets to park by a now-deserted, but free, money-eater meter, I took pleasure in putting my feet in their proper place again - on the pedals.

"If God had meant us to walk he wouldn't have given Moses all those Parking Regulations", I reminded my nether extremities. I reckon this had had a sobering effect on them and for the rest of the day they behaved quite well, transporting me without complaint to such good things as Colin Fine's talk on 'Language in Science Fiction', the bar, the other bar, the other other bar, the first bar again, and the Fancy Dress Parade. This was another New Experience for a grizzled Old Timer like me who



had only recently staggered back in, in the best Dan McGrew style, from the swirling mists of the Fifties. The nearest I could get to Dangerous Dan's state of 'dog-dirty and loaded for bear' was 'dirty-minded and loaded with beer', but it may have been this latter which helped a system still reeling from 'Metropolis' and a Central Hotel breakfast to cope with the vision of a semi-nude Kate Davies. There were many other goodies on show too in this fine event, but I couldn't help having a soft spot in my fannish heart for Peter Weston's quietly ironic, silently - nay, bemusedly - received appearance as Jophan, with His Shield of Umor prominent. I suppose it must have been sometime before this when Steve Green introduced himself to me in the bar with the news that he had read some of my old fannish writings. Peter Weston, according to Steve, had re-emerged in the midst of Brum fandom, somewhat like an Old Testament prophet, bearing piles of old fannish zines and twisting arms until every word had been thoroughly read. Just as I was commiserating with Steve, Peter appeared from nowhere and I finally got to meet the man himself.

Hazel, having finally slept her fill and missed all the boring things, like the day, was now in full swing and kept disappearing and re-appearing like a turbo-assisted Gully Foyle. (Not that she looked like a turbo-assisted Gully Foyle, he hastened to add, hastily.) During her disappearances she would descend upon some innocent like Ian Williams, or some relative innocent like Peter Weston, and force them to dance for hours on end. Without expending too much energy I managed to resist the temptation to join in this flurry of activity and instead concentrated the full, awesome power of my finely-honed intellect on the task of maintaining a state of equilibrium in one small corner of the sidereal universe, in the shape of a pint glass. It's all a question of motivation really and I daresay I'd have left Gully Foyle at the starting line myself whenever this state of equilibrium was threatened by the mysterious displacement of the brown liquid in the glass by an ever-spreading void. Cosmic stasis re-established, I turned my attention to chatting with Bill Burns and the recently arrived Joe Siclari, to whom Bill introduced me. I had been tipped off by Vince Clarke, a few days earlier, that Joe, well-known for his activities in reprinting, disseminating and generally bringing back to active life fannish good things - articles and even whole zines - from past fannish eras, was to be at the Con, and had managed to put together for him a nearly complete file of my mid-Fifties zine, BEM. It was in the midst of this knee-deep nostalgia that virulent fan-historophobe D. West happened by. There are certain moments in a fannish life when you just know the Gulord is smiling on you, and Stanley's "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" paled by comparison as I hastened to make introductions, suggestions of common projects and the like. Fiendish Glee time and a half, that was. Shortly, too, came by James 'Man Mountain' White and, having got into my stride, I introduced him to D. West too. (It wasn't until much later that I paused to wonder what a Johnnie-Come-Back-Lately like me was doing introducing someone who'd been around fandom twelve years or more to James.) Off to the bar went James (it's at times like these that sound childhood training shows) and D. asked "Do you think he knows who I am?" Fiendish Glee Hour continued as I said to a heavily-laden James on his return "You know who D. is, don't you? He's the man who believes fan history started in 1970". Earlier that day I had met D. in a corridor and he asked me what I was planning to do during my fannish renaissance. I told him with great verve and enthusiasm that what I really hoped to do was to bring about a total re-creation of Fifties Fandom, complete in every detail. I swear he paled, though it isn't easy to tell; he shook his head and I believe there was both horror and incredulity in the voice which said "You can't do that". But beneath that Dracula-like exterior (so that's what that enigmatic 'D.' stands for!) the filling is all pure compassion (I guess). At least he seemed to bear no ill will as he guided me to the Blackpool (Eastercon '84) Bid party in

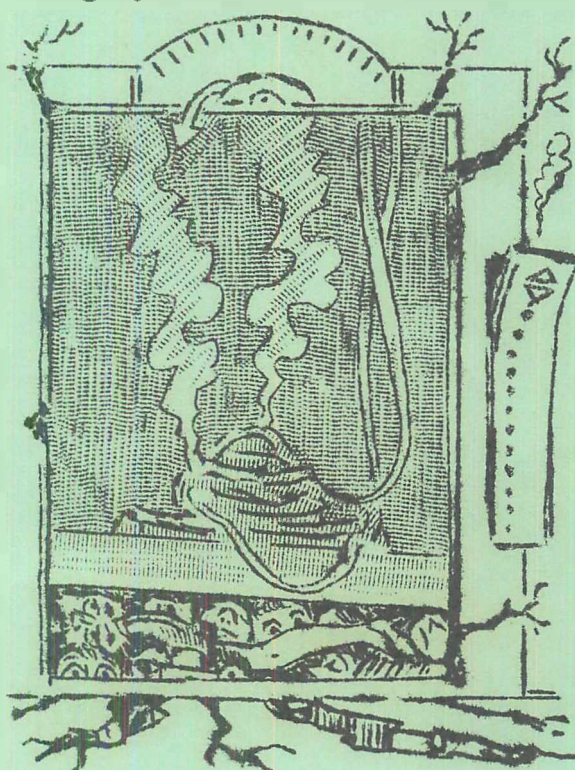
the Fan Room. Hazel, needless to say, had already found this since it was where the music and the dancing were, and hitherto fit young fans were falling fast, collapsing over chair arms in convincing semblances of Dali's flattened, semi-fluid watches. During brief pauses in her 'Wipe Out Fit Young Fandom' campaign she would pause on her way by to tell me who she'd been talking to and, once or twice, to add "He said you were regarded as a sort of Cult figure". At these times I would glance round hastily to make sure D. West wasn't anywhere in earshot; a thing like that could make up for a lot to a guy. Pondering the staggering improbability of anyone saying such a thing I asked Hazel if she was certain she had heard it quite right. Fannish pronunciation, I explained, can sometimes go a little awry around this time of night. But all told the Gulord had had a good night of it; now it was the turn of the Nemesis Critters. Straight into the heart of this idyll of bucolic bonhomie struck stark tragedy. The Real Ale ran out. Not quite able to keep pace with it, I crawled out after it and went to bed, trying not to think of the morrow.

'Take ye no thought for the morrow and ye might miss it altogether', as I'm sure it must say somewhere. We didn't quite manage that but our first waking sensation was the warm pleasurable glow of realising that we had missed breakfast. The second was a 'Yowp' of dismay when we realised we were also perilously close to missing the Eastercon '84 bidding. I just couldn't manage another load of guilt to add to that I'd brought back from Channelcon the previous year when I failed to arrive on time to support the Metrocon bid after having been at the Metrocon party the night before. Thus it was that Mr and Mrs Unkempt, doing a convincing impersonation of Mr and Mrs Undeed, attached themselves to the back of a mighty throng in the Hall of Destiny to listen with open mouths and closed eyes while the fate of the universe hung in the balance, apparently to be decided by such cosmic considerations as the size of the piece of soap in the washbasins in the respective hotels, or the thickness of the carpet on the bottom stair. When the strain became too great for our over-stretched intellects we chatted to Joe Siclari, swapped fanzines and wished him farewell as he had to leave early. Then we dutifully filed into the Blackpool - or Lost Cause - lobby, cursing the milling multitudes streaming into the Brighton lobby. How was it possible, I asked myself, for fans with their reputed slannish mentalities, to be so blind! Didn't they know what they were doing - voting for flat pints of Herbert Horribles Headless Hangover Best at 96p a pint if you're lucky, instead of Boddingtons Nectar of the Gods at 56p? I staggered out broken-hearted only to be faced with further mind-wrenching decisions. Could we possibly find some way of eating before Bob Shaw's talk? Or could we last even through a Bob Shaw talk without eating? The problem was solved for us by a little Suthun Colonel, name of Sanders, tucked away in modest squalor below the station. Whatever else you may say about the Colonel, he's fast. And so we were able to chuckle our way through Bob's latest collection of tall tales of the doings of Von Donegan in relative comfort.

It was after this that the going got really tough. The Gulord, pulling out all the stops, had unearthed a final smidgin of Real Ale in the bar outside the Video Room. "A Pint and a half" I gasped, grinning. "Good God, what's wrong with me?" I inwardly exclaimed, "This is the last barrel, and it's nearly gone! - MAKE THAT THREE PINTS" I amended in the tone of voice usually reserved for requesting a lifebelt on the 'Titanic'. We sat down and quaffed, Hazel and I, and I watched, gimlet-eyed, as successive customers approached the bar, assessing the likelihood of their being real ale drinkers. "I think perhaps I'd beter get another couple in" I confided lazily as I leapt out of my seat and halfway across the bar. It doesn't take long to sort out the Toughies from the Quitters in this world and Hazel pretty soon went off back to bed, leaving me sitting before an impressive array of foaming pint pots.

"What a dirty trick" I beamed happily. The afternoon passed fannishly enough, culminating in the Art Auction, at which all true and dedicated connoisseurs gathered; I suppose there may have been a few art connoisseurs there as well, come to think of it, in addition to all us Kate Davies connoisseurs who turned up to see her model her own delectably minimal creations. It took a few moments for it to dawn on me why bidding for these items was so slow.

Early that evening I put on my best Captain Oates expression, picked up my bag and said to Hazel "The Time Has Come". Stiff upper lips held high we sallied forth into the damp, deserted streets of Glasgow. There was no way to avoid it, whatever the hazards. We had a long night ahead of us and I'd be din-binged, dag-nabbed and rowrbazzled if I was going to face it without a goodly stock of real ale. Settling in the Victoria Bar, with its impressive array of handpumps, we smacked our lips, upper (suddenly unstiffened) and lower, over the excellent Maclays. I delved into my bag and came out with two 4-pint containers and asked the barman to fill them. While he was doing that we tried the rest of the brews. Then the Maclays again. Then I fished out another 4-pint jug and had that filled as well. The barman seemed to become less taciturn by the minute. The walk back to the hotel was almost cheerful, though the curious Glaswegian residential system of living in shop doorways took a little getting used to. From there on, however, the evening achieved progressive lift-off as we joined Dave Langford and James White in the bar with the happy knowledge that we were independent and any fizz and sparkle could be restricted to the conversation and kept out of the beer. After that came the early stages of the Birmingham Fan Room party and then, somehow, we ended up at the Swedish fans room party, an amiable, civilised and thoroughly enjoyable affair. Of course, it was on the bed at this party that...but, no. WALDO is a family fanzine after all. After many hours of interesting conversations my communication had gradually changed from anything that Colin Fine would have recognised as language to something more like the grunts of a contented badger. When even those faded out I allowed myself to be steered away bedwards. This was the night when Hazel, hearing some rather strange thumps somewhere in the room, put on the light to find me battering a cowering trouser-press into submission in an effort to force it to open a way for me to the loo - a brutal enterprise which was a signal failure, not so much because of the fortitude of the trouser-press but largely because the loo was in an altogether different direction.



Morning, I am given to understand, came eventually, and, more in a spirit of resignation than forgiveness, we went down to breakfast. There it was, over the soft susurrus of slithering eggs, that we learned of the early hours' fanish attempt to reproduce Jules Verne's 'Journey To The Centre of the Earth' by crowding a lift at a high floor with an inconceivable density of fans to induce it to plummet down the shaft and bore a hole in the earth's crust. Unfortunately, the centre of the earth displayed a comparable recalcitrance to that of my trouser-press and someone's ankle gave way before the earth's crust. (I decline to comment on the detailed outcome of my own close encounter - clothes encounter? - Go and indecently assault your own trouser-press if you want to know what happens.)

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Negotiating an uneasy stalemate with our overly-animated breakfasts, we tottered over to say goodbye to Dave & Hazel Langford. "Call in on us if you're ever in Reading" said Dave in a fit of that mindless bravado which often overcomes people at times of parting. "We might do that on our way back to Yorkshire", said Hazel, "My navigation isn't too good". I was very proud of her at that moment; to produce horror-stricken expressions of such magnitude at breakfast time on the last day of a convention is no mean feat. And so we lurched away to load the car, grinning Deaths-Head fashion at all the other terminal Rigor Mortis cases staggering around the corridors and lobbies of the hotel. That accomplished, we crept into the Fan Room, expecting to die there with our fannish boots on within the next five minutes. No such luck. But what bugged us even more was how pain-free Dave Langford looked as he breezed brightly through the entertainingly slanderous ANSIBLE review of the past year. Realising that more drastic measures were called for, we slunk off to the car for the last time and started to drive around in circles. We knew it was something like that we were supposed to be doing, but after a while the further realisation dawned that 'nearly right' was not good enough. It is in these crisis situations where I really excel and my years as a 'Goon Show' fan came to my aid now. "Gad", I croaked, in the nearest thing I could manage to a Major Denis Bloodnock voice, "We'll have to drink our way out". Accordingly we pulled up alongside the nearest pub and fell inside, pausing only long enough to check that it served real ale. Between gulps and shakes we idly and idiotically reflected on the comparison between a Health Farm, where you arrive feeling lousy and come out all sparkling and bouncy, and a Con, where you arrive feeling fine and crawl out feeling that even the End of the World would only bring you very slight relief.

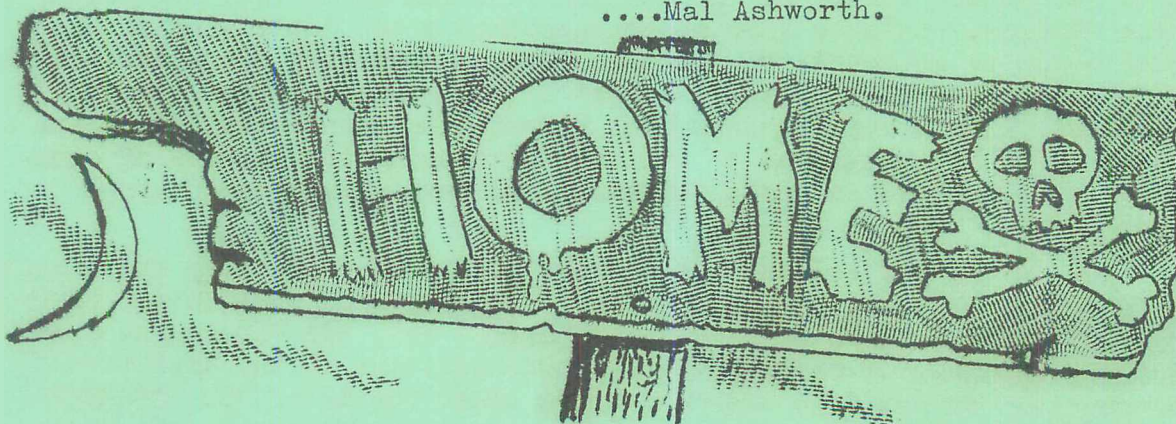
It was desperation rather than true grit that caused us to re-embark on our quest. After a few hours of scenic motoring the road happened to turn south and, as we cruised along dozily through the afternoon, I realised that once again, as at every Con I've ever been to, I hadn't managed to talk to several people I had really hoped to get to know better - fine fans like Harry Bell and Ian Maule, to name but two.

By the time we got back to Yorkshire it was Opening Time (Alas, no, Virginia, it is not true that in Yorkshire it is always Opening Time) so the logical first stop was at our local, 'The Royal Shepherd'. "You've been to Glasgow ?", said Donald, the Landlord, a burly ex-policeman, in a voice tinged with admiration for such death-defying bravery, "How was it ?"

"Oh, pretty quiet, I said, "How were things in Skipton ?"

"Well there was a running street battle all around the town this afternoon", he told us, "Blood everywhere, ambulances screeching around and four people taken off to hospital, one of them with a fractured skull".

....Mal Ashworth.





# BODDARD CRIPPS AND THE LOST VOICE

By

Hazel Ashworth.

I catch intonations the way other people catch 'flu. My me used to say I was Easily Led, which may explain it, though I don't like the label much. Whatever the truth of it, I am a fiendish copier: give me ten minutes with a broad Scot and I'll be going up and down, if you'll pardon the expression, in all the same places.

I lost my own voice a long time ago. A Devon accent, toned down by my mother's efforts to have her child 'speak proper' was erased further by mixing with folks from the big city (London, not Wigan). The result sounded cooler too, to my adolescent ears. SLAR'Y BAR'FARS (pause to wipe nose on sleeve in true city style)...much more oomph somehow than SLAA'TTY BAATFAAST (Pause to move daisy/cornstalk from one side of mouth to other).

Mother and the Londoners were, of course, no match for Yorkshire. Once you've been told 'Shurrupangerritett'n' you're never quite the same again. The lost voice only put in the most occasional appearance after that, and then, as they say, only in moments of extreme duress.

It isn't just accent though. Since Pogo and Riddley Walker and a few happenings like that, my communication with others does go awry if I don't watch my lip. 'Trubba not!' I say to my infant class as a thunderstorm rolls overhead (most of them are only 5 and not so quick to criticise as the 6 year olds). The effects of Pogo are of course ruinous, but we'll go into that another time. One of the main warping influences of my language life, I must tell you, is the Ashworth Tendency, (You know, like the Militant Tendency). Actuably, it's not so much a movement, more a sort of quirk this fellow I live with has. He writes a lot, and when he's not doing that he talks a lot: to the cat, himself, sometimes to me. All in impeccable Yorksher. He was never so lax as to lose his voice, no by the Gundrox. He's so damn talky sometimes there don't seem to be enough words to go round, so he makes them up (and very often the entities that go with them - like 'the Gundrox' I just mentioned, for instance). This sounds like a very praiseworthy undertaking such as budding poets or postmen might be encouraged to cultivate, widening the circles of communication to include not only Yorkshire and Devon, but even, maybe, Lancashire.

But it isn't like that; its effect is, I fear, probably the opposite. For Instance, many and diverse are the beings invoked when Things Go Wrong. "Boddard Cripps," "Borolex Phipps and Bertie" trip off the tongue most readily. "Tanassus of Creap-Up" is a newer addition to the expletive line-up. And who could go wrong with the stark purity of "OH WAGONS!!" in time of need?

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The last time we moved house we hired a van and persuaded Malcolm's brother Clive to come and help us. Early April it was, and the rain torrennding down like anything. The van was big, the gateway small, and the path to the garage (called 'drive' in the Estate Agents blurb) narrow and so steep that the previous owners had thoughtfully left their crampons hanging up with the key. We 'shared' the work - Malcolm drove, Clive directed, I sat in the windowless rear holding ovens and wardrobes together, or apart, depending on whether we were negotiating a left or a right-hand bend.

On about the third journey from the old house to the new, we had more than usual trouble getting through the gateway. Clive was directing with all his heart and soul, waving and shouting wildly from one side as Malcolm carefully reversed into the stone gate-post. 'Stop!' shouted Clive, and with a terrific flourish of arm-waving fell over backwards onto the lawn. The neighbours were entranced, but then something happened that they hadn't bargained for. Malcolm let rip with one of them there Expletives I told you about: 'W O O O O D Y W A A A A N D R O X!!!' rent the air. To be precise, first it quavered, and finally reached true rending proportions on the 'R O X' part. The rain pattered down in its unchoosy way over the standing and the fallen. Neighbours' hands flew to their ears. The first real swear had been sworn in the environs of the new house. I felt we had really arrived.

I suppose it's alright when you are having a swear, rhetorical-like, but an actual two-way conversation is fraught with pitfalls (Thank you, Count Korzybski; I mean more pitfalls than the usual): Picture an early morning in a Yorkshire kitchen at the Ashworth household. Although we don't want to be in the kitchen at this hour, there we are, because we have to go and earn our D.B. ('Daily Booze,' of course.) Conversation is, as they say, minimal. A devilishly sophisticated code, demanding a mere whisper of effort, has become increasingly refined during our years together, and a dialogue of spare and sparkling accuracy, reminiscent of that of Lord and Lady Fenring in Dune (we always like to think) is the order of the day!

Malcolm knocks a cup flying as he reaches out, somewhat abruptly, over a crowded table for something nameless to read. "Slintering shunter!" he expletes. (I cower, ears covered) "What would you like for brefferast?" I enquire. "Bannya?" he barks. (= "I beg your pardon" not "bananas").

"Make up your mind quickly".

"Wuffo?"

I get up from whichever place of shelter I have chosen and start to make coffee. Blank astonishment on M's face. I re-run our conversation silently. Realisation dawns. He's asking me why we have to hurry! "Oh! Wuffo! I thunk you said 'Coffo' ".

Punctuation, as well as words, is often used to devastating effect in deflecting the course of true communication:

Night falls.

Me: "Now I is gonna make yo' chonklit."

M.: "No, I is gonna make you, Chonklit."

Then there was the time when, staying the night with some friends, I admired a multi-coloured patchwork quilt that covered our bed. By next morning it had slipped off and was nowhere to be seen. "Where's that nice coloured jazzbo?" I asked sleepily.

"I's here ma'am" growled a voice in my ear.....

It's quite nice, in an unexpected sort of way, to be completely incomp-  
rehensible rather than just marginally so, like I was before I met him. If  
people overhear our converse, they assume we come from somewhere amazingly  
amazing, and sneak glances at us to see if we've got slanty eyes or only  
half a smile, or a black pudding chonked twixt our teeth. How do you disa-  
buse them? You don't even try. As Riddley Walker, Pogo and me allus say,  
"No trubba...life ain't nohow permamints."

# A final Genuflexion

John Berry

I HAD NOT CONTACTED ART FOR MANY YEARS. It was not jealousy on my part, it was just that I felt that now he was tremendously rich and moved in high circles he would not wish to be reminded of the days in the fifties and sixties when he assisted me with the Bleary Eyes investigations. I mean, a Freeman of the City of London would not wish it to be bandied about that once he thought one had to wear bicycle clips to visit a Cyclotron. Of course, without being cynical, it is only fair to state that Art's accumulation of lucre was the result of a complete fluke. Whilst working as a fitter at an aircraft factory, he accidentally spilled a cup of canteen tea (one sweetner, no milk) into a bubbling cauldron of aluminium, zirconium and titanium. Quickly, the resultant alloy solidified, and now forms the inner casing of most of the world's jet engines, because of its superior strength. Only Art knew the secret of the alloy, i.e. which brand of Sweetner he used. Quickly a consortium built up around Art, and it cornered the market in 'Perkins Sweetners', and was thus able to negotiate a deal with Rolls Royce..... Art naturally being the principal shareholder. Sometimes his photograph appeared in the newspapers; he usually wore a Homburg hat, thick-lensed spectacles, a silk-scarf knotted round his throat, some critics said not knotted tightly enough. Art had made it big, and lived accordingly.

My limited success was also due to a mischance, but I consider it to be rather more profound than Art's discovery. I was leaving the Gent's toilet at Skelmersdale railway station in the summer of '66, when a man jammed a brush laden with black paint up my left nostril. He had been painting the word GENTLEMEN on the door when I had opened it....he was putting a full stop at the end of the word. My lightening mind hit upon the idea of using a stencil to print LADIES and GENTLEMEN very quickly on lavatory doors, and thus in six months time I patented BLEARY'S LATRINE GUIDE. Dividends on the shares were minimal, because the latrine guides were made of cast iron and lasted for about one hundred years. Luckily, I had inserted a clause which allowed me 7.29 pence every time the latrine guide was used, which was constantly due to the activities of a criminal-type with a warped mentality who kept painting over the words on the doors.

Art lived in Park Lane - I had my own little pad in Brixton where I was happy to listen to classical music and dream of another invention which would enable me to become more financially viable. And I was a little surprised when Art rang me up in the winter of '81. "Bleary," he said in a posh voice, completely devoid of any Celtic inflection, "I have a private box at the Festival Hall next Saturday.

Would you like to be my guest ?"

"Oh yes, sir" I said. "Who is wrestling ??"

"It's a classical concert, Bleary" he admonished, though in a kindly tone. "Actually the London Symphony Orchestra are playing Ein Heldenleben by Richard Strauss. As the music so closely typifies my own career, I felt you would like to attend the performance."

"Wonderful," I said. "But what made you think of me after all these years ?"

"I saw you smearing a red-covered rag over the word LADIES at the toilets at Heathrow Airport and I said to myself, Bleary must share in my triumph."

"Oh...er.."I stuttered.

"I'll pick you up in the Mercedes next Saturday night at 7.30 pm. Goodnight, Bleary."

"Goodnight, sir." I replaced the telephone.

Well, what a tremendous coincidence. Ein Heldenleben was also my favourite piece of classical music. 'A Hero's Life.' I thought it succinctly embodied my own life, and I played it every day...sometimes twice. I was particularly delighted with the frequent incursions of the solo violin, usually played by the leader of the orchestra, depicting the gentle and maybe sensual nature of the Hero's wife. It reminded me so much of my own loved one, now unhappily returned to the second row of the Follies Bergere Can Can dancers. I hoped my wife never found out.

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Art's chauffeur, Gerald, a nice boy, knocked on my door at the appointed hour and of course I was ready. I felt it was incumbent upon me to show Art that although not in his 'big time' league, I was still reasonably wealthy, and I had hired an outfit for the weekend. Atop my head was a floppy wide-brimmed blue corduroy hat. The brim was very wide, and I had to cut two holes in it to see where I was going, but I felt it typified my unyielding personality. Some critics would opine that my pink shirt, tartan tie, green cape and blue plastic trousers clashed somewhat, but I was told by the assistant that it was all the rage in the swinging London scene, of which I was now an acknowledged member. As the assistant said, 'if you wear those clothes you'll be certified'.

I sat on the back seat with Art. The Astrakhan collar of his overcoat almost hid his face, but he held out a gnarled hand. "Good to see you, Bleary," he said, "after all these years. Um...you may call me Art."

I shook his hand....old habits die hard.....I admired the way he took a rapid inventory of his rings when our hands parted. "Congrats on the Merc," I panted.

"What do you drive, Bleary?" he asked conversationally.

"I hold shares in London Transport," I replied enigmatically.

He reached under the seat and handed me a box about eighteen inches long and fifteen inches wide. The mahogany was inlaid with mother-of-pearl spelling the words 'Goon Bleary'. "I've had this for some time," he said, in a kindly manner. "It's a present to remind you of the good old times we had together in the fifties."

I gulped audibly, flipped the hasps off the lid. Inside were two steel-blue hand guns. One had a long barrel with half a dozen rubber-tipped plonkers in two sets of three above and below the barrel.

The other had the sleek shape of a high-powered water pistol with a 300 ml capacity, as printed on the butt. Both weapons looked lethal in the comfort of their red velvet recesses. Both gun butts were initialed 'G.B.' in gold.

"I had them hand-made by Krupps," explained Art.

I wiped a tear from each eye. "Th....thank you so much, Art," I gritted.

The Merc stopped outside the Festival Hall, Art gave orders to Gerald and after he'd handed us out the car drew silently away. We entered the hall...well-dressed people were flitting about, none of them as stylishly dressed as I. Art seemed to maintain a certain distance from me, which I attributed to the fact that he wished to preserve his anonymity. We climbed the stairs and were escorted to our box on the left of the auditorium facing the stage. We sat down...I slid the guncase under my seat. I had never been in the Festival Hall before...it was magnificent...our box gave an unhindered view of the entire hall. Even as we were seated the musicians commenced to file onto the stage and take their seats. Soon, every seat except one was filled, and the players started to practice a few nervous scales, to become silent again as the leader entered. He bowed to the audience, received scattered applause, and took the vacant seat.

Then the conductor, Sir Herbert Pilchard, made his entrance carrying his baton tastefully between finger and thumb of his left hand. He climbed onto the rostrum, bowed to the audience, then turned to face the orchestra. What a breathtaking moment.

Sir Herbert swept the orchestra into the highly charged opening bars and I settled back in the comfort of my seat, immersing myself in the luxury of abstrac appreciation. It was wonderful to study the varied techniques used by the conductor to control the members of the orchestra and their sections; mostly by digital gesticulation, although in the intensity of certain passages he used a shoulder and even an elbow to indicate the entrance of certain instruments.

And then I saw the muzzle of a gun protruding from a curtained section immediately on the right of the stage, about seventy or eighty yards from where I was sitting. At first I couldn't believe it. My attention was initially drawn to that area because I observed bulges in the curtain, but, well, when the muzzle was so suddenly thrust into view I was utterly shocked and bewildered. Yet no one else seemed to notice it....down below me, the homogeneous mass of the audience edged forwards in their seats, stunned by the overpowering grandeur of the music.

"Pssst." I alerted Art.

He opened his eyes and looked at me rather angrily through his spectacles. "What do you want, Bleary?" he demanded.

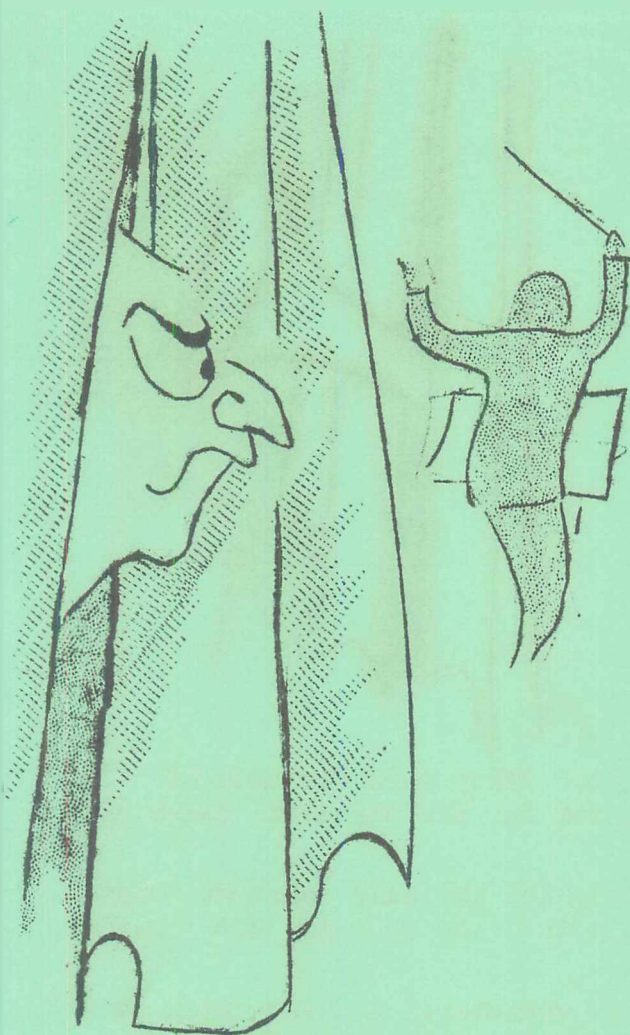
"The curtains to the right of the stage...watch...a gun muzzle appeared for a second."

"Nonsense."

The area was still...and then the curtains bulged again, indicating movement behind them....and..yes...there was the muzzle again, visible for a second, as if a sniper was assessing the range.

"Great Ghu, Bleary, you're right!" exclaimed Art. "What the hell is happening?"

"Must be international terrorists," I said. "This concert is being broadcast by the BBC. Think of the propaganda value of an assassination. You might even be the target." He dropped swiftly to the floor, almost beating me to it.



"There must be more important people here than me...don't you think?" he panted.

"Shouldn't think so," I hissed.  
"Unless Joseph Nicholas is here."

I peered over the edge of the box. Suddenly an evil face appeared from behind the curtains... ..a face without mercy, jaws clenched with tension, looking directly at the conductor.

"We must do something, Bleary" hissed Art. Suddenly inspiration banged against the inside of my skull. I reached under the seat and withdrew the box; pulled out the long-barrelled gun from its velvet nest, rammed a rubber-suckered shaft down the barrel and felt the mechanism grip the end of it, coiled spring encapsulating. I licked my right forefinger and gently lubricated the inside of the rubber sucker. I rested the back of my left hand on the edge of the box, placed my right wrist in my left palm, put the back sight to 75 yards, aimed at the man's forehead and squeezed the trigger.

You've got to hand it to Krupps, and perchance a mite of egoboo for my own small skill, but there was the man's face, eyes bulging as the shaft struck his forehead...and stayed. He looked like a reluctant unicorn.

He disappeared like a rocket inside the curtain, and then two heads peered out, scanning the auditorium...and..yes...two rifle muzzles were pushed through as well.

"This is it, Bleary," rasped Art. "Once more the Bleary Eyes sweep into sheer scintillating action." He wrenched the zap-gun from the case, and raced out...I followed him, plonker rampant. The vast tabled complex was empty...Art seemed to know where he was going...I loped after him. Pausing only to fill his zap butt with an abandoned glass of stale brown ale, Art continued his charge.

Suddenly he stopped outside a closed door, a firm left forefinger to his lips demanded silence.

He gently opened the door, stepped through it...I followed him.

What a superb ambush....a triumph for the Bleary Eyes. The three men had their backs to us, looking through the curtain towards the orchestra...and there we were....their undoubted quarry, directly behind them.

Without a word of warning, Art zapped the frothy brown liquid over their heads...they turned as one and advanced towards us, playing their trumpets....

Playing their trumpets ?

"Oh, awfully sorry" said Art.

He grabbed me by the arm and pulled me through the open doorway we had just entered through. I followed him down the wide staircase...he ran so quickly that I only had time to smear out the words on three toilet doors.

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"There it is, Goon," snapped Art. We were in his posh flat in Park Lane. He had withdrawn the long-playing record of Ein Heldenlaben from his vast collection of classical records. He pointed to the music notes on the reverse side of the record cover. Richard Strauss had asked for three trumpeters off stage to give dramatic three dimensional impact to the battle sequence.

"Rifle muzzles indeed," snorted Art. "They were the ends of trumpets....they were watching the conductor for the signal to blast out their chords."

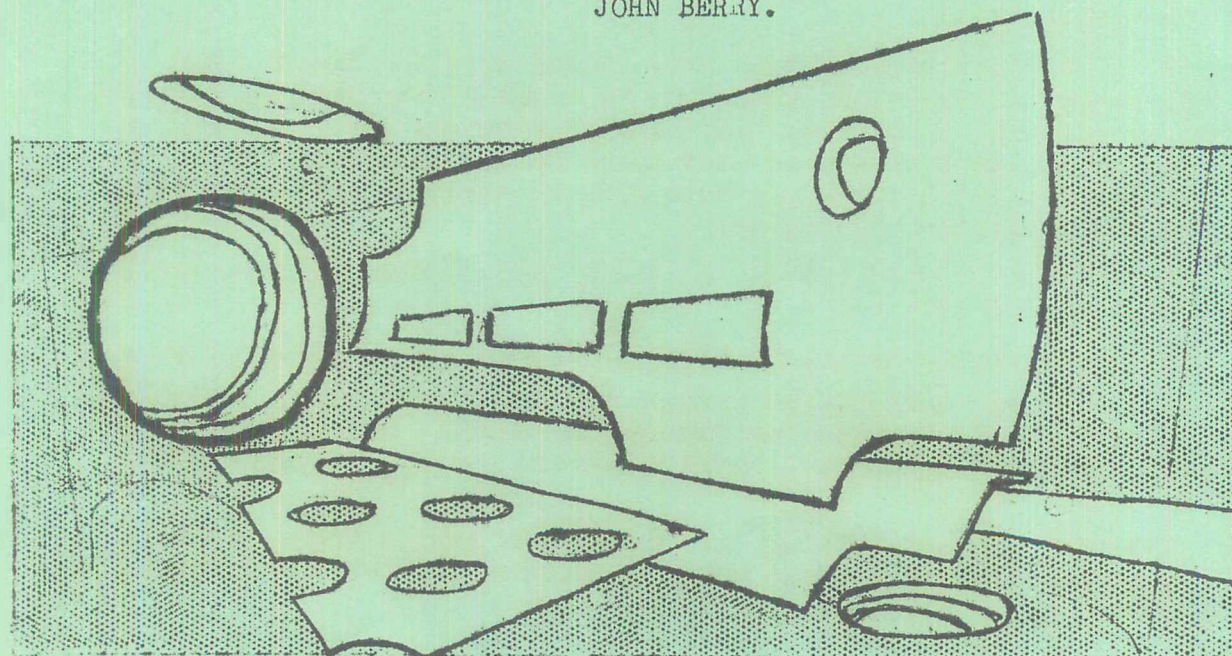
"I won't stop for dinner," I hinted, but Art said 'alright' that would be fine!' He offered to get Gerald to drive me home, but I said I'd walk.

I trudged towards Brixton, and then remembered I'd forgotten to bring the gun case with me. Oh well....Gerald would bring it round one day.

What an anti-climax to my career. For a few seconds it had looked as though it would be the apogee...Ein Heldenlaben Two. What a disaster...an all-time low for the Bleary Eyes. It just couldn't be worse.

Then it started to rain....

JOHN BERRY.



# When Gillings Published Stefn Scope

by  
CHUCK  
HARRIS

Try to imagine you're a neo on your first visit to "The Globe" ((The 'TUN)) on a night when the fannish dinosaurs are losing their reminiscences over the Good Old Days. You've met Frank Edward Arnold and heard about "The History of Science Fiction" project that he has been writing for the last nineteen years and three months, and just brushed off some aged character who stencilled "The War of The Worlds" and published it in a very limited first edition. Ignoring the squeaks... "imported papyrii..." "...fourteen carat staples..." you make your way to the corner where two relics of First Fandom are holding court before an enchanted teen-age audience.....

Of fandom fans we are the cream,  
We never miss an ish.  
Trufandom is our only theme,  
Our yankee accent is a dream,  
As BNF's we reign supreme,  
- Exactly what we'd wish.  
Trufandom is our meat and drink,  
It is our staff of life.  
Our prop, our safety-valve, our link,  
Our vice, our passion, foible, kink,  
Trufandom is, we really think,  
Our mistress and our wife.

It's true that many lesser clans,  
For fandom also thirst,  
But they are merely nouveau fans  
It's us who loved it first,  
And us who know it best, because,  
Ask any connoisseur,  
Trufandom isn't what it was  
When we were what we were.

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Oh! the glee!  
Shared with Lee!  
What a pill!  
What a thrill!  
Such a spree!

And when Gillings published STEFNISCOPE in August 1910,  
What a fine fannish fanzine that was, in the fan-Pleistocene that was!  
We are positive that nobody has ever really wrote since then.  
How pellucid, how light it was! Like an angel in flight it was!  
Written sweetly.  
Nothing rotten.  
Quite completely,  
Starbeggotten.  
Published quietly and discreetly,  
And yet still not quite forgotten.

When Gillings published STEFNISCOPE in August 1910,  
How his rhyming elated us! How his timing prostrated us!  
When Gillings published STEFNISCOPE, as we keep on saying, when  
He was just at the peak of it! oh, we can hardly speak of it!  
The sort of prose you'll never, never, never, never see!  
So don't talk about those others, but apply your mind to me.  
And although we've told you so before, we must repeat again -  
When Gillings published STEFNISCOPE in August 1910!

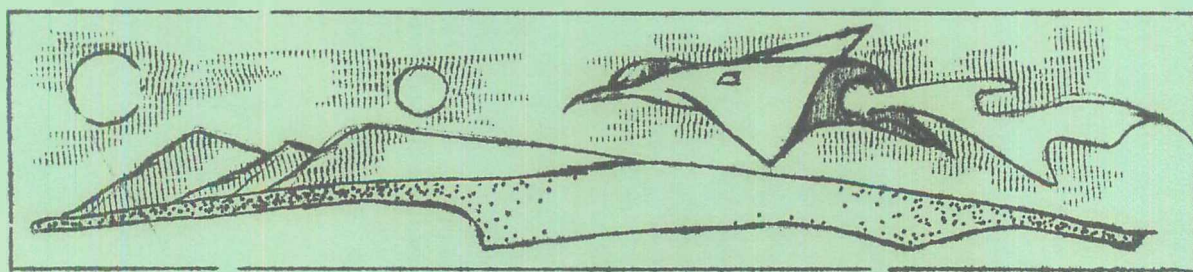
Though today this APORRHETA does for Sandy and all those,  
It's not good enough for us! it's rather too rough for us!  
The thing is merely wonderful, it's never deathless prose.

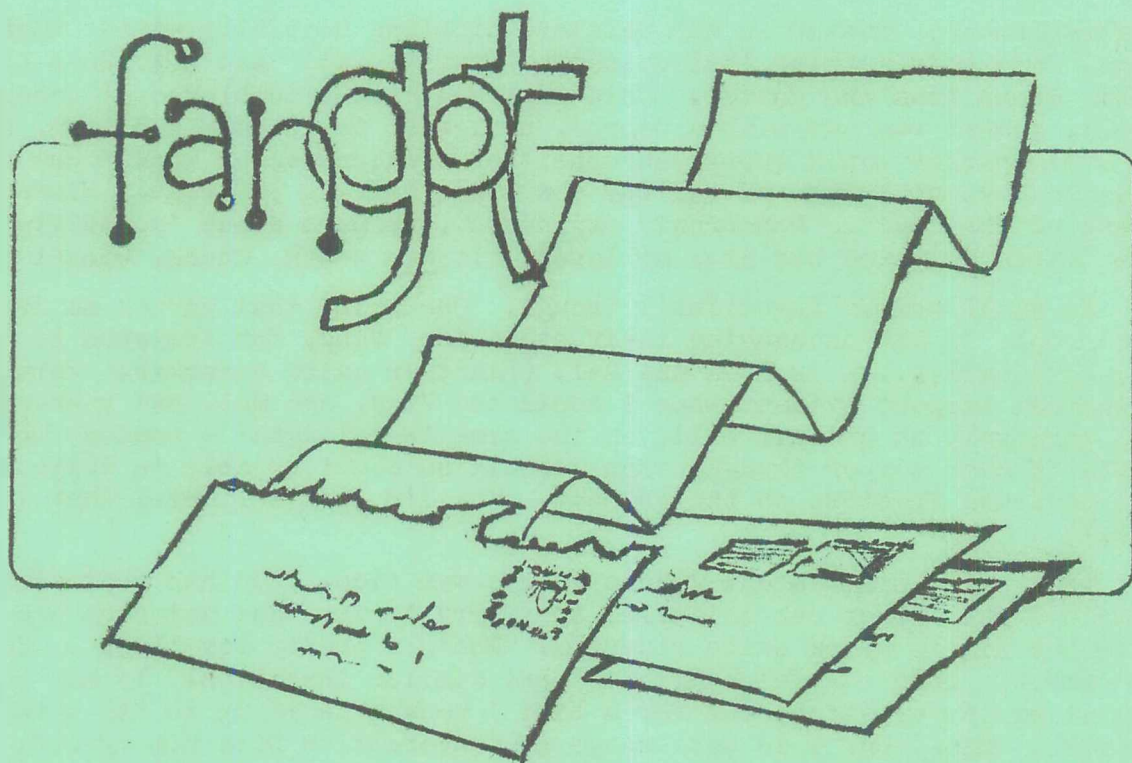
When Gillings did a piece for SHAGGY, or for Grennell's early GRUE,  
Each paragraph was gem-like, each phrase rang hard and true.  
You understood The Message, felt the sacred stefnic fire,  
And the Cosmic Mind pulsating in trufandom's own Messiah.

Oh, when Gillings published STEFNISCOPE in August 1910,  
How poetic! How lyrical! What a feat! what a miracle!  
Oh, the sighing of the neo's and the swooning of the fen!  
As he stencilled out each page for us, he created a new age for us,  
How we shriaked and screamed and hooted, how we hollered, how we howled!  
We were ravished and uprooted! we were frankly disembowelled!  
You'll never know the throb, the glow, the bliss that we knew then,  
When Gillings published STEFNISCOPE in August 1910.

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WHEN GILLINGS PUBLISHED STEFNISCOPE originally appeared in Chuck's  
SWAN SONG No.1 (1960 ?) and in my opinion relates as easily to  
today's fandom as it did to that era's. Further derivation from  
Chuck... "I found a song lyric about ballet in a book by Herbert  
Farjeon, and I've more or less pinched it wholesale as a poem thing.  
I've kept lots of the original, but added bits here and there. It's  
lots less than a parody, - it's more plagiarism than anything else -  
but it was awfully tempting. The good bits are Farjeon's, the lousy  
bits are mine."





Chuck Harris, 32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants.

Thank you very much for WYVAL. It's by far the best thing I've seen from you for years, - - - - in fact, it's the only thing I've see from you in years. How come you cut me off your mailing list after I commented on TRIODE in 1965 -- and mentioned your name twice ? (Once quite favourably and once on the envelope.)

I suggest you reinstate me immediately OR I will not only cross you off my mailing list but will make it my business to disabuse all those people who wrongly imagine you are called Bent Eric because of your surname.

And don't try to get round me by saying you are serializing my Bonnington Con Report either. That was longer than the Bagavad Gita -- even I can only remember the first 382 verses which only covered the auction. And Where is the bloody verse about Burgess then? The one he sued me for libel about?

" Anthropophagy was reigning in the kitchen  
They served up Burgess with an apple in his gob.  
He was cooked completely nude,  
You could have him baked or stewed....  
Or in a Burgessburger for a bob."

It was lovely to see old Eric Needham again, but you might have used the actual Wart Remover verse to benefit all those of the congregation who weren't at the matinee.

I think: (How many years is it?)

Alexander conquered the whole wide world  
In a single adroit manouvre.  
He sprayed his foes, with a high pressure hose  
Of WIDOWERS WART REMOVER.

The Widower concept was sheer genius, but I never realised before that it was an imaginary firm. I thought it really was a Northern departmental store and I seem to remember Eric using the name in another poem. This was an elegant and clever piece about evening and the lights of the city. This was way back and I don't have a copy, but it was impressive and memorable.

And lovable old Mal Ashworth too. Wonders will never cease. The last time I heard of him he was eating hallucinatory fungi: I thought "Another good fan gone White" and had visions of this poor degenerate hanging round

the greengrocery counter in the Safeway, nibbling hopefully at the mushrooms. ((These days he's wearing 'hallucinatory fungi'....)) And Lo! Here he is again! Risen from the gutter. Cold Turkeyed into a semblance of normality ---well, almost --- and with a Degree, no less. Well, half a degree, and only a nit-picker would query Fahrenheit or Centigrade, or wonder how much he has to save up before he can buy the other half... ((Careful, Sirrah, he was one of the leading Psneeronic exponents..and puns about 'normality' are quite liable to rouse his ire, at least. It was a pun, Chuck, wasn't it ?))

He still writes beautifully though. One thing that struck me about all these people is how unchanging their style is. Vinç, for instance is instantly recognisable...so is BoSh and Mal. ((Another quite remarkable thing was the instant rapport evident when I contacted Vinç, and Mal, and yourself.... quite strangely we are all still on the same 'wavelength' - someone who is capable of much deeper thought than I would no doubt be able to write a quite profound treatise on the subject. Me, I'm just delighted that it does exist.))

The filler squib about John's budgie was nice. Sue has most always had a budgie. The latest one is called Appy Arry Arris. Sue dotes on him and has taught him to speak quite fluently: "Who's a pretty boy then, ...How's your father....who's a fat budgie..." and similar inanities. It may not be stimulating conversation, but for a bird I reckon he is up to "A" level standard. Mind you, I do not engage in conversation with him myself. He dislikes me and I despise him. Sue used to let him fly around the room occasionally for exercise, and he developed a nasty habit of perching on my head and leaving a surprisingly large deposit of fecal matter on my parting.

I was very cross. The last time it happened I made a lucky blind swipe with the Daily Mail and sent him whizzing across the room, arse over tip like a bright green and yellow shuttlecock. The family called me a sadistic monster and Samantha threatened to report me to the RSPB but no matter, it solved the problem, and the little bastard detours well around me now. That's all by the way though. What I was telling you about was its loquaciousness. The twins' friends come in and he chatters away like mad: they go home marvelling and wishing they had such a treasure instead of rotten old Ceefax and Videos.

Well sir, I was sitting in the armchair reading PONG whilst half a dozen kids were laughing about the cage. Sean came over to report: "Ho, Ho," he said, "Guess what Deborah is teaching Harry to say? She is teaching him to say Fuck you."

And so she was. Lovelyangel-faced twelve year old Debbie mouthing "Fuck you, Fuck you, Fuck you," at the bird. Now this is a very modern enlightened family. Anybody can say "shit" or "sod" or "bugger" or even "fuck you" - especially if they don't mind one hell of a belt over the earhole from my old lady together with a mouthful of Wrights Coal Tar Soap.

So, I flung a sheet over the cage, took the bird upstairs "to rest a bit" and spent the rest of the afternoon trying to de-programme it. Nature, as you may have noticed, does not provide an "erase" button on budgerigars. All I could do was try to cover any tracks left in its memory banks by reiterating "England winners cha cha cha, England winners cha cha cha" for the rest of the afternoon and hope for the best.

In the event, the bird never did say "Fuck you" - or, for that matter, "England winners cha cha cha." He did, however, scream "Piss off piss off piss off you old cow" at the County Girl Guide Commissioner the following morning - but the old love is almost as deaf as I am so it didn't really matter.

I still think there's a lot to be said for budgie sandwiches though. (( It's strange...very strange...but the last time I heard from you - back in 1955 - you had also been having 'trouble'with a budgie. John Berry's budgie.

And....that you were accused of raping this poor innocent feathered being. False though this accusation no doubt was, I can't help wondering if John has since spent much of his time teaching young budgerigars to defecate on large-sized partings. It would explain much - including his gafia.))

// It is unfortunate that the Harris Experiment should have produced an unexpected result - to wit, one egg laid by the budgerigar. It is a pity this could not have been ovoided. However I am sure that the great-hearted Harris will readily assume responsibility for his progeny and will give the little one a good home, bringing it up as one of the family with all the advantages of a cultured household. I appeal to fandom to help him in this noble endeavour. SUPPORT THE CHICK HARRIS FUND! Walt Willis. A TRUEBILL.//

Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN LELYSTAD, The Netherlands.

Many thanks for a taste of the time when Yngvi was a louse. I'm glad he has survived the Kojak voguel. I cherished the pieces of fan history by John Berry and yourself, admired the fannish writings of Ted Tubb, Vin/ Clarke and the likes, laughed at most places which would have been right in the fifties, all the places which would have been right in the eighties, and then some. But most of all I enjoyed the word-play, the joy of using language pervading the entire collection. The find of Widowers jingles alone is something which should have bridged the years.

"Shakespeare took the critics aback  
By the passion of his love scenes in dramas.  
Until he said that Romeo and Juliet  
had been wearing WIDOWERS SHOWBIZ PYJAMAS."

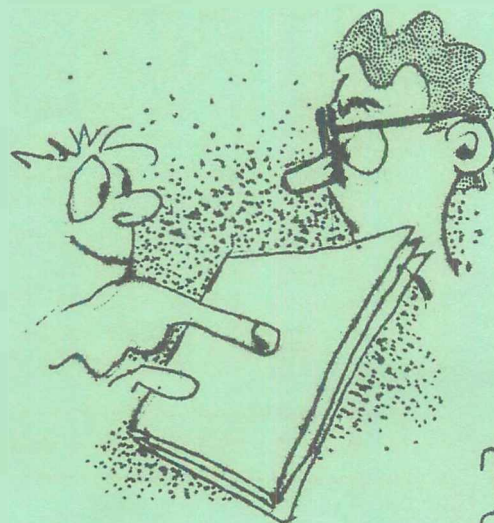
"The cave-man was shivering night after night  
before he at last became brighter.  
The innovation to spark off civilisation  
was a WIDOWERS CIGARETTE LIGHTER."

Oh, I could go on and on! I'm really waiting for someone to reprint fanzines like HYPHEN and NC&THEN in their entirety and stop the frustrations of a fan who'll never be able to afford fanzines from before his birth. ((Suggest you contact Richard Bergeron on this!)) This fifties fanthology, and especially Jim Cawthorn's cover "which so typifies the spirit of 50's fandom," has made me understand the basic secret of 50's fandom: while we simply drink our pints of beer, you used them to sit in!

I'm baffled that it all can be that simple!  
((Well, certain invocations to the Great Ghod OSMOSIS, have to be made as well....))

Harry Warner, Jr, 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, Md.

I think you're unique among those who have compiled anthologies of fan writing, in one respect. Offhand, I can't think of anyone who had previously permitted the authors of reprint pieces to choose what they would like to see included. I don't think I could have borne to deprive myself of the freedom to choose the contents, if I'd been ambitious enough to put together such an anthology, but I can see the merit of the system by looking at the contents of WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE and



realizing that there may be a better variety in the contents than there would have been if you or any other one fan had done the choosing. (( It did work out reasonably well, I think...though there was some editorial choice involved in who was invited to contribute - and since several of those so invited suggested more than one piece I was able to balance out the material to my satisfaction. Naturally, I wasn't able to include all the fan-writers I would have liked to include; time, money, and my Inbuilt Lack of Vulgar Ostentation precluded that!))

TWILIGHT OF THE GHODS seemed to be totally new to me. Maybe the sheer volume of the John Berry writing output during the late 1950s exceeded the capacity of my memory cells or maybe that issue of Hyphen didn't reach me or maybe it was among the victims of the damage an anesthetic did to my memory during a hospital stay in the 1960s. Whatever the reason for my failure to remember having read this piece before, it seems to stand out for me personally in this anthology. Of course, it helps that John has embodied in this long narrative so many fragments of the IF mythology, causing it to seem like the very epitome of all that made its characters such legendary individuals to those of us who had never visited Ireland or met its most prominent fans.

But something else came to my attention as I read through this issue, a situation which I hope won't be lost on the younger generation of fans as they read it today. All those thousands of words, with their hundreds of guffaws evoked by the hyperbole and exaggeration and extravagance of language, and I don't think I encountered in them even one lone obscenity or strong profanity or grossness. Today, so many fans seem to think that gutter language is needed to capture the attention and hold the interest in fanzine material. This is the best possible proof that it's excess baggage. ((The only complaint I've had is about my exaggerated use of commas - by Ted White - and I can only assume that he has a greater lung capacity than myself, since my golden rule is to put in a comma whenever I have to stop for breath. Interesting, the things you discover about people from their comments; was TeW raised at a High Altitude does anyone know? It would explain much...))

Mal Ashworth's contemporary article seems unchanged in quality and good spirits from when he was fully active in fandom. He did me a particular service by waiting so long to write this article, because I'm also one of those obsessive accumulators of books and just now this trait is involving me in a series of crisis. So it's consoling to know that someone else has problems. I've been putting newly acquired old books into three more or less superfluous bedrooms which are empty except for odds and ends of furniture but they're getting badly filled up and just recently, I had a terrible scare involving one of these bedrooms. I assume that books when piled on the floor in too great numbers topple over unpredictably in England. They did in this bedroom one night and as if they were doing it on purpose, the collapsed stacks of books rearranged themselves against the only door into the room, jammed solidly up against several very heavy, full boxes of other books. I heard the crash, went up to investigate, and found that the books had barricaded themselves behind the door. I couldn't open it far enough to reach in and pull away any of the books to permit opening the door further and get inside. The hinges of this door were on the bedroom side, so I couldn't remove the pin and try to open the door the other way. The windows to the room were shut tight and bolted from within. I had a bad half-hour before I finally succeeded in poking a book or two far enough out of position to break the logjam. (( Now there's a new twist for a writer of 'Sealed Room' murder stories; "...but the real culprit M'lud was a first edition of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS!))

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" Ted E. White is a sort of primordial D. West....."

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Robert Bloch, 2111 Sunset Crest Drive, Los Angeles, California.

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Mere words can scarcely convey my delight with WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE! Here indeed is ample proof that U.K. fandom was active and flourishing in the days when Christopher Priest was still just an altar-boy.

And what a pleasure to renew acquaintance with Widower's products! Come to think of it, I seem to recall having a go at one or two such ad's myself, although mine weren't anywhere near as good, written as they were, under adverts circumstances.... ((YIKE! The only answer to that, sirrah, is to reprint, and let the audience ~~judge~~ judge.

The Boy stood on the Burning Deck:  
That fire it was a wow, sirs!  
Yet he could, without doubt, have sat it out  
With WIDOWER'S ASBESTOS TROUSERS

Moses climbed up Mount Sinai  
For ten tablets to cure mankind's ills;  
But when internal growls distress your bowels  
Buy WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL PILLS



When viewing the wringers of washing machines,  
Ample-bosomed young women show fears;  
But if you've a full bust, then just put your trust  
In WIDOWER'S WONDERFUL BRASSIERES. ...))

John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks.

I recently attacked (politely) Rob Hansen, for floating an idea for a fannish foundation devoted to reprinting fan writing from the past, saying that I thought it was a bad idea, and that he should better spend his time and energy encouraging new writers to do their thing, rather than merely regurgitating old material no longer relevant to the eighties. Well, I have to confess that after reading your fanthology, I've sent another letter to Rob, saying that it's not such a bad idea after all! How's that for the power of positive reading?

I did enjoy most of WYWAL, though finding there were one or two pieces in there that were too dated for my tastes. But the over-whelming impression I came away with was how much FUN the fifties fans seemed to be having. Reading many of the current fanzines, I often get the impression that the writers are concentrating so hard on being witty, or turning a clever phrase, or finding a new way to be rude, that they've lost the spirit of FUN in their writing. I produce CRYSTAL SHIP as a stimulus to me, as I say in the editorial to CS6, and the only way it stays a stimulus is if I can keep it as a FUN thing, something which I actually enjoy doing. That way, it's easy to get down to doing it, and what comes out, although hard work, isn't too forced. I get the feeling that the fifties fan operated in a similar fashion. I came across the phrase 'desperate fun' used in a recent fanzine, for the kind of frenetic activity that modern fans engage in - it's a good phrase, summing up the difference between 'now' and 'then' quite accurately.

The best bits in the zine were John Berry's 'Twilight of the Gods' and your own 'The Day I bit Ghod on the Ankle'. Those two had me absolutely hooting with laughter (which was a bit embarrassing since I was reading it in a spare moment at work - my workmates in adjoining offices kept popping their heads round the door to see if I was alright). The Berry piece in particular is brilliant, and would be worth the price of admission alone. Seeing an early Bob Shaw, like 'DRAGNIT' was fun, too. After reading that, one can see where the man gets all his Eastercon material - he's probably plundering his old fannish writings!

Mal Ashworth's piece struck a nerve, since I'm slowly beginning to realise that my book collection is taking over the house, and that my wife and I will soon have to sleep in the garage - provided the car doesn't object to being moved out into the road. If it does, I guess it's a tent on the lawn! ((Er...that will, of course, only be a tentative arrangement, one assumes.))

Ving Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent.

YNGVI....it gave me a warm glow inside, like swallowing a Madras Curry. ((I only hope it didn't also have the same after-effects a Madras Curry has..!)) I thought that nearly every nuance of the lighter side of Sixth Fandom on this side of the Atlantic was there...of course, there were a few who didn't even get a mention...Nigel Lindsay, Ethel (?) ditto, Ken Potter and Dave Wood ((Yes, but turn over a few pages...)), Fred Smith, Fred Robinson, to name a few with the aid of an OMPA index - the first five years - but on the whole it packed in a helluva lot. I only went through about a third of my fanzines for quotes, and then did some very severe pruning, so there is plenty of material to be mined. ((Yes, now...why don't you do a fannish 'Book of Quotations', in a humorous vein, of course.))

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"He's gone into hospital to have a peacemaker fitted...."

---

Pamela Boal, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon.

Today I have positively revelled in doing my own thing, taking time off to read your fanthology from cover to cover, and re-read many of the especially chuckleworthy bits. I'm what might be termed a late developer though an sf reader and spiritually a fan since the age of seven I did not discover truefandom until the late 60s. Even in the early 70s there were zines about that had an echo of the sense of fun and friendship that your fanthology reveals to be the way of the 50s. Fortunately I met fans with the attitudes and spirit of those days and contact with them, however tenuous, keeps me from completely gafiating.

To make comment on the excellent illos and layout would be trite somehow and to analyse my enjoyment of each and every item just might detract from that enjoyment so forgive me if I do not.

Though Confucius said so many things,  
To light the inner path,  
A brighter countenance is gained from  
A WIDOWER'S BUBBLE BATH.

Hmm could be better but twas straight from head to typer, on spur of moment. Great fun, some faneds have tried to get limericks going but this is the first I have heard of the Widower's products. I can't help wondering if such fun items faded away because fans take themselves too seriously nowadays. ((Some do, I think, but there's still wit about ...a more cerebral, ascerbic, clever type of wit reflecting the times we live in...which are also less funny. And with the return of some of the characters herein to active-fandom mayhap there can be a blending of the two, to everyones enjoyment.))

" The peak of Everest was reached  
By Hillary and Tensing,  
Who staked a claim and surrounded same  
With WIDOWER'S PORTABLE FENCING. " ....Archie Mercer.

((The WIDOWER'S by Bob Bloch, and  
Archie Mercer appeared originally  
in Harry Turner's NOW&THEN. ))

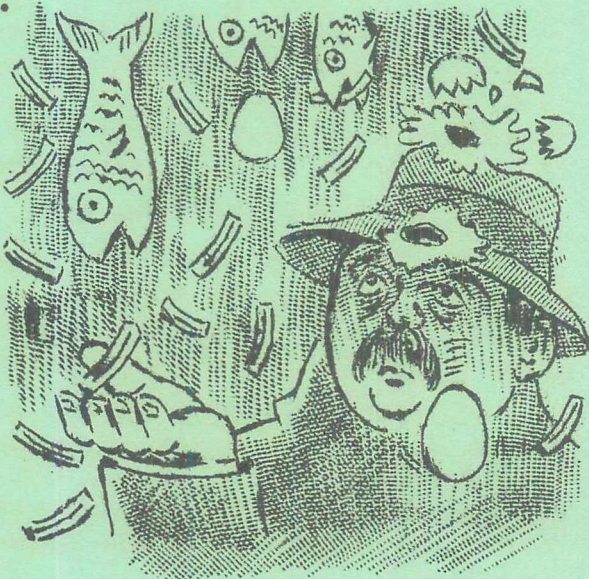


As a child I cherished a large collection of car brochures, gathered from around the world by a benign uncle, who was something in the motor business. I collected cuttings from newspapers and magazines illustrating exotic "Yankie" monsters; Chevvy's, Pontiacs, Lincolns, Panhards. There were French Citroens, German Mercs, Italian Fiats and the English Morris, Austin, and Triumph Mayflower. I gazed in awe at chrome-plating, sweeping-fins, sumptuous upholstery, wire wheels and malevolent grills. Eventually I grew out of it all and turned to stamps (I'd hear there was money to be made in that market) and girls in bikinis (bikinis in those days were fairly new and seemed to appear at the same moment I began to notice something interesting about girls. Actually, the bikinis were two large pudding dishes and a nappie to cover the naughty bits. Not at all like the modern postage stamp variety - but the allure to my pre-puberty mind! .....ah, but I digress.)

After army service I was taught to drive, but it wasn't until I was twenty-five that I acquired my first car. My driving until then was limited to a small green van full of tools, telephones and dirty wellington boots. I had a Lambretta scooter for social occasions and my wife and I would bomb happily about the area on this trusty steed. That was until on a particular foul winters night, amid falling snow and iced-up roads we crashed into a drunken pedestrian....well, that's not quite correct, the drunk crashed into us. He lurched out of his favourite tavern, stepped off the pavement and hit us broadside. Scooter, wife, shopping and yours truly went into a shallow orbit and crashed back to earth with alarming speed. I found myself skating along the road on the bridge of my nose, wife on my back, scooter snorting and snarling on her back. Charles Fort would have been delighted to notice that it was raining eggs, bacon, fish and chips. I picked myself up to see drunk lurching off into the blizzard. I doubt if he ever felt anything. But I did. And to this day have misplaced knuckles in my left hand to prove the point.

After that we never really had the same affection for scooters ("What if it had been a car that hit us....or even, a double-decker bus!")

Then fate took a hand and I started my first real love affair with a car. An ~~1937~~ friend had an MG. A 1937 PB all red and sexy with large protruding head-lamps a supple wood-ash frame, wire wheels and a soft removable top.



He wanted a scooter and successfully "conned" me into doing a straight swap! Think about that you car buffs! A 1937 MG for a Lambretta scooter!

The MG was duly delivered to me and I ceremoniously handed over the scooter. That evening a mechanical minded friend ( that is to say a friend who knew about cars not one of the Asimov variety ) looked it over. "Umm, interesting. A very novel concept." his muffled voice from under the bonnet. "Still, no real sweat. Let's take her for a spin." We drove off in the hairy beast and he belted it down the A6 in third. "What you've got here Dave, is an MG body and gearbox with a morris-minor engine."

"What's that mean ?"

"Well the gears don't quite match the engine properly so I suggest you treat top gear as a sort of under-drive."

"Don't you mean overdrive ?"

"Nope. Underdrive. Look I'll show you."

We were approaching the rear of a large red bus and with complete aplomb he pulled out into the face of the oncoming traffic; accelerating alongside the bus in third gear. Drawing adjacent to the driver's cab he casually flipped into top. There was a dull grinding noise. The MG went into deceleration and the bus pulled away. Horrified I covered my eyes; visions of head-on contretemps with approaching vehicles flashed through my mind. My friend, with the seasoned manner of a driver fully used to driving other peoples cars, casually slipped back in behind the bus.

"That's what I mean by underdrive." he said.

\*\*\*

Over the next two years we had boundless fun with that car. It wasn't without its problems though. For instance the brake blocks would heat up and bind on a long journey (say, over twelve miles). We carried cans of water for cooling purposes. On one occasion we did a lo-o-o-ong journey of about twenty five miles and ran out of water. A kindly farmer offered help with the comment, "Engine overheating, then ?"

"No," I replied tossing the water against the wheels to his bemusement.

The door on the passenger side developed problems and wouldn't shut properly so I fitted a small bolt on the inside to keep it shut. One evening, trundling homeward, I stopped to pick up a neighbour. Intent on impressing him with the MG it never entered my mind to tell him to slip the bolt into place. I put my foot down, approached the local roundabout with gay abandon and flung the MG round with a carefree flick of the steering wheel. There was a loud scream and to my horror I saw my neighbour lurch against the door. The door swung wide and he started to fall. I grabbed his jacket with my left hand as the car mounted the pavement and careered to a halt against the hedge....

I explained about the bolt.

He said nothing for the rest of the journey home. Or when we parted. My wife was just serving up the Lancashire hot-pot when the door-bell rang. It was Mrs. --- the neighbours wife. " And who's going to wash our Sid's underpants then ?" she demanded....

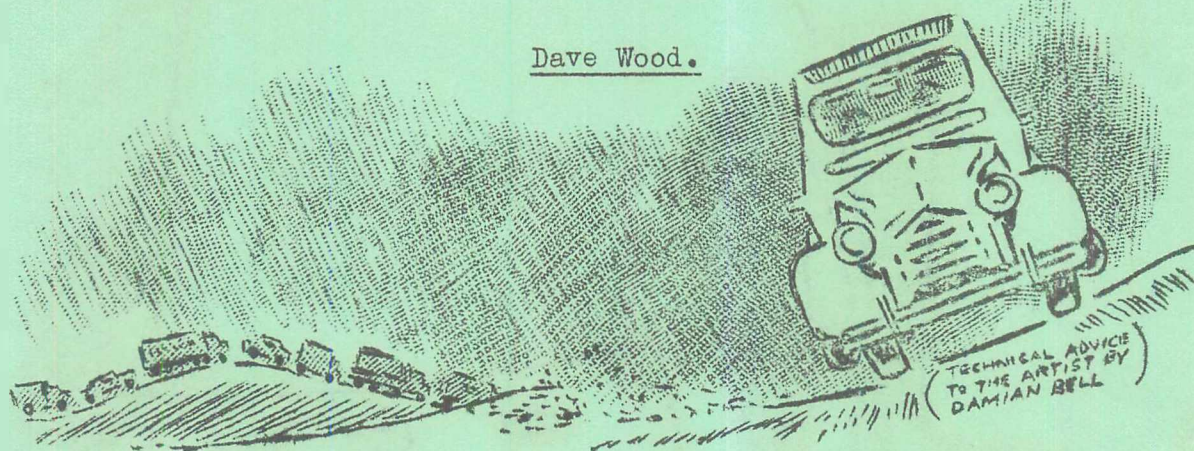
Eventually the car had to go and I sold it for £25. After the MG came a long succession of old and battered cars; Rochdale Olympic, Triumph Herald, Hillman Minx, Imp and Hunter, a mini and an Escort. All adequate but close to being knackered. Finally my wife broke, "Enough is enough! You spend more time lying on your back under cars than....."

I took the hint. The bank manager proved surprisingly helpful and we bought an almost new Citroen 2CV. For nearly four years it gave us perfect service and I never did get to see underneath it. Its one drawback was the tiny 600cc engine. The poor little bugger really did have to struggle over the hills into Bristol. My passengers started to mutter "It will have to go," when for the umpteenth time we heard over Radio Bristol that "...traffic on the Clevedon road is almost at a standstill. Police say the queue is headed by a slow-moving vehicle..."

So we changed again. This time we have gone from the ridiculous to the sublime. French, two door sporty hatch-back, five speed gear-box, power steering, electric windows, bucket seats and a mortgage on the insurance. Beautiful. We sail along in silent splendour, two fingering past the hogs who had previously made our little 2CVs life such a misery. Utopia!

Mind you, have you ever been in a car wash, put in the money and then found the electric window switch jammed? It tends to wash away all thoughts of grandeur.

Dave Wood.



((Such is the graphic power of Dave's prose that at one point in the typing-on-stencil of this piece I executed "HORRIDIED" for 'horrified'.....some times the typos are better than the - - - One wonders if in the expected science-fictional future, those supermen to come will be relating their favourite 'spaceship-breakdowns' to amuse their contemporaries, I rather suspect so as almost all modes of conveyance engender a love/hate relationship. I often recall the time when I drove a Renault Dauphine with no reverse gear....one became singularly adept at recognising garage forecourts where one could drive on and off..... and you ?))

