

Inca 3



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Incantations 3 – Reformed Memories

Rob Jackson (2008)

My memory has been getting lots of exercise recently. People keep challenging me about what I can remember.

This is made much more of a challenge – as well as much more fun, and instructive – when I meet people I haven't seen for years and they remind me of something – often totally embarrassing – that I'd completely forgotten. The response is often how did you remember that?

Just after New Year there was a get-together of old Core Fandomite pals for a few of us from the IntheBar email group, including me. For many of us it was the first actual reunion for years, but that doesn't stop people remembering things – in fact it triggers memory.

Brian Parker was there. Now the last time I'd met Brian was – Ghu knows when – Seacon 79? One of the Eastercons in the early 80s? It couldn't have

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been later than Conspiracy in 1987, anyway, as after that I stopped going to cons for 20 years.

Bu Brian's memory completely boggled me. Brian, Pat Charnock and I were the ones who ordered food at the pub. I had a sort of chicken paprika, with vegetables which were a bit anaemic and under-seasoned so I put a very light sprinkling of salt on them. Something I usually refrain from nowadays.

Brian said "At least you don't put a great heap of salt by the side of the plate like you used to, Rob!"

Now the last time Brian and I ate together must have been more than 20 years ago.

So either Brian has an amazing memory, or I used to put an amazing heap of salt on my plate. I have just checked, and Coral is inclined to the latter view, but she accepts the former may be true as well. So did Harry Bell, who told me he was also horrified in the 70s to see me pour a heap of salt on the side of my plate. I'd forgotten all this, as I've now been thoroughly indoctrinated to minimise my salt intake by Coral, who wants me to look after my ~~income~~ health.

So I've now been reminded. Sometimes you need to be reminded about the bad things in your past. But I doubt people really want an editorial from me about how I used to use too much salt.

What I should really do is remember, not just excessive salt intake, but all the pivotal (if sometimes rotten) things that have happened to me. Well, what other memories have been dragged from the sludge at the bottom of my brain by all this dredging that happens when people chat 19 to the dozen on email lists?

There was a memory of open-air swimming at my public school. The topic of swimming cropped up on the list, and we found out that not all middle-aged Core Fandomites like swimming, or can even do it at all.

I can actually do the breast stroke OK, and regularly use it as my main type of organised exercise. However I didn't enjoy swimming all that much as a kid. I was at a day prep school in Newcastle, and the baths to which they took us were quite close to the school, so we were lucky. My Dad encouraged my brother and me, so by the time I went to public school (which are called private schools in the US) I could sort-of swim. It didn't take me all that long to get the basic swim-a-length qualification at my school - 50 yards. But I hated it, as it was an unheated outdoor swimming pool. I supposed there was a veneer of civilisation about it, as they didn't throw you in when it was

freezing in the winter - they would open it up in the summer term only when the water temperature reached 55 deg F.

Since then I have heard it is now covered, heated and has become civilised in various ways which were considered unnecessary in the 60s. Oh, and I expect you can now get some *privacy* while changing, instead of just changing in two fifty-yard-long covered ways either side of the pool. No comment about what the masters could see when they watched the boys changing....

But actually I could comment, and will. I never witnessed abuse myself, though when I was 14 I did wake up in the dorm one night and see two of my dorm-mates, both fairly advanced in pubertal terms, indulging in something which was quite obviously consensual. (The one underneath had his hands down by his crotch creating a receptacle for his partner.) However there was probably an absolute load of it which went on elsewhere than the dorms, which were semi-public. The masters may have been abusers on the quiet, and some of them developed a reputation – but the ability of the boys to fight their collective corner with rumour, innuendo and sly character assassination meant that there was a lot less of a Dotheboys Hall abuse feel of victimisation than might have happened at some places.

Some boys had an outrageously gay reputation, including one a single year ahead of me, who has since made a considerable name for himself in the theatrical world as a playwright and adapter of classical works. It was this bloke who said – totally correctly – that “If you go with a girl you get expelled – but if you go with a boy you just get beaten!”

All of which meant that by the time I left public school, girls were aliens from outer space as far as I was concerned. That had to change. Thank Ghu for – first – university; and then, and much more importantly, fandom. A bit of learning about real life intervened.

Real friends, who do real fun things – like developing a tolerance for spices, under the expert tutelage of mates in Gannetfandom. Which leads to the next set of memories – curries in Whitley Bay, especially the historic Himalaya.

That was where I first learnt about Prawn Pathia and Lamb Dhansak at the hands of the Master (Kev Williams). Ian Maule, Henry Pijohn, Kev and I – often with others such as Harry Bell or Ian Williams – used to pile into the back of either Kev's tiny Austin A40 or my mum's Austin 1300 or both, and go in search of spiced grease.

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Later replaced by home-made vindaloos or roghan joshes in Kev's place in Seaton Delaval. Kev lived within easy staggering distance of a pub – I forget its name; probably called something inspiring like the Delaval Arms – and we would go and indulge in lots of lager while Kev would every now and then return to the kitchen to stir the curry and prevent it from burning on the bottom of the pan.

Didn't stop it burning on other bottoms later though.

Memories of Kev's front room in Seaton Delaval are coloured too by Jefferson Starship, Yes, Pete Atkin and Betjeman's Banana Blush. The strange eclectic tastes we develop at this stage of our lives do usually stay with us – if you are having enough fun, almost any music will grow its own emotional attachment to the fun you had at the time. The associations that develop are almost a synaesthetic experience.

I have another example of this. When I was at Oxford in 1972 and desperately trying to make myself keep up with revising for Finals, I had naturally just discovered a motherlode of new experiences within SF via the Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group. Some of the books I read with the greatest goshwow factor then, and still remember with irrational affection now, are the ones I read while taking a break from revision.

Take Larry Niven's Ringworld. (No, I insist, *you* have it.) I read this at the same time as listening to Grave New World by the Strawbs. So now, whenever I listen to the occasional track from Grave New World, I still develop a mental image of the huge band-shaped world strung round its sun, and the thousand-mile-high mountain punched into the middle of the world by a stray comet, with Niven's cardboard humans and aliens lost amidst this vastness. That has nothing whatsoever to do with the lyrics Dave Cousins wrote for the Strawbs, but the associations are still there, and indelible.

I wonder if this synaesthesia, and the buck-up it gave to my state of mind, was a significant help in helping me get through my Physiology Finals. And on to real life, including being an actual doctor and earning money. Which links to another recent memory review – about getting my first credit card, and moving away from my parents.

Rob Hansen said recently that he got one just before his TAFF trip to the States in 1984, and was very glad he did, as without it he wouldn't have been allowed to stay at his hotel the first night. Even in 1977, Peter Roberts had trouble at the Fontainebleau in Miami at Suncon, because he wanted to pay for his room with cash.

I was travelling with Peter then, and had had a credit card for 2 years, since just after graduating as a medic. So I had no problem.

Just before I went to Suncon I thought it might help to have an American Express card, as well as the Access (Lloyds Bank) card I had at the time. So I applied – and to my horror they turned me down.

Though I was a junior doctor, and thus likely to finish up in the top quarter of the income bracket, I think the problem was that I had just moved out from my parents' house in a moderately middle-class part of Newcastle into the first home of my own, a flat rented from Ritchie Smith and Annie Mullins. This was in Heaton, which if you do research by postcodes is anything but a posh part of the city. And I suspect that is how Amex checked me out.

I have never forgiven Amex, and on principle I have always ditched their junk mail ever since then.

At about that time, I had had a loc on Maya from Coral Clarke, a fan from south-west London with a talent for interesting and revealing self-made fancy dress costumes. Coral had been at Hull University with Annie, who (it later turned out) had kept Coral informed on how I was getting on in an almost matchmaking kind of way.

Coral's loc was on pink and purple Paisley patterned paper, and the tone of the loc somehow gave me the idea she was dropping hints. A few months later she sent a postcard with "Que la force soit avec toi pour toujours!" as the message, from somewhere in south-west France.

It turned out she had been trying to send me a French letter from Condom, but the colleague of hers who posted it had to get off a train to find an appropriate post box, and was only able to get it postmarked in the next village. Shucks. Nevertheless I finished up asking Kev Smith to organise a post-Christmas party in 1977 as an excuse to travel down to west London, which he kindly did – and I will always be grateful to him for that.

As a trainee psychiatrist, it was easier for me to move my career from one part of the country to another than it was for Coral, whose work was highly specialised research into the performance of people (including aircrew) after various sleeping medications, among other things. So in early 1978 I made plans to move down to south-west London, and we bought a house in West Ewell. But for a couple of months before the purchase went through, I lived with Coral's parents in Surbiton.

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Which meant a shift of fan group for me.... from the Gannets to what soon became the Surrey Limpwrist. People like Kev Smith, Ian & Janice Maule, John & Eve Harvey, Joseph Nicholas and Alan Dorey were the nucleus, as well as Coral and I, and sometimes Coral's brother Bruce.

The only claims to fame of the area of Surbiton near Coral's parents are they filmed parts of Oh! What A Lovely War on the Alpha Road estate, which you have to go through to walk from Coral's family's place to Ethel's. They also filmed some of the early Mr. Bean TV episodes, some of the ones featuring the infamous lime green Mini, on the next street to Coral's parents' house.

Goodness knows how it has changed since then, as in 1993 Coral's increasingly frail parents had to move down to live with us and their house was emptied and eventually sold. So none of us have been back there since; we have no reason to. (Nostalgia creates a mild curiosity, but not a desperate urge to expend time or petrol on finding out.)

"Emptied" – that word covers a Herculean effort by Coral's brother Bruce, who lived closest. It took him every spare weekend for 8 months. Imagine an eight-bedroomed Victorian mansion lived in for 55 years by a family all of whom had pack-rat tendencies – neat bundles of gas bills dated 1938-1947, and a few First World War ration books – almost nothing thrown away. Hanging onto one's memories is obviously a family trait.



More recently, after my own mother died, my father lived by himself for a while but eventually has moved into a care home in Ponteland. (He is enjoying life as he still has good eyes, ears and faculties – it is only his sense of balance that needs help.) So my own family's old house has now also been sold, and I don't have reason to go to Benton or Forest Hall any more when I go up to see folks (Barista and otherwise) in Newcastle.

So I may not be so well-informed in future about changes in that area of Newcastle either. A fair number of former Gannets have worked in and around there; Ian Maule, Harry Bell and Dave Cockfield have all worked at "the Ministry" (Department of Social Security in Longbenton), and Kev Williams worked for a number years just a couple of miles further east at the research labs of Procter and Gamble in Benton.

When I went past the old "Ministry" a year or two back, the part that used to have all the old single storey red brick buildings – had mostly been converted into car parks. Whether that area is now being rebuilt as taller offices I wouldn't know; there are already newer taller offices to the south east corner of that site, as well as another completely new site off Coach Lane or Whitley Road.

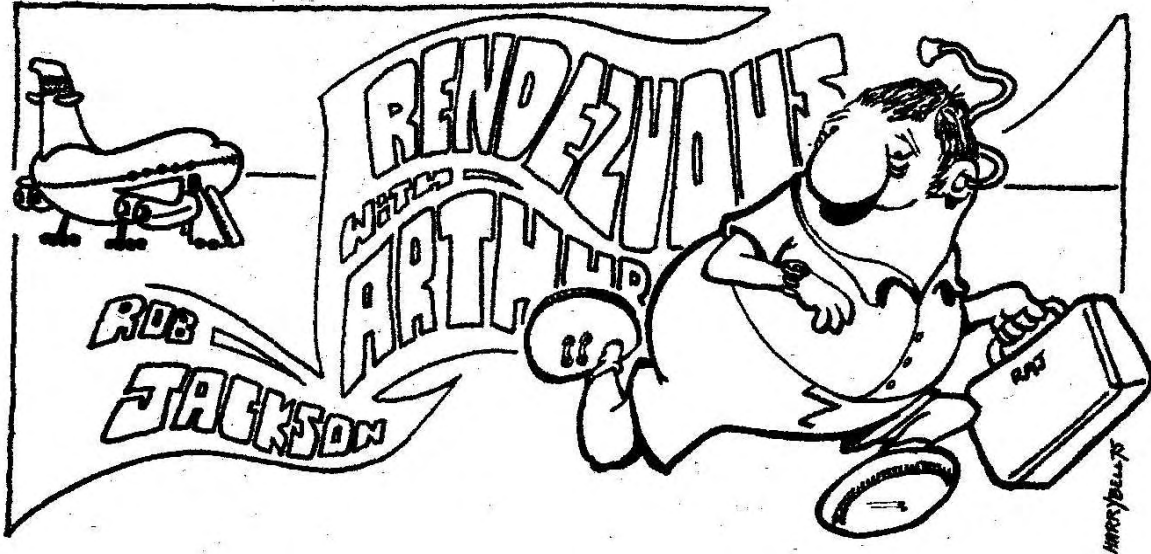
So life, and the environment in which we live it, keeps on evolving. As well as good old Sense of Wonder, an itch to learn about possibilities and changes, and to learn how to cope with them, is I think one of the strongest drivers that motivate young people to start reading SF and stretch their imaginations. And even if we don't read quite as avidly once we're older (I'm afraid I don't, partly because there is just Too Much To Do), the habits of thought have been successfully learnt. As Bob Shaw wonderfully put it: "When you've read a book and then forgotten it, what you're left with is a different kind of ignorance."

You will find that all the pieces in this issue of Inca are in their way links between the present, past – and (still) the future. Travel, nostalgia (or at least timebinding) and visual pleasure – either from art, photography or just looking around us – feature too. As with Inca 2, this issue is arranged roughly in chronological order; you start off many years ago, and gradually come up to date. There's no escaping this future thing, you know!



Rendezvous with Arthur

Rob Jackson (1975)



((This piece by a very much younger and definitely more impressionable version of myself, is reprinted in memory of Arthur C. Clarke, as well as in keeping with the themes of travel and memories. Thanks to Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins for first publishing this, in The Spanish Inquisition 6, in 1975, as well as OK-ing this reprint. All temptation to re-edit has been resisted – Rob Jackson, March 2008.))

In July 1973 I travelled to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) for three hot, sweaty and ruggedly instructive months of overseas medical training (in the medical curriculum they call it the “elective” period of one’s clinical undergraduate training). You have three months, during which they boot you out with the message: “Learn medicine – but not in Newcastle!” As my father had been to Colombo in 1969 and established contacts which had brought a Ceylonese paediatrician and the ear, nose and throat surgeon husband of the Professor of Paediatrics to Newcastle for valuable training periods, Colombo was the one best choice for my elective.

The fact that Arthur Clarke – intellectual hero of mine ever since the first spaceships swam across my mind’s eye – lived in Colombo didn’t put me off either.

Before I left, each time I mentioned to an SF fan that I was going to Ceylon, they would say in their fashion (eagerly, deprecatingly, or with

appreciative grin): “Going to Meet Arthur?” I couldn’t have faced them – or myself – if I’d come back and had to report that I hadn’t tried to Meet Arthur.

For the first part of my stay I lived with a friend of the above-mentioned ENT surgeon, a senior political civil servant of wisdom, integrity and energy which if replicated often enough would pull any country, not just Sri Lanka, onto its feet by the scruff of its neck. As he generally worked in the Parliament, the only typewriter he had at home was a battered old thing with rust flaking off all over, and a ribbon which printed letters the colour of dishwater on white paper. I manfully resisted the temptation to drag the desk directly under the ceiling fan (Colombo weather is like a sauna bath with a small blast furnace in one corner) and sweated over a pretty letter to Arthur, telling him how I’d liked his books (still do, in case anybody’s feeling argumentative), and was treasurer of next year’s Easter convention, and hoped he’d have time in a busy schedule, etc, etc.

The Colombo postal service is surprisingly efficient. Next afternoon when I arrived home, Arthur’s Ceylonese secretary had rung to say that Clarke was out of the country and would be so for eight weeks, but would be back three weeks before I was due to go back to England. Which was kind of him as far as it went, but to come to one side of the world, expecting to see someone who is annoyingly on the other whence you have, was

peeving, although it was a prompt and courteous response.

Things then slipped into limbo for a while as far as Meeting Arthur was concerned; I actually became more interested in medicine than in SF – a rare happening for me indeed. Mostly I wandered around hindering the junior doctors on the teaching ward at Colombo children’s hospital. One day I’d just tried to eat the lunch served in the junior doctor’s residence (and had my mouth burned off) when the newly qualified doctor I was with introduced me to another doctor hardly older-looking than himself, and said: “This is Dr. Buddhadasa Bhodinayake. He’s a famous man in Ceylon. He writes your favourite type of literature, science fiction.”

Dr. Bhodinayake had originally met and talked with Arthur Clarke in 1957, when, as both were experts on the subject, they found themselves saying the same thing over the radio in different languages: ‘Just because Sputnik got up safely, doesn’t mean rockets are safe toys.’

If you think Asimov is a polymath, you should compare him with Dr. Bhodinayake. My memory on detail is imperfect, but as I recall it he has been or is all of the following things:

- Member of Sri Lanka’s Science Advisory Council;
- Secretary of Sri Lanka’s national youth club organization;
- Writer of science fact articles in Sinhala – as many as Asimov, and in less specialist circulation – newspapers, etc;
- Writer and translator of SF (e.g. Clarke’s) into Sinhala;
- Broadcaster on science, especially space science;
- Part-time doctor at the Children’s Hospital, which in itself is more than enough for most people.

He said he’d love to invite me for a drink sometime, but was a bit busy.

I was not bewildered after talking to him for a quarter of an hour. You can expect to be baffled by some geniuses but not geniuses at communication. I never got to meet him again, though I should have, and would have loved to. Being in Ceylon was in some ways like being at a three-month-long convention – there were so many half-invitations from people interested to meet one that it was impossible to follow them all up – one had neither the time nor the energy. Energy – something one misses out on altogether in such heat. One doesn’t walk; one drags oneself; one doesn’t sit; one flops. Unless you get out of the sweltering lowlands altogether, you can only recharge your energy by

swimming or drinking vast quantities of soft drink. I did both at the Colombo Swimming Club, a rather exclusive watering-hole used mostly by foreigners on U.N. or commercial attachments. (I did rather a lot of swimming, which was not surprising; I taught myself to swim underwater-- whoopee!)

I also got out of the lowlands altogether occasionally; I’d been given postal introductions to some tea planters (estate superintendents) up in the cool central highlands, and visited some of them for a few days each. The British, during their time there, built massive, sprawling, rambly bungalows for their supervisors, usually perched on the top of knolls in the valleys, surrounded on all sides by sweaty cool green teabushes in neat rows all the way to where the hills meet the clouds under cool sweaty grey skies. The planters’ bungalows are often close together on the map, but the bumpy terrain and the odd old colonial habit of building roads absolutely flat, so that they wound round every little rill and knoll, makes for long, sinuous, slow journeys between one bungalow and another.

The planters’ life is incredibly lonely, ensconced in bungalows either filled with bric-a-brac, or hollow and sparsely furnished, depending upon the acquisitiveness of previous inhabitants. This loneliness is made far worse by the absolutely rigid social stratification – for a superintendent to be close friends even with his own assistant is not really On. One’s peers are superintendents on other estates ten or twenty miles off round the valley – dinner with a friend means an hour’s rattle and bonk in the ancient Minor 1000 Traveller you are forced to keep because you can hardly get a new car at all unless you earn the money for it while you are abroad. (Recent second-hand cars in good condition will sell at five times their new English purchase price.)

For me, visits to the Up Country planters came as a quiet cool relief from the busy sweaty Colombo life. During August I moved into a most pleasant guest house run by Mrs. Pereira, a retired and nearly blind lady doctor – or rather, the house was run for her by her servants. (Labour is cheap, and servants are ubiquitous in the Ceylonese middle classes.) This lady was very much in possession of all her mental faculties, and a fascinating as well as voluble talker. I can’t keep my interest in SF secret from anyone for long, and when I mentioned Arthur Clarke she knew exactly whom I was talking about. By the middle of September, I was thoroughly engrossed in social life, and only occasionally thought about the letter I’d written to Clarke. I always came home for lunch as I couldn’t at that time take local curries – certainly not the ones they served in the hospital – and the cafes I used were close to my digs.

One lunchtime Mrs. Pereira welcomed me with: “You are very lucky, Mr. Jackson.” “Oh, why?”

“Arthur Clarke rang.”

I suppose you could say this made me happy; I didn’t notice it at the time, as all it really did was make me nervous! I rang Arthur, managing to make my fingers select the right digits, and told him who I was. I can’t remember any exact details except for Arthur saying, in his deep growly voice (yet gentle; if I were directing a radio play I’d pick him for Winnie-the-Pooh’s dad) something like: “Are you free this afternoon?”

As far as I can remember, I was expected to see a patient that afternoon, then join a teaching ward round at 2:30 pm. “Sure, I can come this afternoon. 2 o’clock OK?”

At my usual watering-hole, the Chinese Lotus Cafe, I broke my golden rule. (The rule is: no booze, as it gives you a headache in the heat.) I had one-and-a-half pints of shandy with lunch. Dutch courage, much needed. What else I had for lunch I can’t remember, though I do remember being surprised that I ate it.

Like the Children’s Hospital, Arthur’s (then) house is two miles or so inland from the sea. Gregory’s Road is part of the upper-class residential area, with tasteful cool palm-ringed houses, originally built far apart but with gardens sold off during occasional family financial strictures for the building of newer equally tasteful houses all around. This two mile trip is as easy by taxi as anything; it costs three rupees (12 pence or 30¢)--only twice as much as a similar bus ride in England, and far safer than hanging around bus stops and off straps in buses with your pocket asking to be picked. I was told many tales of woe about the fiendishly professional pickpockets on the buses, though I never experienced their work myself. Once, though, a couple of smooth youths were standing looking at me at a bus stop, from about ten yards away; I pointedly put my hands in my pockets and gave them a hard stare, and they moved off. Because of the amount of money I was wont to carry at a time (getting money exchanged is a long business, to be gone through as rarely as possible) taxis were worth the worry of keeping one’s pocket covered.

Especially if you’re going to see Arthur Clarke, and are worried about that instead.

His house turned out to be up a short driveway which led round the side of another, newer house. On the right of it was a double garage with a boat on a trailer – and two Alsatian dogs, chained up and barking like mad, beside it. The house was

surprisingly small, a single story structure with the ubiquitous matt pink walls and open windows, no bigger than an English detached. A Ceylonese chap came and let me in and asked me to wait in the front room directly through the door. This was large, airy and partitioned; the front half was crammed with about eighty bright yellow compressed-air diving cylinders, on racks on one side, and ten diesel air compressors in a row on a shelf on the other. There was just room between all this machinery for some wicker chairs. These are of the type which, if not treated regularly, are invaded by little brown bugs which crawl out and bite any bare part of you when you sit down, leaving a bite-mark which is incredibly itchy – far worse than mosquitoes – then scuttle back inside the chair as you get up, because they don’t like light. Arthur’s chairs were clear, which was just as well; I could do without being itchy if sitting talking.

On the wall above the yellow cylinders were two or three photos of Apollo rockets and moonscapes, signed by eminent space scientists and astronauts as mementoes. I’d been told that Clarke would be busy for a while, but I was interrupted quite soon – after ten minutes – by a tallish white-haired man with a brilliant red patterned sarong. (Sarongs are the habitual Ceylonese man’s dress. A sarong is a cloth rather like a toga, worn from the waist down to the ankles; it’s usually white and a bit dirty from the dust of the streets which it drags in. This sarong was indoor wear only, I gather, as it was very clean.) He had an only mildly protuberant stomach – less than mine; his eyes, though behind glasses, were still able to give the impression of fixing one with an unnervingly straight gaze.

This was Clarke.

(Unfortunately, a time-lag between event, and writing has eroded details in my memory; any conversation described below is more in the nature of an imaginative reconstruction than of strictly accurate reportage.)

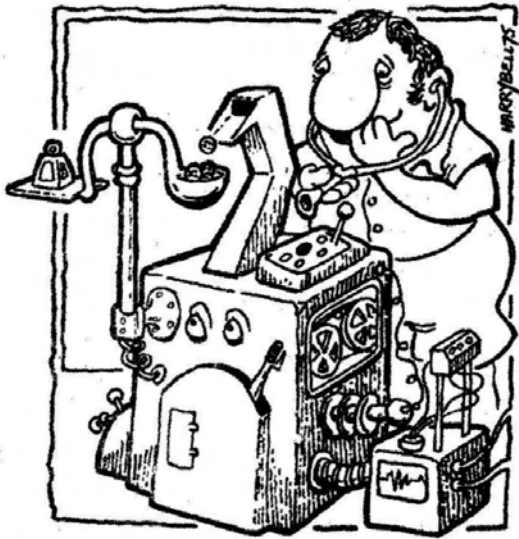
Arthur welcomed me, and, invited me into a small room where his secretary sat at one side making a typewriterish clatter, surrounded by shelves of books of all sorts – hardback and paperback, including, of course, dozens of editions of Clarke’s work, plus tall wobbly piles of magazines – the most strikingly large piles being magazines of scientific speculation and futurology.

Off this room in turn was Arthur’s study. A small air-conditioned room with only *one* wall crammed with books; the others were only a third crammed, as I remember. On the wall were further mementoes – not just photos but certificates of gratitude from such as NASA high-ups and broadcasting corporations. One of them may have been his

Kalinga Prize certificate.

On a work-bench were two amazing pieces of machinery. One was an enormously elaborate microscope with five objective lenses (amazing because at first one doesn't think of a man whose domain is the vastnesses of space as being also interested in the tiny). For gimmickry's sake he had a microscope slide with the whole of the Bible on it; I was very impressed with this slide at first, but less so when he told me you could buy them for a dollar in the States. The other machine was Hal, Jr., his minicomputer, which was presented to him by, I forget which bunch of engineers – on looking it up in *Lost Worlds* I see it was his friends at Hewlett-Packard. The programs for Hal Jr. are preset on magnetic cards about three inches by one, which you push into it.

One of these programs – the one for the solution to the Twelve Golf Balls problem – gave trouble. (Surely you know the Twelve Golf Balls problem? You have twelve identical-looking golf balls, numbered 1 to 12; problem is, one is a different weight, and you don't know which one, nor whether it's lighter or heavier than the rest. You



have to find out which one is the odd one out, and whether it's lighter or heavier, by putting groups of them on a pair of scales--and you're only allowed three weighings. You don't know it? Then have a go sometime. Have fun.) As well as the program, Arthur had to feed in the answer to the puzzle (i.e. the number of the odd ball out) before running the problem. Unfortunately, when the program was run the answer it came out with (9), was not the one which went in (4); this puzzled Arthur as much as it secretly half-amused and half-embarrassed me. When erased and reinserted, the program

worked perfectly, but that was fifteen minutes of puzzlement over a little random jump or something. I wish the Lloyds Bank Cashpoint computer cash dispensers would do the same thing, giving out 9 when you typed in 4; unfortunately, Murphy's Third Law of Technological Disaster states that when a computer goes wrong it shall always be to the detriment of the consumer.

Sri Lanka itself was another interesting problem we talked about. The country is in a terrible economic plight now, far worse than fifteen years ago when the big Colombo stores were happily importing goods left, right and centre and the country seemed rich on tea. Since then the price of tea has been virtually static, while the price of the average import to Sri Lanka has roughly quadrupled. The country's moneymaking power has been dreadfully eroded – but the less developed countries are attracting less sympathy and foreign aid than ten years ago; Sri Lanka is no exception despite this deterioration.

One striking piece of past do-goodery was that of the American charity hospital ship *Hope* which visited Colombo in 1968. This ship is (or was then) in the habit of sailing to supposedly medically underdeveloped nations and anchoring for a year while they try to heal the country's unhealed sick and educate its poor overworked (and supposedly under-trained) doctors. Sri Lanka was the ship's third mission, and not a very profitable choice for its purpose. The pride the Ceylonese medical fraternity takes in the fine, scientifically advanced job it does (for the whole community – Sri Lanka is ahead of the States in that it provides a truly national government health service) with a pittance of a budget is thoroughly justified, and this pride was dented by the arrival of an insensitive shipload of charitable people who almost seemed to give the impression that they thought they were bringing the benefits of Listerian antiseptic surgery and the wonders of antibiotic therapy to the place for the first time. This attitude jarred on some of the extremely skilled doctors and surgeons – and some of the extremely proud politicians – of the island. (There is an apocryphal tale of a Ceylonese neurologist at an international congress listening to some American and British surgeons talking of a rare operation, and how one had done it thirty times and another forty-five, and so on. The Ceylonese matter-of-factly announced that he had done his three hundred and thirtieth just before leaving for the congress.)

Each of these ship's voyages had been commemorated with a self-congratulatory book by one of the staff. A friend of Arthur's had seen the Ceylon one in an American bookstore and had brought him a few copies. Arthur had heard tales

of the friction between the ship and the Ceylonese medics, and was fascinated and appalled by the distortion in the picture the book portrayed, of the shining adventurers versus the natives, obtuse, sometimes fractious, but with hearts of gold beneath it all. I had heard these tales, too, from my own contacts; as soon as Arthur heard I was a medic he produced this book and suggested I read it. I did, and was as appalled as he was.

That was one of the two books I borrowed from him; the other was a pre-publication copy of *Rendezvous with Rama* which, of course, I gobbled up with tremendous speed later that evening and the next day. I am rather pleased that, despite my goshwow attitude to virtually all of Clarke's work – which I still have; it's that surely irrational attitude we all once had to the SF we were weaned on, and one many of us never lose – I did at least notice the lack of flesh in Rama's human explorers. Whether this was oversight on Clarke's part, or simply his deliberate wish to keep the beauties and wonders of his thirty-mile spaceship in the forefront of the reader's mind, I'm not absolutely certain. I should have asked him when I took the books back, but I didn't have the time, or perhaps I just forgot, or perhaps I hadn't thought of the question at that time.

I rather think, actually, that Clarke is too clever a writer for this to be oversight, in which case his deliberate neglect of human character is, at first thought, puzzling for those of us who spend ages analysing character and motive in SF works; this includes most of fandom's critics, as well as me (I don't count myself as a critic). It is as well to remember, though, that the vast mass of SF readers aren't hankering too desperately after deep emotional or intellectual immersion in the characters they read about; otherwise they'd be reading Agatha Christie, or *Woman's Own* short stories. No; they want their sense of wonder tickled. Clarke, as usual, did that superbly, and I have a feeling that the paperback sales are now proving him right on this. (One department store in Newcastle, with a reasonable selection of SF paperbacks, put out around thirty copies on one Monday, and by the time I returned to look at them on Friday there were only five left, and even then the stock may have been replenished.) If anybody wants proof of the care and thought Clarke puts into his writing, may I commend to you a compulsively readable analysis of "The Nine Billion Names of God" by John Curlovich in *SpanInq* 3?

Clarke had already received some of the reviews of the American hardback of *Rendezvous with Rama*. I remember a conversation something like this, after I had finished reading one of the reviews.

Me: "That's quite a pleasant one."

Arthur: "Yes, on the whole; but look at that there [points out factual error in description of the book]."

"On the whole she likes it, though."

"Ah, but it means she hasn't read the book properly."

Clarke seems as concerned about accuracy in those who write about his books as he is in the actual writing of them, which I suppose is only fair, although finicky (and an apparent confirmation of his famed Ego) in the eyes of some. (I hope he doesn't mind whatever inaccuracies he finds in this article!)

Clarke mentioned that Sigiriya, the tremendous bread-loaf-shaped rock in the northern plain of Sri Lanka, would feature strongly in his next novel.

"Is it SF?"

"Oh, very much so." I'm not sure which of his two forthcoming novels this refers to, but I rather remember that it was *The Fountains of Paradise*, rather than his "magnum opus" *Imperial Earth* which is the one apparently nearing completion at the moment (late 1974).

The subject of swimming cropped up, but not for long, as it was soon superseded by the subject of table tennis (ping pong, or whatever you call it). After a cup of tea – Arthur had earlier given me a beer, so I wasn't short of liquid – we walked off down to his swimming club (not the one I frequented while in Colombo, but another equally up-market place). As we were leaving Arthur lined up three tortoises – Star tortoises, I think they were – he kept in a pen in the garden. Their sizes were a perfect gradation from twelve inches to eight inches to four. I now have a very over-exposed photo of Arthur with a grin and three tortoises. Once again I was clutching my ubiquitous shoulderbag with its valuable cargo of books on loan, and some magazines Clarke had given me after he'd finished with them – some futurology magazines, and four issues of *Locus* – nos. 141, 142, 144, and 145. Arthur said he hadn't received issue 143. Anybody care to look up and find out what the lead item in issue 143 was? ((*Original editor's note: The Locus that Clarke did not receive contained a story about Clarke's enormous sale to Ballantine. – Jerry Kaufman*))

So we played table tennis. I'm fairly nearly as good as anybody in Gannetfandom – I beat Ian Williams twice out of five, usually – but Arthur was better. I thought I was playing well for one who hadn't played for months, and there were some very good rallies, but he beat me 21-5. He said he hadn't

played for months either, but that each time he began playing anew he started brilliantly and declined. I need practice to improve, so he reckoned we'd eventually meet halfway.

A crowd of other friends and acquaintances descended on Arthur after we arrived, so he played table tennis with them also, and we didn't have time to put the meet-in-the-middle theory to the test, but it certainly indicated that his rumoured heart attack earlier that year did no permanent damage to speak of.

At strictly five o'clock Clarke had to leave; I promised to ring and arrange a time to return his books. He had to ready himself for dinner with the British High Commissioner. (No, I'm not dropping names on his behalf; another time, I went to a party at the High Commissioner's too.)

I floated home on a cloud. (It was a taxi really, and it didn't float, it rattled; but that doesn't matter.)

Although I read *Rama* very quickly (and handled it carefully – each time I picked it up I washed my hands) it took me nearly a fortnight to read *Hope in the East*, the hospital ship book. Eventually I finished it, and rang to arrange a time to take back the books I'd borrowed. Ten next morning it was, so off I went. In Ceylon I had with me a few treasured fanzines. Five of them I'd brought with me, and the other (*Siddhartha*) Ian Williams had sent. One of the fanzines I had was *Sfinx*, issues 6 and 7, which I'd brought in the hope of showing off my (lack of) writing prowess to anyone interested. (A surprising number of people were, but only because they were stories by me, not because they were SF.) I reread *Rock of Ages*, my story in *Sfinx* 7, and to my chagrin discovered a silly little inconsistency. At one stage in the story a woman mentions that her house is a bungalow. Later on, the anti-hero listens from the bedroom to the front door being battered down by ambulance men – downstairs.

So on my second visit, I mentioned *Sfinx* to Arthur. Phil Payne had already sent him no. 6, so I gave him a copy of no. 7. I shamefacedly mentioned the inconsistency in the hope of forestalling possible criticism. Arthur replied, "That's nothing; I'll show you a real bungalow," and brought out the plans for the two-story house – nay, mansion – he was in the process of buying. At the top of the architectural drawings it said, I think, "De Soysa Bungalow." Arthur's "bungalow" looked from the plans to be ten times the size of his then house, which he'd had ever since he first came to Sri Lanka in 1957. I was absolved of my sin of inaccuracy – or would have been, if the lady in my story hadn't specifically mentioned, when going upstairs was suggested to her, that they

couldn't go upstairs because "it's a bungalow, silly!" Very silly indeed.

Virtually the last thing I did before leaving Arthur's house for the second time was to get him to autograph a copy of the English edition of *Lost Worlds of 2001* I'd bought in Colombo. "To Bob Jackson with all good wishes," it says. I've virtually never been called Bob, but I don't mind. I may have to get used to it.

I had to leave Clarke relatively quickly as he was already late for an appointment with his lawyer; off I went, happy, to the hospital, in my usual taxi. When I got back to Mrs. Pereira's for lunch there were two books, still on my bedside table – *Rendezvous with Rama* and *Hope in the East*.

My third and final, rendezvous with Arthur cost me two taxi rides worth eight rupees, a noisy interruption of his Alsations' afternoon nap, and a minute's apologetic interruption of Clarke's lunch; then off I went to the hospital for the afternoon. Back at Mrs. Pereira's that evening I found myself with some magazines, an autographed book – and a feeling of anticlimax.

Why anti-climax? Remember that in Sri Lanka I'd fulfilled two long pipe dreams – to learn to swim underwater, and to meet Arthur. The fact that I didn't combine the two and go underwater swimming with him is irrelevant. Nor was my sense of anticlimax any kind of hero-has-feet-of-clay feeling. Clarke's fannish reputation as a rather cold fish with a gigantic ego didn't justify itself to me at all; he seemed to possess a thoroughly normal degree of friendliness. Probably he is, like most of us, most relaxed at home, but he seemed genuinely pleased to see a British fan.

Possibly the anticlimax was a sense of my own inadequacy, and failure to reach any enormous intellectual heights. I came with ideas of asking all sorts of intelligent questions and maybe even borrowing a tape-recorder to do an interview for a fanzine, and the fact we simply had friendly chats which didn't reach outer space but rambled around Sri Lanka and the diagnosis of psychological disorder in book reviewers and charitable organizations possibly disappointed me subconsciously.

Far more probably, it was partly simple reaction from elation, and partly the fact that it had all ended. As usual with me, the nearer I was to leaving Sri Lanka the more I enjoyed it (I'd even got back to liking curry, despite attacks of squitters) and I was leaving for the U. K. in only thirty hours.

Sheer Art Attack

Jim Barker (1980)

I'm slightly embarrassed by the number of SF art-related books I've bought over the past few months. You'd think I was rich or something. But Rob hasn't passed on any of the review copies he promised me and I've had to have *something* to talk about here, haven't I? At least that's what I tell myself when I try to justify the expense to my wallet....

As I was saying last time, Chris Foss has a lot to answer for. Single-handedly he has influenced the SF art field so much that publishers can't see past his style of super-detailed spaceships for their jackets. And if Foss isn't available, there are any number of imitators ready to take his place. This is amply illustrated in **Spacecraft 2000 to 2100** by Stewart Cowley (Hamlyn, £1.99). This is the softcover version of what turned out to be the first in a series of paperback art reprints masquerading as "Terran Trade Authority Handbooks", a sort of Jane's Starships. Cowley takes a painting of a spaceship, prints it on the right hand side of a spread and on the other invents a history of the craft and specs. The series has gone on to include **Spacewrecks** and **Aliens** all in the same format, as well as numerous similar books from other publishers.

I must admit to mixed feelings about this type of book. The original Spacecraft book was a nice idea for a one off joke but any joke quickly gets tedious when repeated ad nauseam. The paintings, mostly supplied by the Young Artists studio, are competent Foss rip-offs which are capable of being printed in a Young Artists portfolio by themselves. Why do they have to be padded out with all this unnecessary bumph? That was what put me off buying the hardcover versions of the TTA books. Now, if they'd only reprinted an anthology of the paintings, identifying the artist and source (neither of which is done at the moment), I wouldn't mind buying that.

If you could imagine a cartoonist with Trog's talent for social commentary, Harry Bell's talent for aliens and Brian Lewis's talent for technology, his name would probably be Ron Cobb.

Cobb was born in 1938 and started his artistic career with Walt Disney working on Sleeping Beauty. After a stint in Vietnam, he started contributing cartoons to the Los Angeles Free Press, and Broadside, an Australian underground newspaper. His first cartoon collection, **RCD-25**, was published in 1967 with a second, **Mah Fellow**

Americans, in 1968. As well as cartoons, Cobb has done record covers, posters, postcards. A cover he did for the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction won him a Hugo award in 1959. And it's in the SF field that he's perhaps best known, as he now works in the film industry designing things like the Cantina creatures in **Star Wars** and many, many designs for the film **Alien**.

The above information was cribbed from two recently published Cobb cartoon collections. These are **The Cobb Book** (Big O Publishing; sorry, I've forgotten the price) and a French book **Le Livre de Cobb** (Dandelion Editions; £2 from Better Books in Edinburgh and I think I got a bargain). Both contain selections from Cobb's work, with minimal overlap. The French book publishes the cartoons in English with French subtitles. I can't recommend these books highly enough. Cobb's jaundiced black humour on subjects like war, ecology, the industrial revolution, politics and race hit right on target so often that his cartoons can be painful to read (my favourite cartoon shows a robot talking to a college leaver: "Oh, haven't you heard? The Industrial revolution is over.... We won"). If you can get it, buy the French book first, as it's better produced and contains (to me) funnier material. Better still, get both.

Keeping with *Alien*, we have **Alien: The Illustrated Story** (Futura, £1.95) which is a comic strip version of the film by Archie Goodwin and Walt Simonson. It's a competent effort but fails to capture the tension and atmosphere of the original which could only come over on film. Go use the money to see the film instead.

Now we get onto the really good stuff.... **Tomorrow and Tomorrow** edited by Ian Summers (Workman Publishing) is subtitled Masterpieces of Science Fiction Art and it certainly lives up to that claim. The book contains 127 pages of full colour works from 64 artists currently active in the SF field. There are a good number of the big names (DiFate, Vallejo, Hildebrandt, Whelan – though no Gaughan, Freas or Frazetta) as well as lesser known artists (Nick Astrivulous, Chris Blumrich and Robert LoGrippo among others). The paintings are divided into twelve subject headings: *Aliens, Astronauts, Symbolism, Fantasy, Barbarians, Spacecraft, Futuropolis, Other Worlds, Supernatural, Robots, Humor and Back to Earth*. Each double spread features a full page reproduction on the right with smaller repros

Sheer Art Attack – Jim Barker (1980)

on the left. Each painting is identified by artist, though if you want to know the source you have to look it up in an index. A confusing system and my one real complaint with the book. Naturally, with so many paintings by such a varied crew of artists there are a few clunkers, but these are far outnumbered by the masterpieces. An excellent showcase of (predominantly) American SF artists with hardly a Foss imitator among them. If only British artists could show such variety.... I've read elsewhere suggestions that there should be a similar collection published every year as a "Year's Best SF Art", with which I heartily agree.... If they could guarantee that each year's selection could be as good as this one.

Dan Dare: The Man From Nowhere

(Dragon's Dream; £4.25) preprints the first third of the comic strip story of the same name from the Eagle comic of the Fifties. The Dan Dare strip was probably the starting point for countless SF fans, and it's nice to see it collected between soft covers. It's interesting to see that the Americans are only now discovering the "painted" comic strip while Frank Hampson and his studio were its masters twenty-five years ago....

My top three SF art books, in no particular order, are:

Upon The Winds of Yesterday by George Barr (Donald M. Grant Publishers) was bought for £6 at an auction at Faircon and I think I got a bargain again. (Mind you, I was handling the auction and made sure I got it.) This is a deluxe collection of published and unpublished works of one of the best artists active in the SF/fantasy field. And the emphasis is definitely on the word "artist". Barr is not your average hack jacket illustrator. He ignores the usual stock items of the SF field in favour of fantastic landscapes, glorious creatures, mystic baubles and beautiful women. His unique artistic methods give his creations an other-worldly feel in a subdued pastel style which is a direct contrast to the garish colours of most jackets. You get the impression that his work is too good to be plastered round 160 pages of wood-pulp... at least, I do. This is borne out by the number of private commissions that Barr does. I wish I could afford to buy one.

Barr achieves his results with the basic tools of a black ball pen and water colour paints. The pen is used in place of a pencil for outlining and shading and then coloured over with water-colours or inks. The finished results are masterpieces of moodily complex fantasy art. This book reprints the best of them. There are several paperback jackets (mostly from DAW Books; Wollheim knows a good thing when he sees it), some early fanzine work, a smattering of advertising and greeting card work

and a fair number of privately commissioned works seeing print in this book for the first time. And they're all exquisite. Each painting has details of size, medium, source, and details of current location. There are forewords by Tim Kirk and Stuart Schiff and an afterword by Barr himself. Well worth investing some cash in.

Does Frank Kelly Freas need any introduction? No, I didn't think so. And if he does, Isaac Asimov takes care of it better than I could in his introduction to **Frank Kelly Freas: The Art of Science Fiction** (Donning; forgotten the price). This is more than just a collection of Freas' award winning art, though there's certainly a superlative selection, including SF's two most famous images, the little green guy from **Martians Go Home** and the pleading robot from **The Gulf Between** (a signed print of which hangs in my bedroom). But in-between and round about the paintings is Freas' own story of his career as SF's most honoured artist, and since he writes as well as he paints it's an immensely readable story. It covers his start in *Weird Tales* in 1950, through his involvement with virtually every magazine and paperback publisher in the field (with emphasis on John W. Campbell and *Astounding/Analog*) to his involvement with Laser Books. There's also a highly interesting personal view of the job of illustrating and its place in the SF marketplace. Each reproduction has a hand-written comment and is identified by title, publisher, and owner. Again, well worth buying.

The Studio (Dragon's Dream, £5.95) reprints the results of four artists who set up the modern equivalent of a 19th-century artists' studio where each could have the peace and tranquillity to produce whatever their hearts desired. In this case, the artists were Jeffrey Jones, Michael Kaluta, Berni Wrightson and Barry Windsor-Smith. Each of these artists is well known in the fantasy field. Jones has been doing magazine illustration and jackets for years. Kaluta, Wrightson and Smith started off as comic artists for Marvel and DC. Eventually each got tired of the commercial grind and got together to produce fine art primarily for themselves. This book reproduces the best of their efforts. Each artist is given 36 pages to present their wares and the space is very well used. Freed from the constraints of commercial work, it's interesting to see what each comes up with. Jones presents several paintings of women in a style reminiscent of the 19th century (which I suppose was the general idea of setting up the studio) as well as several ink sketches (some very sketchy) and preliminary studies. Very few are fantasy orientated though many have an air of the fantastic, and fans of Jones's sword and sorcery work may be disappointed (I know I was....).

Kaluta is perhaps best known for his work on the short-lived **Shadow** comic book. His work reeks of the Thirties, as he admits, and it's no surprise to find a couple of **Shadow** paintings among the fantasy paintings in this section. Kaluta's work, while it's in the same fantastic vein as Jones, seems more substantial and attractive. It also contains several colour and black and white illos for books by Robert E. Howard, and a cover for Marvel's magazine *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*.

For an artist who decries the work he did on the Conan comic book, it's surprising how many Conan-related items are in Barry Smith's section. It was here that Smith gained his reputation and it seems he's reluctant to abandon such a good meal ticket. Smith's section contains mostly ink drawings coloured with watercolours with a few paintings. His subjects range from the Conan work through his Gorblimey Press work which illustrates British legends and other supernatural subjects.

Wrightson is a master of macabre art. His subjects are usually dead or dying, corrupt and rotted *things*. His section reflects this. There are several repros from portfolios he did illustrating scenes from Frankenstein and Edgar Allen Poe, as well as colour works from Howard and others. In general, the black and white work is more successful than the colour. Wrightson is much better with pen and ink than palette and his subject matter is much better suited to b/w than colour.

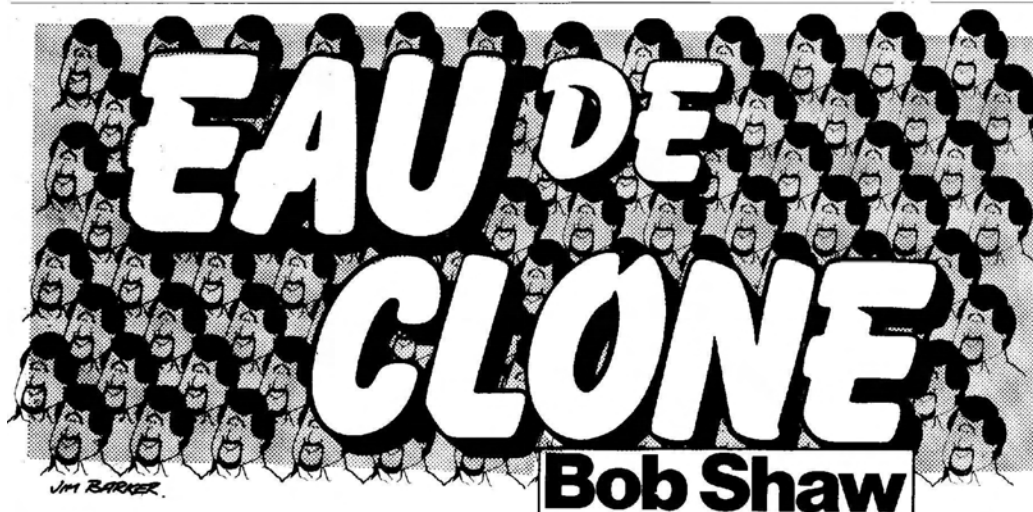
Oh dear, I knew it was a mistake to try and describe the works of each artist individually. I haven't done justice to any of them. Look, just take my work for it and go and buy this book, will you. I don't think you'll regret it.

Some personal stuff to finish with. I should congratulate my "partner" Bob Shaw on winning his well deserved Fanwriter Hugo. I seem to have done illos for most of Bob's recent articles as well as the two collections which Rob published. So it's with not a little regret that I'm announcing that *Eau de Clone* is the last one I'll be illustrating for a while. No, Bob and I haven't had a fight and I still enjoy doing the illos as much as I did the first one. It's just that I feel people must be getting tired of always seeing Barker illos with Shaw words. I'm a bit uncomfortable (though flattered) that people automatically seem to think of me when looking for someone to illustrate Bob's work. So, I'm standing down to give other people a chance. I'd love to see someone like Grant Canfield or Joe Staton illustrate one of Bob's articles. I don't want to give up Bob's work permanently, but I would appreciate a short break.

I've also given up my other major fannish work. You probably know by now that Elmer T. Hack has retired from SF. This is basically because Chris Evans and I were both getting a bit jaded with the strip. We'd started running out of fresh ideas (and recognisable faces) so by mutual consent, we retired Elmer. Don't worry, he's currently getting rich writing naughty books and TV novelisations and more than likely will pop up in a future Captive strip. You haven't seen the last of him....

Editor's Note: *The original illustrations Jim did for Eau de Clone, which was one of Bob Shaw's now-legendary Serious Scientific Talks, have been languishing in my files for far too long, and as far as I know have never been published. They are absolutely as good as any of the other ones Jim did for Bob Shaw's and other articles through the late 70s and early 80s, and as they also stand on their own I am using them throughout this issue of Inca.*

-- Rob Jackson, March 2008



David, David and Me

Brian Parker (2007)

I met David Hockney 2 or 3 times in the late '60's. I even had an offer to buy some of his prints at 'mates rates' but being a student I couldn't afford it, and being unsharp about these things I didn't rush out and get a loan like maybe I should have.

In '69 I was exhibitions secretary for the first Bradford arts festival which was instigated and run by a gang of students from Bradford University. Keep in mind I was but a year away from home and very unworldly, probably still am comparatively speaking. I organised or helped organise 7 or 8 exhibitions in and around Bradford, some of them quite major. One of these was the first retrospective of Hockney's work, which included most of his paintings to date and the complete 'Pilgrim's Progress' and 'Brothers Grimm' print series. During the course of helping organise this exhibition I met Hockney several times. The first time he came up from London I was told I had to squire him around and 'entertain' him and I didn't have a clue what to do. As he was gay I decided it would be a good idea to take him in the evening to the only gay pub in Bradford to see the drag revue. I shudder to think how wrong that could have gone in hindsight but it seemed a good idea at the time. Anyway, we met, talked about the exhibition and like that, then David (I call him David you know) suggested we go for a fish and chip supper at one of his old haunts. After that we went on to the revue. David took it all in his stride and was very charming, I suspect he found me sweet and made allowances. We met a couple of times after that more briefly, and as I said I was offered the chance to buy some of his prints at about half price as I remember it, but even that was about £100 each in '69. Worth a fortune now of course.

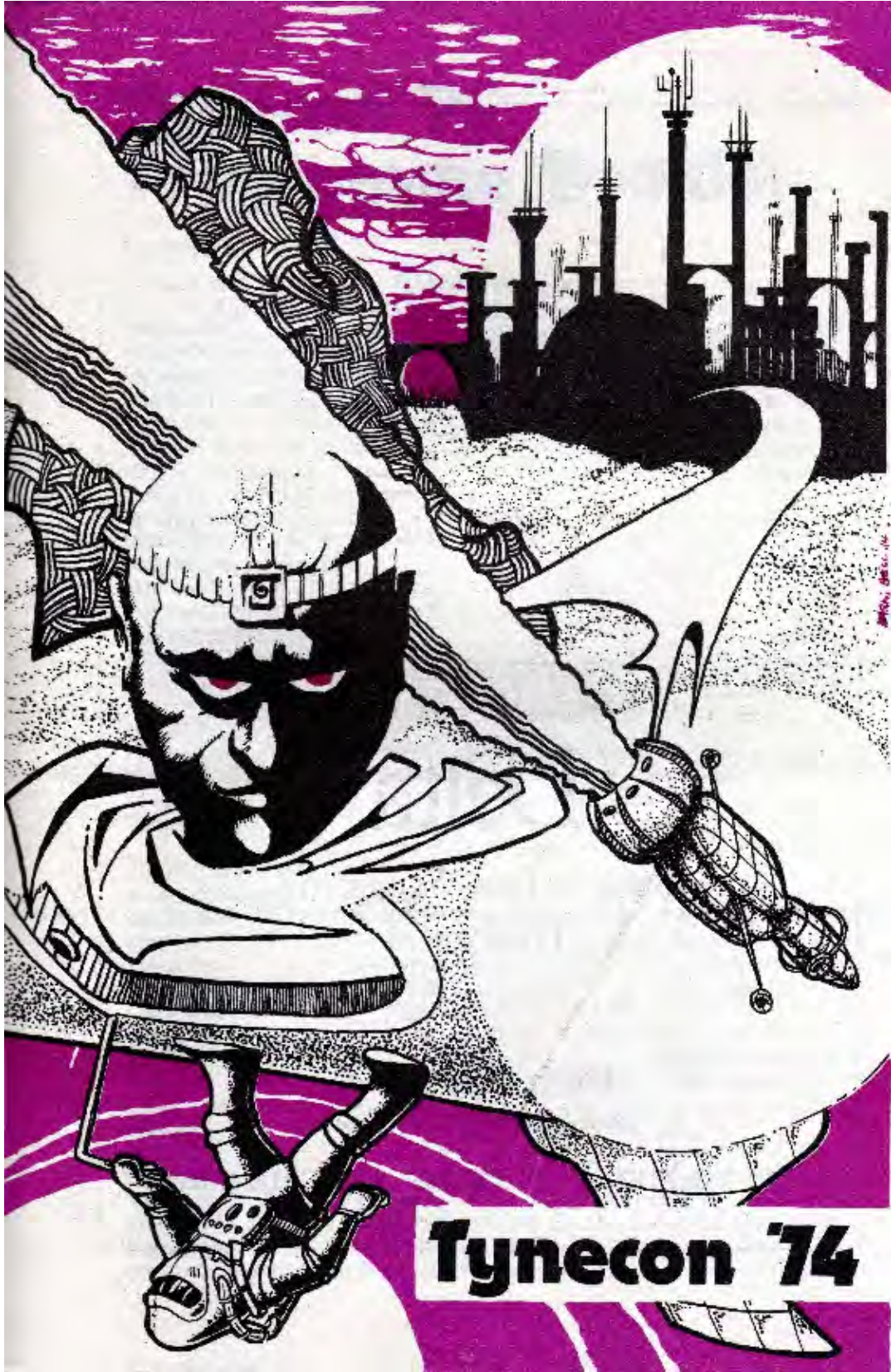
During that time I also became friends with an artist called David Blackburn, who also offered me a chance to buy his pastels from both his 'Creation' and 'Metamorphosis' series at about £25 each, again worth thousands today. We might still be friends if he hadn't bugged off to Australia. He did ask me if I wanted to go with him, didn't go and I was too reserved/shy to ask why, but I have my suspicions.

...and finally, I arranged an exhibition of poster art which I personally selected from the V&A's

collection and from the collection of a rather posh private gallery in St. John's Wood. All of which resulted in my first trip to London aged 19. I stayed at the YMCA and spent the first day in the vast archives of the V&A and on the Sunday had lunch with the (French) gallery owner at his home/gallery in St. John's Wood. He told me he was relieved to discover that I wasn't a fifty year old mill owner, as that was what he was expecting from our telephone conversations, instead he got this fresh faced, unpretentious youth. All very exciting at the time, but somehow it all seemed to go over my head; I just couldn't shake off my sense of being an alien outsider who just couldn't connect with the rest of mankind.

I liked the idea of organising art events just then. I was living with an art college lecturer (female) at the time and spending sometime in her social circle, and that together with the exhibitions work which took me to lots of previews and led me to become friends with a couple of municipal gallery directors, caused me to look very seriously at becoming a curator in the fine art field. Closer inspection led to the conclusion that I'd have to be very lucky or very exceptional to make it. So I let that one go. I've had brushes with various artistic pursuits, most of which I could have followed, if I'd been brave enough and willing to take the chance that I'd end up living on a pittance. Contemporary dance and ceramics are two examples. I'm making up for it now though and apart from the other things I'm involved with at the moment I'm hoping to enrol for a fine arts access course at SOS Uni after Christmas. I could do a lot of regretting of missed opportunities, but what's the point? What's done is done; it's what I do now that counts.

Hockney is an admirable artist, I like the paintings and like what he did a while back with photo collages, but I'm not too keen on the prints. As regards David Blackburn, I remember him fondly but dimly, as he befriended me, took a shine to me, whatever; but I very much doubt that he remembers me. When I knew him it was right at the start of his career, and I was a bit of a weird person then, very disconnected, and so once he left Bradford it was like he no longer existed and I made no attempt to stay in touch. The story of most of my life really until recently when I've taken positive action to change.





GUNPUTTY

HARRYBELL 75

DC3s and D-Day

—

A Return to the Beaches

Keith Freeman
All photos by Keith Freeman

To start at the beginning would be wise, but I think I'll start shortly before then...

Tom, a fellow member of the Royal Berkshire Aviation Society, lives quite close to us and has recently got a PC. So, for various reasons he calls upon me for help... In this instance on how to transfer digital photos to CD for showing on the TV. This went well and then I noticed a brochure on his desk. The upshot of this was my going home and persuading Wendy (with very little difficulty) that we should join Tom on an outing to Normandy organised by Air Atlantique (hereafter AiAt).

I got on the internet and filled out the form - several days later I got an acknowledgement from AiAt confirming our places (this ticked off Tom somewhat as he hadn't got any acknowledgement - but he'd made his reservation on the phone). Because the start on Saturday morning was, we strongly suspected, going to be early we decided to go up to Baginton (the village nearest Coventry airport) on the Friday and stay there overnight. Tom had the name and phone number of a B&B so I volunteered to get the bookings sorted for all of us. I did this - not without a certain amount of difficulty - talking on the phone several times and making the booking for two rooms despite the online booking form not (at the time) apparently accepting the booking of a second room.

Somewhat late (and after a phone call or two) we got the flight details, some instructions on checking in at Coventry airport (6 am) and a rough itinerary for the trip.

Tom had volunteered to do the driving (I wonder if that's because he's had lifts with me before ?). Wendy and I walked round to Tom's, found him loading the car, so we put our bags in the boot and set off. The journey went well... Tom had exact instructions how to find the B&B (turn left on entering Baginton - the B&B is just past a Chinese restaurant and directly opposite the Post Office). This turned out to be true (except the Chinese restaurant was actually a Chinese take-away). We

parked and walked up to the front door. There appeared to be no-one around and no bell or knocker.. just before panic set in someone appeared. It wasn't the owner but another "guest". He was an airline captain who was just off to the airport. His first reaction was if we wanted to stay he couldn't help us - but then spotted a note in the hall with our names on it with the information we had rooms 2 and 4. He then gave us the code for the front door (a digital lock) and bade us farewell.

We looked at our rooms (adequate enough) and walked down through the village in search of a pub. My instinct let me down and we walked off to the right when (I believe) turning to the left would have brought us to a closer pub. However maybe my instinct was good because we found The Old Mill - a very good pub/hotel that was full but not overcrowded and we had a very decent meal plus a couple of drinks. We then strolled back, got in (with a little difficulty) and went to bed, remembering to set the alarm clocks to 4 (yawn) 30.

4.30 in the morning (I can reveal) is not quite daylight... Having found out the night before that we were on our own we went through the "Resident's Lounge" to the conservatory where all the ingredients for a light breakfast were to be found. Well, not quite *all* the ingredients - the one thing that was missing was the *light*. The one neon tube, when switched on displayed a small flickering light at either end - luckily the sun was just about making itself felt.

Although Baginton is very close to the airfield the passenger terminal is three quarters of the way round it (and, no, one couldn't do the shorter quarter distance as there was no road that way). Nevertheless Tom managed to get the car into the car park (very large but also very full) and we got to the terminal (very small and seems to be built of prefabricated building site offices). A queue extended from somewhere inside to just outside the entrance. Actually there were four queues - Thomsonfly flight check-ins for Pisa, Orly and Jersey and security (the longest). I went to the

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head of one queue and asked the chap where AiAt passengers should book in. "It'll open at six" he answered. It was 5.55am... A few minutes later Wendy spotted someone with an AiAt brochure. Tom went out and asked him if he knew anything about us checking in. It turned out we had to go to "Passenger Services" – a desk in a corner that was pretty well hidden by the people in the queue awaiting security checks. We pushed our way over to it and the young girl there (between answering phone calls) did the necessary paper work for us and took our suitcase (Tom's second bag, a rucksack, she declared he should take on board with him). We then joined the security check queue (by this time extending well out from the entrance to the terminal).

We slowly inched forward... with one hold-up (while passengers for Pisa were taken to the head of the queue) we got to the security check. Tom had got ahead of us and apparently the security people picked up that he had his shaving kit in the "carry-on" luggage he'd meant for the "hold". However as soon as Tom mentioned AiAt all was well and he was waved through(!) I felt disgusted that the new security rules forbid liquids to be taken through to airside - however once there you can buy bottles of water etc - £1 for a 330cl bottle seems exorbitant to me.

In the departure lounge it soon appeared that there were 19 of us bound for Normandy. This figure increased temporarily as passengers for Jersey (the Pisa and Orly flights had gone by this time) came through to join us - only to be hurried on to the departure gate by the ground staff. We were then told our aircraft would unfortunately be an hour late. In fact, we found out, the aircraft we were supposed to be using had a tech problem and another was being prepared. (Later still we found out the preparation involved replacing the non-standard life jackets for CAA approved ones). Although causing a delay it transpired we had a DC3 with *some* soundproofing which was better for us - though the weight of the soundproofing etc meant the fuel consumption was increased which was not good for AiAt.

We looked over our fellow passengers... there appeared to be the one inevitable loud mouthed know-it-all (*not* me I hasten to add). He tried his best to always steer the conversation to 617Sqn on which he was an expert (though as far as I could gather not from any kind of personal experience. If I heard it once I heard it a dozen times: "When I retire I'm going to Canada where they fly you as a passenger in a Lancaster for \$1000".

Soon a member of the ground staff came and ushered us out (past the remaining Thomsonfly B737 still waiting to get off to Jersey) to the DC3.



We had boarding passes (!) but scrambled up the steps and up the fuselage to wherever we wanted to sit. In our case Wendy got ahead of me and we landed up just behind the wing on the port side. As we got in we could check our luggage was "in the hold" - as the "hold" was the rear of the plane...

The plane had been towed across the airfield from AiAt's area so we experienced the "pleasure" of the engines starting up and being run up... and then we taxied out, down the runway, 360 turn and, after another quick check, roared off... on our way at just after 8am.



The course was pretty near due south all the way, at 1500ft over England, rising to 2000ft over the channel. We flew over one rather weird installation that I haven't been able to find on Google maps, then flew fairly close to Blenheim Palace (well worth looking at from the air), Didcot power station (a landmark we know well whenever we drive "oop north"). I happily snapped away - the only fly in the ointment being that the sun was shining virtually straight into the lens. Over the M4 (which goes by Reading, east to west) and then we almost followed the A34 - another notorious road to inhabitants of the Reading/Newbury area - down over Southampton and across the tip of the Isle of Wight.

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The channel wasn't very interesting - but we soon approached the French coast (seeing a slight build up of cloud in the distance) and landed at Maupertus, which is the Cherbourg airport. Here the DC3 was the largest aircraft around... and the smart quite modern terminal was virtually deserted. Once the luggage was offloaded on to a pickup truck the steps were produced and we clambered down. One lady waved us in (most of us were pausing to take pictures of the plane) and we followed her through the terminal. Wendy asked "What about customs?" to which the only reply was "We've gone through them....".

The coach was waiting and our "hold" baggage was put on as we identified it - thus making sure it was all there. The lady now introduced herself as Danielle, our guide, and the driver as Victor. As we drove off Danielle gave us a run-down on where we were going, what we were going to do and a brief potted lesson about Normandy, its geography and history - including "William the Bastard" - better known to us as William the Conqueror.

Danielle told us she was born in July, 1944 (having primed us to exclaim "You don't look that old"). Her family had a farm and decided to stay put when the invasion began. They were there for over a week in isolation. The first experience was two very young looking German SS arriving asking for food. As the family had none they couldn't help (even if they had wanted to), however the two soldiers then asked about the goat that was in the yard. They took it (despite being told it was a pet) and immediately killed, cut it up and made a stew in a large pot. They did offer some to the family but it was refused as no-one could face eating their pet.

When the Americans arrived at the farm house they were surprised to find it occupied by a French family and insisted the family should move further away from what was, then, the front line. Danielle's mother, being 8 months pregnant, was given a lift in a jeep to a suitable hospital. On the way she said she was thirsty whereupon the driver stopped, got out and filled a water bottle from a ditch, popped two pills into it, shook it vigorously and handed it to her. Despite not really wanting to drink ditch water Danielle's mother was so thirsty that she did drink... "and it did *me* no harm" was Danielle's final comment.

Most of the roads we used in Normandy are small country lanes (other than the N13 Route National) and Victor proved to be an excellent driver. We drove through St Mere Eglise and on to Utah Beach. It was almost high tide, the 6th June, 1944 landings were done when it was low tide so that



the landing craft could see the many obstacles that had been put in the inter-tidal range. This meant, however, that the troops had a wide expanse of beach to run up before reaching the cover of the sand dunes.

Around this area ("The American Sector") small areas of the roads are named after soldiers who were killed there - a very nice gesture though, of course, the overall name of the road for postal purposes remained what it always was. Having wondered at the bravery of the troops who'd stormed ashore we returned to St Mere Eglise for an excellent lunch. We had pre-ordered what we wanted from an extensive menu and apart from some confusion caused by the English descriptions being slightly different to the French names ("Puff pastry shell with meat/cream sauce filling" and "Puff pastry shell with fish/cream sauce filling" being the worst offenders). The lunch was washed down with red or white wine and several people began to think that a snooze might well be a good idea.... but it was not to be.

Danielle promised us lots of walking to work off the effects of the lunch... a promise she kept in full. Back we trundled to the centre of Ste Mere Eglise in the coach and then walked over to the church. On the spire is the replica parachutist who hung there almost the whole of D-Day. He was actually suspended on the other side of the tower in reality - but the mannequin is now on the side where most people can see it (from the main road and main car park) and take photographs. He was shot in the foot and two snipers in the tower argued over whether to kill him - but the older of the two persuaded the younger one that he was doing no harm hung there and he was thus allowed to live. When he came down, however, he was completely deaf as the bells had been ringing continuously to announce the invasion. We were also told that a replica used to be put up every year at the beginning of the tourist season - but they now have

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one made of glass fibre and it is on display all year. It is also, apparently, slightly larger than life size so that it can be seen (and photographed) more easily.

Crossing the road we went into the Museum - housed in buildings representing (very well) parachute canopies. A C-47 (military version of the DC3) is displayed here with the troops and equipment surrounding it.

On the coach again for the short trip up to la Ponte du Hoc. Here the top of the cliff has been left, as much as possible, like it was in 1944. Shell and bomb craters cover the area and bunkers (damaged but not knocked out). There are also



several sites where guns were to be placed. The US Rangers had the job of climbing the cliffs here and

silencing the guns. A British RN coxswain brought them in - to the wrong part of the coast... Realising this they re-embarked and came to the beach below the cliff. They climbed it and (with the element of surprise lost) met with fierce opposition. Because of the delay and fierce fighting the troops who were supposed to follow them in didn't, thinking they had failed. Nevertheless they held on - but at a price, when relieved 90 were still standing (and fighting) from the 225 that went ashore.

To top it all the large guns they were sent to silence were not where expected but several hundred yards inland; the ones at the top of the cliff being dummies (painted telegraph poles). These guns could have covered two of the other landing beaches but were rendered ineffective.

Incidentally this piece of land was given by the French to the Rangers and the extensive car parks and buildings were put up by the Americans for the 50th anniversary celebrations.

Driving on down the coast we came to Omaha beach... in many ways a replica of Utah beach. The Americans had their own Mulberry Harbour here - except they didn't take the advice of the British engineers on how to lay it out and subsequently it was destroyed in a bad storm. Luckily they took Cherbourg in time to use that port to get supplies.

The last visit of the day was to the main American Cemetery. Huge (9,387 graves, the smaller one has 4,410) it is a magnificently landscaped with everything kept in a perfect state (again the ground was given to the Americans and they bear all the upkeep costs). We arrived a few minutes before the daily ceremony of lowering the (American) flag - accompanied by a recording of "taps". The headstones, line upon almost endless line of them was rather daunting, so we went into the visitors' centre - which is virtually a museum. Strangely this was the first building where we had to go through security screening. A film was showing but we didn't have time to settle down and watch it so we walked down the rows of exhibits to a small tunnel which led to a semi-circular room with pictures on the walls of some of the people buried here - mostly those who had received high decorations. It was here that I found the first evidence of an Afro-American involved in D-Day - a member of a *segregated* anti-aircraft battery... rather a sad commentary on some of the less pleasant aspects of America at the time.

In error we exited this building at the far end and had to hurry to get back to the coach by a rather long way round - but we still managed not to be last on the coach.

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We drove to the outskirts of Bayeux where we were staying at a Novotel. Apart from a slight hiccup when there appeared to be no room for "Freeman" (our key-card had got stuck to the back of another card) all went smoothly and the room was comfortable. We both had much needed showers and then met Tom in the lobby as we'd decided to walk down into Bayeux for a meal. The centre wasn't all that far and we spotted one restaurant on the other side of the street and then one on our side. The menu (in French) looked quite good and the other side of the entrance it looked even better in English! Nevertheless we walked on a little further and found two or three more... however we decided the first one looked the best and returned to it. We had been a little worried that they might not have room for us - but it turned out that the seating went back quite a long way (though you couldn't see that looking through the front window) and we were soon sat with drinks (much needed) and the extensive menu. Wendy had a steak, Tom had salmon on rice and I had Normandy Veal chop. All were excellent – so much for our original intention to only have a small snack after the hefty lunch!

Thus about ten o'clock we wended our way back to the Novotel. I don't know about anyone else in the party but I think I actually fell asleep *before* my head hit the pillow after a very full day.

We had been told there was a very good hypermarket in Bayeux, very near the hotel - however we found out it was closed on a Sunday but a smaller supermarket that we'd noticed on our walk into town was, the receptionist thought, open. So we went down for the continental breakfast at 8 and after a reasonable breakfast we strolled down the road. The supermarket was indeed open and we wandered around - actually looking for Van Houten drinking chocolate, something you can't get in the UK. We didn't find any, but bought a couple of small bottles of water for the day ahead and a bottle of 11 year-old Calvados for the weeks ahead.

Back to the hotel where we got our suitcase down to the coach which started 15 minutes early so that we could visit one of the British cemeteries. Whereas the Americans have two large cemeteries the British have 16 smaller ones (containing 18,793 graves in total). The largest, the one we visited, has 4,653 graves whereas the smallest has only 40 graves (there are also a few graves scattered around in "normal" French graveyards). To round off the facts and figures there are also two Canadian cemeteries (5,007 graves between them), a Polish one (615 graves) and five German ones that, between them, have 58,312 graves.

The British cemetery had an entirely different feel

to it from the American one - difficult to pinpoint what it was but almost everyone on our tour remarked on it. Perhaps it was because it was somewhat smaller and "more manageable" and seemed, to us, to be less clinical and more "human". It was very sad, of course, but even sadder were the gravestones such as "A SOLDIER OF THE 1939-1945 WAR / Lance Corporal of the 50th Division / 6th June 1944 / Known unto God". Most of the graves were a set distant apart - one anomaly was the two set "shoulder-to-shoulder", a Sergeant and a Pilot Officer who had obviously died in their plane together.

We left with some reluctance as Danielle chivvied us back on to the coach, but she did tell us that the cemetery actually had the graves of Dutch, New Zealander, South African soldiers in it - and *one* German! So we drove down to the Pegasus Bridge.



There were, of course, two bridges, one over the river and the other over the canal. The Museum here is magnificent, there's no other word for it. The main building contains relics and souvenirs and many pictures and we wandered around (yes, we did a *lot* of wandering). Then a clipped British voice bade us come into the model room. This contained a large model of the area with various lights to show the two bridges, the landing areas and the routes the gliders took. They were cast adrift well out in the English Channel and three approached from the west to land by the canal bridge. The other three flew on past the bridges, made a fairly steep turn and landed on the other side of the river bridge. Surprise was complete and the bridges were secured in ten minutes. Further glider landings and several parachute drops were made and the sixth airborne division kept the eastern flank until the invasion forces reached them from the beachheads. The navigation was performed by the co-pilot (and remember both pilot and co-pilot were trained soldiers first and pilots second) basically with a compass and stop watch - there were no beacons on the ground as getting the resistance to set them up could well

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have jeopardised the element of surprise.

One glider went well astray and landed about 50 km away (near some bridges on a small river). The troops blew up these bridges and travelled back through the enemy forces, picking up a few stray parachutists as they did, to where they should have been. They incurred one minor casualty.

The bridges were captured for two reasons - to stop reinforcements coming into the Cherbourg peninsular and to stop them being destroyed when the German army retreated. Other areas of the country (a wooded ridge running inland from the sea) were also occupied - or rather liberated. Above the model tv screens were suspended so that we could watch a short film about the operation.

The guide then took us out into the grounds. The actual bridge became too small for the vehicles using it and was replaced. The local council couldn't give the original bridge away so they sold it to the Museum - for one Franc (said to be still owing). Thus part of the bridge was restored and built in the Museum grounds. The damage done to it was by a German fighter later on (the concrete in the counter weight still contained parts of the 20mm canon shells. Incidentally the guide said the scene in "The Longest Day" where the pipe-major strode up to the bridge playing the pipes was entirely false. In the pipe major's own words (passed on by the guide) "Ye canna play the pipes and run - and by God I was running for my life".

The Museum was inaugurated by Prince Charles in 2000 and a wartime Bailey Bridge was installed in 2002. In 2004 a replica of a Horsa glider was added to join the sad remains of an original one housed in a glass fronted shed. The tyres of the replica were bought from a French farmer who had



done his own liberating and used them on a farm cart for many years. Although the replica was built to be as near perfect as possible they have had to

replace part of the wings with glass fibre. The invasion stripes (black and white) mean that in the sun the material expanded at different rates and were in danger of destroying itself. This problem did occur during 1944-45 but few planes were static for very long at that time so it wasn't quite such a problem.

It was here (and the fault of the guide) that we incurred Danielle's good natured wrath - running over our allotted time by nearly three quarters of an hour. But, in the end, we embussed (if you can do that on a coach) and set off for Arromanches.

Just before arriving at Arromanches we began to see the Mulberry Harbour remains - but didn't stop on the top of the cliff for photographs; I don't think there was a suitable place for the coach to stop. On the 50th (or was it 60th?) anniversary there was a big ceremony here and one of the local farmers allowed his field to be covered in tarmac for a car park and a review stand to be built. He did this on condition that the field was returned to him in the condition it was before the ceremony. So the tarmac was laid and then later removed - apparently to his satisfaction.



Arriving at Arromanches we were given about two and a half hours "free". I think everybody started by picking a cafe, restaurant or creperie and having some lunch. Wendy, Tom and I certainly did. We all had cheese and ham omelettes and (for Tom and myself) beer. Then Tom had a crepe with chocolate sauce and "candied pineapple" (looked more like chunks from a tin to me) while I had banana crepe with chocolate sauce and Wendy had vanilla ice cream (second choice as they didn't have the coffee ice cream advertised on the menu). I can't remember if we had coffee - but I do remember I had a glass of Calvados...

The town is a typical seaside tourist trap - with the added bonus of a D-Day Museum; however after we'd eaten (the French don't rush meals and we were falling into the same habit) we decided we

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didn't have time to do the museum justice, so we looked at the Mulberry Harbour from the sea front and idly wandered around the touristy shops. This was also the occasion when people had been told they could buy wine and bottles of Calvados - but we looked and realised we'd got the much better bargain earlier in the supermarket in Bayeux.

By the time it came to getting back on the coach the wind had risen a little and ominous black clouds had appeared. However as we drove towards Cherbourg we left the clouds behind and the sun once more broke out.

We arrived at the airport to find it locked and deserted - and no DC3 waiting for us. Danielle though knew what to do and rang the control tower on her mobile. Shortly after a fireman appeared and let us in to the terminal. Then he went into one of the offices to use the phone and came out to tell us the plane would be landing in 50 minutes time.

The plane duly landed and the fireman reappeared to take us through security. He insisted the luggage should go through the X-ray machine - despite the fact that no-one was looking at the monitor. Wendy went through first and I followed... being inquisitive I walked through so I could see the monitor - thus inadvertently not going through the metal detector arch. This was perhaps lucky as almost everyone else set off the alarm. The first few times the fireman rushed back from putting bags through the X-ray machine and waved the person through as soon as they indicated they'd got a watch on. After a while I think he gave up doing even this.

Another fireman had appeared by now and they loaded the bags on to the back of a pick-up and took them out to the plane. Then they came back (using a door marked "Staff Only" to get in and out of the departure lounge) and carefully unlocked the door in the lounge so we could walk out - why they didn't herd us through the Staff Only door I don't know... but I suppose rules are rules.

The trip back was more or less a mirror image of the trip out – except we flew at 3000ft all the way because lower would have been too turbulent. This time we sat at the front of the cabin where I, on the aisle seat, could watch the pilot and some of the instruments. Apart from that I spotted a three masted sailing ship in the Channel (Is the tall ships race coming up soon?) but by the time I'd unlimbered the camera it had disappeared under the wing.

We swung in to Coventry airport and taxied towards the terminal - seeing a Thomsonfly plane already there with the luggage being unloaded.

Partly due to this we sat on the plane for a short while talking to the pilot before being allowed off to walk round to join the queue of people going into the terminal. I must say the Thomsonfly passengers cleared the carousel remarkably quickly and our baggage appeared. We walked through customs - at least there was one person there, looking very bored - and through immigration. Two people on duty there and the first person who went up seemed to be taking a long time to get through but it turned out the official was asking how we'd got on and there was no problem.

Finding the car took a little while but after locating it and loading up we started on the last leg of the journey. Out of the airport and on to the A46 with the intention of getting on to the M40 and a fast drive home. We got to the A46/M40 roundabout only to find a vehicle parked across the sliproad (with two bored looking people sitting in it) and a large sign saying the M40 was closed. Tom decided to take the next road off the roundabout and that said Cirencester and Cheltenham. We went down this road and eventually hit the M4 well west of Reading. Just before the turn off for the A34 the electronic signs said the M40 was closed from junctions 10 to 13 - but it wasn't until the next day we found it had been closed because a Hell's Angel had been shot on it. Actually the time taken to get home wasn't that much more than we'd have taken on the M40 route although a few more miles.

Home... we'd been away two days and yet it seemed like a week at least. On arriving home on Sunday we had the meteor shower to look forward to. I did a quick scan when I locked up but, not unexpectedly, saw nothing and we couldn't keep our eyes open for anything that was supposed to happen later. A snack and bed with the thought that Monday would return us to our normal mundane life.



IntheBar Day 2007

– what went on?

The Participants

Cast in order of appearance:

The visitors: Pat Charnock; Graham Charnock; Keith Freeman; Ian Maule; John Hall (Uncle Johnny); Rob Jackson (*co-host of the event*)

Commentators from across the Pond: Joyce Scrivner; Rich Coad

Also present on IntheBar Day: Janice Maule; Wendy Freeman; Audrey Hall

Co-hosts: Coral Jackson; Hugo Jackson

Pat C:

We didn't exactly leave home early, but the traffic was foul. I was up at 7.15 to get the chores done, the cats pacified, and the house stocked with provender for the cat sitter. But that nice Mr Charnock didn't get up till 10.30. By 11.30 we were on the road, with the help of the AA route planner. The AA was sure it would take us 2 hours and 20 something minutes, but it wasn't until 4 hours later that we were disturbing the dogs at Rob's. The AA didn't remind us that it was a Saturday in August, and there were roadworks by the Devil's Punch Bowl. At least we were fairly happy, and looking forward to a good weekend.

And the AA didn't let us down route-wise. It didn't know that the Jacksons had put balloons at every local turn, but it knew every road in rural Hambrook, and it got us there. As we were negotiating the lanes, my mobile beeped twice – I ignored it, on the grounds that I really didn't want to be shouted at if I lost us. But if I'd read my texts, I'd have known why there was a Jazz already at Chinthay instead of an obscure Japanese car, and why the camper van was missing.

The messages read:

“Only K n W here so far. Hotel lost L n A's reservation so they are booking elsewhere. L's clutch gave out 2 mls out of Eastbne so doubt she'll be here. Less rain tho. Best, R.”

“That was J n A not L n A. V late lunch! Best, R.”

I never did work out why V was going to have a late lunch but so it goes.

*Rob J: That's *very* late - as in John and Audrey not being able to have lunch till after 4 pm.*

Grah eased the car into the parking lot, we put our coats over our heads against the drizzling rain, and dashed for the front door. This being a dog house, we didn't need to ring the bell, and the door was opened by Rob and his excited pack.



Wendy F, Janice M, Keith F (Photo Rob J)

It was great to meet Wendy and Keith for the first time. They're lovely people, and I hope they'll be able to make it to other gatherings. And Coral – I can't have seen her for over 30 years, but she hasn't changed. Still slim, only a few grey hairs, and a distinct absence of wrinkles. Mind you, that house is so big, there's plenty of room for an attic with a portrait in it..... And Ian and the lovely Mistress Janice were there. John and Audrey turned up later.

It's a huge house, and we only saw the ground floor. I saw a dining room, sitting room, kitchen, WC, bathroom, office, weaving room, small room with computer in it, front hall, and big sort of back hall with dog food and armour in it. And I'm sure there was more. And it's a lovely lived-in house, full of traces of busy people.

Rob J: The room with the computer in, we call the study. And the one with lots of clobber including dog food, we call the utility room. Mind you, the phrase "room with lots of clobber" could describe pretty much anywhere in the house.

So what did we do all day? For a late lunch, we had various salads and feta and hummus and stuff. And the most divine cherries and strawberries dipped in chocolate! And we talked, and we

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chatted, and Ian took photos, and Ian drank a bit.



Graham, Pat & Ian all look serious (Photo Rob J)

We'll all tell you different bits, that's the way it goes. That's why you have to read at least three conreps to find out what a con was like. Someone will tell you all about Spanko.

*Rob J: They'll have to tell **me**. The Spanko thing must have come up while I was washing-up or something.*

And someone else will talk about Coral's shelf full of chocolate. And, of course, there was Hugo's ladder. He was getting ready for an enactment at Petworth House, and had to load up his car. So he was going backwards and forwards from the car to garage, with armloads of glaives and armour and wooden bits and things. He suddenly got a small ladder out of the car, and Ian watched, excitedly, as he carried it over towards the house. Happily, he stowed it in the garage, and we didn't have to avert a tragedy.



Merlin thinks what to do with Keith (Photo Ian M)

The dogs were very friendly. I'm a cat person really, I'm not temperamentally suited to giving a dog a good home, but I'm willing to be won over.

And these dogs were sweeties! When I first met them, I decided that Taiko was my favourite, but I think Merlin runs him a close second, not forgetting Romulus. (And of course, now that I'm writing about dogs, Barney (grey cat), who has practically ignored me since I got home, has climbed onto my lap.) But they were so well behaved. They know Coral's rules, and they know their limits. By the end of the evening, though, Taiko was getting a bit personal, and thrust his head into my crotch.

What else happened? We chatted. We toured the garden, and inspected Rob's ingenious double-tent arrangement, but it was agreed that Grah would sleep indoors, in the dry. We met the goldfish, Slurp, Gurr and Hiccup, and the catfish.

Rob J: Gloop, Burp and Gurr actually, but that's a bloody good rendition. The catfish may be nameless, but as he likes hiding in the deep I am sure Bruce could find something suitably Lovecraftian for him.

We watched Coral gird herself impressively for dogwalking in the rain. She wore an ankle length waterproof thingy, topped with a fluorescent vest thingy. And the poodles had macs too. But Romulus managed to hurt his paw while they were going down the drive, and Coral turned them around and headed back home. Intelligent dog, that.

Coral made a wondrous pot of her veggie curry, and we had that with pizza for our dinner. And Graham wrote a song, in honour of the occasion.



Graham performing Spanko! (Photo Rob J)

And we drank, and chatted. And Ian didn't fall over, even when the dogs tried to trip him! At one point, Coral was talking about making this an annual event.

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Rob J: We'd be keen, but we wouldn't want to get in the way if others wanted to have a go! Not least as Linda may be going green at having missed out....

In the morning, there was more chatting with Coral and Rob, and a wander round the front garden. Then Grah and I hugged our goodbyes, climbed into Jazz, and headed off. As we were so close to the sea, Grah indulged me and we went to Bosham (pronounced Bozz-am, not to be confused with the other Bosham, pronounced Bosh-am) to look at the harbour and smell the brine on the mudflats. Then back north, to London.

But not quite. I almost forgot the farm shop. Graham left his jacket at Chinthay, and we had to go back. Then we passed the Southbourne Farm Shop, and Graham was easily persuaded to stop and purchase veggies and baked products. I bought an obscene amount of cakes and biscuits, and I'm scoffing a delicious cherry muffin even now.

It was a very good weekend. Thank you, Rob and Coral, for putting up with us all, and being so nice to us. There'll be more, I'll remember stuff, and do a Keith, and post addendums. And one day I'll get Graham to help me, and I'll upload my photos.

Rob J: We really enjoyed it too, the more so for such great feedback.

The other place is Cosh-am, a suburb of Portsmouth. Bozz-am is the seaside village where King Canute allegedly failed to do his thing with the tide, and lots of foolhardy car owner tourists have similarly watched their cars steadily drown after being parked mid-tide, to the amusement of locals watching from the pub.

Really pleased you found Southbourne Farm Shop (without any prompting from us!) - it's one of our regular favourites too.

Graham C:

What a miserable fucking day. I never wanted to go anyway, especially after waking up on Saturday morning with a vodka shandy headache. But Pat insisted. She didn't cheer me up by singing tunelessly to me in the car once we had set out: "We're going to the country, we're going to see the cows." For a start I thought that was an exceptionally rude way to refer to the Jacksons.

My father told me three things: "Never go near the

North Circular, Never go and visit people in Hambrook, and never go near the M25." Unfortunately I only paid attention to the first one. The M25 was everything an orbital motorway in one of the biggest cities in the world should be, three lanes going nowhere slowly. I'm with the Tories on this one. What we need is twelve lane motorways and more airports with at least ten runways. By the time we reached the A3 we were going even slower because someone had decided to improve the road and decided this would take until December 2008 to complete, which we all know means it won't even be complete by the time the London Olympics roll around. Still eventually, after wasting a large part of our life we arrived.

Rob had tied balloons at the entrance to his driveway in an attempt to ward off evil, but it didn't work. We entered anyway. Only to be set upon by a hoard of ravenous dogs frothing at the mouth and obviously out for our blood. And once inside – what a dump. I couldn't believe they'd actually claimed they had "tidied up" for the event. There were dog toys everywhere and worse, boxes full of ancient medieval armour. I wasn't much impressed by the company either. Some skinny dreg of fandom called Ian, and his wife whose accent I frankly found impenetrable. Some old airman called Keith who appeared to be suffering from shell-shock, the way his mouth dropped open and he gasped in horror when he saw me. I was aware of the grossness of Rob J of course from previous acquaintance. He claims to have lost some weight. Don't you believe it folks, unless it's down to brain shrinkage. And Coral? Boy has that woman let herself go. Must say, however, the surgeon who had worked on her face had done a good job.

Still, I thought, things had to improve when Uncle Johnny and Audrey arrived, but no, far from wrestling me to the ground to administer several kidney punches and head butts, the man was a sickening picture of benign beatification, while Audrey was sweetness personified, considering the last time we'd met she'd held me in a head-lock and kneed me in the groin. Coral had laid out some dregs of a sad salad obviously held over from some previous event several decades ago. We'd been promised a chocolate fountain but all we got was a few shrivelled cherries and strawberries she had dipped in molten chocolate. Later, much later, when we were all on the verge of starvation, she laid out a vegetable curry which true to its name had NO MEAT IN IT at all. Can you believe that?

At some stage Rob dragged us out in the pouring rain to show us his estate, barely two thirds of an acre and hardly worth bothering to look at. His garden pond was miserable, and he obviously took

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more pride in his compost heaps than anything else. He showed us where he'd dug out the



Graham and Pat on Sunday in front of unused tents (Photo Rob J)

runners from his bamboo plants. Boy that was certainly one highlight of the event. Rob is planning on making this an annual event, but I say, don't hold your breath, not unless there's a definite commitment to provide some kind of MEAT!

Pat C:

You reminded me about the compost heaps and the digester, you post-modern anti-social ironist! Rob's 3 big compost heaps were so much better than my measly two old dustbins with holes in the sides. And Rob's got this hole in the ground with a thing above it what he calls a digester where all the kitchen waste goes.

Rob J: If we do carry out the plan to hold it here again next year, we will provide meat especially for Graham! There is a significant risk that you will see me at it too, though (the meat, I mean).....

Joyce S:

I have visions of you presenting Graham with a large packet of beef jerky upon his arrival and then supplying everyone one else at meal times with lovely visually attractive salads, cold fruit soups, and mock duck chinese,

(grin, ducking)

Keith F (and Wendy):

Great write-up Pat. Makes me wish I'd been there... oh, hang on a minute – just seen Graham's writeup – the *real story* and I was there. Isn't it amazing how the nasty (in print) Cartiledge

becomes the tongue tied embodiment of humour and charm when you actually meet him. (There - that's put paid to *his* reputation).

Was great to meet everyone – those I'd never met and those who I must have met (or at least seen) in the past and yet had no memory of.

We left sometime between 10 and 10.30 and arrived home just about at midnight having only made one slight navigational error and gone through Petersfield rather than around it - however at that hour I suspect it made no difference to the journey time.

If you ever want to get me to a party/gathering/ what-have-you in future all you need to do is promise me Coral's chocolate cherries will be there.....

Oh yes, Pat, I thought Ian *did* fall down – or at least said he had... you must get your facts right you know or that kind Mr White will be down on you like a ton of bricks.

Many thanks Coral and Rob.

Ian M:

Saturday was fun, even with the trials and tribulations of getting there and the events that followed.

The sat-nav said M25 (London's major arterial motorway) then A3 (major road, not motorway), A27 (major road, but not as major as the A3) and finally a short drive on the A286 (major road but not so you'd notice it) to Crouchers Bottom Hotel where the Maules and the Halls had agreed to meet up as close to the 1pm check-in time as possible. John said he'd chosen the hotel for its facilities and location but I reckon that was of secondary consideration to staying at a hotel with the name "Crouchers Bottom".

The sat-nav said the journey would take 1.30 minutes and a second opinion with the RAC online route planner gave us the same route and a time varying from the 1.30 up to 2 hours if the traffic was bad. So we set out at 11am, thinking that would get us to the hotel more or less on time to meet John and Audrey, settle-in, get organised, and get the lift to the party that John had so kindly agreed to provide so that Janice could sample the alcohol being offered at the gathering.

The roads were busy. Busy to the extent that after 30 minutes we were still almost within walking distance of home but soon the traffic eased a little and we sped onward at a respectable 60 mph to

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junction 10 of the M25 and then on to the A3 southbound. I started singing a happy song and the voice of “thing” on the sat-nav occasionally joined-in with a couple of choruses of “straight-on at the roundabout”, until we hit the narrow section of road with the roadworks and sat, and sat and sat (I believe the sign said “Aren't you happy we'll be finished this work in 5 years?”). A mere 30 minutes later we were on the move again and rapidly approaching the end of the A3. I'd found a new game to play, reading out the mileage display on the sat-nav, “5 miles to the A27, 4.9 miles to the A27, 4.8 miles to the A27”.

“Shut up!”

I obeyed the driver and just sat staring out the window at the rain pouring from the heavens.

We finally arrived at the hotel at 13:30, checked-in and discovered the Halls were not in evidence. “They've got a big blue car.” “No, they've got a big black car.” “Blue.” “Black.” This jolly banter continued for some time until at around 2pm a big blue car pulled into the car park and I could see Uncle Johnny himself clutching the steering wheel. I went out to greet John and Audrey, congratulated them on the choice of hotel and steered them towards the door leading to the registration desk. Five minutes later they still hadn't re-appeared so I strolled over to see whether they'd been given a room in the main building instead of the cabin accommodation Janice and I had. They were slumped in the lounge in a posture reminiscent of fans at a dead-dog party on the last day of a convention, and they hadn't even been drinking. It transpired the hotel had no record of their booking and were trying to find them alternative accommodation in the neighbourhood (which they finally did).

So Janice drove to the gathering after all, and we didn't get lost.

“Ring, ring” on the doorbell. Dr. Rob opens the door and we're immediately accosted by three large dogs, three very well behaved dogs. Inside we see Keith and Wendy for the first time in umpty, umpty years and start taking about battlefield tours, DC3s, Horsa gliders, the sort of things fans talk about. Coral appears and looks no older than when I last saw her in Surbiton in 1987. Country life and three kids have obviously had a good effect on her. Graham and Pat arrive, people start drinking and eating. John and Audrey arrive and tuck in to a belated breakfast/lunch. More talking and drinking. The dogs are everywhere, but friendly. I go for a cigarette in the garden and fall over on to the wet grass. Voices in the garden; through the gathering gloom I see Rob conducting

a guided tour and showing people the tents where we would have been sitting if the weather had been better. In the kitchen I accost Coral and take a



photograph of her in a very fetching apron that has “Tim Burton's THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS” emblazoned on the front. Uncle Johnny sits down and admires Rob's shirt, “Is that really washed-out blood stains from your last patient?” The vegetable curry arrives in a huge urn and we all ladle vast quantities into our bowls. Silence reigns.

We say goodnight to Keith and Wendy who have a long drive back to Reading ahead of them. Graham brings forth his guitar and we settle down in the large sitting room to listen to the song he has been writing all evening. The night draws in and John and Audrey have to find their way back to their hotel. We too have to get back. We say goodnight and Pat gets permission from Janice to give me a hug. The hotel is five miles away through the dark wet night. We get lost twice but eventually arrive, the car headlights sweeping over the sign as we pull into the car park. “Crouchers Bottom”.

The journey back was easy and quick. Ignoring the pleading from the sat-nav to turn right we carried on to Southampton and took the M3 north to London. 1 hour 30 minutes later we were home. Tired but happy.

Uncle Johnny:

I can't believe it, but it may be that I am the first to make it back here to my computer and report on the gathering at Rob's on Saturday.

First of all, let me mention, it was raining.

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The only people who got there with no bother (one might have assumed they had been dropped from a DC-3 but for the hulking 4x4 outside) were Wendy & Keith. Audrey and I suffered a mild delay on the M3, and the Charnocks were stuck for hours on the A3, and Linda's clutch went and she never made it at all. However, Audrey and I arrived at our designated hotel where Ian and Janice were also booked in. Keen followers of banter in obscure corners of this bar will know that I had booked our room at the hotel, long before Ian booked. Ian, they had a room for, but not poor Johnny. The girl on reception looked a bit embarrassed - whether that was because Audrey spoke very sternly to her, or because she knew that some dreadful bollocks had been made and it was she who made it, I cannot say. Anyway, she booked us a room at another hotel and described where this was.

"See!" squeaks little Ian Maule: "You'll be even closer to Rob's than we will be!"

"Will we?" wonders poor Johnny, scratching his befuddled head. The directions worked on by Audrey and the Reception girl seemed to indicate to me we would be going to Goodwood, the other side of Chichester from Rob, but what did I know? Anyhow, did I mention it was raining? Well, it was and Ian and Janice decided one of them would have to remain sober (perforce, that would be Janice) and they were soon lost in the spray on their way to Rob's in their Jazz. Johnny and Audrey set off to look for this substitute Hotel. It was raining. We traversed around a dozen roundabouts and three sets of lights, found we could not possibly be in the right place, turned around, forded three rivers and traversed a swamp or two and eventually found the hotel. They guy on reception assured us we had taken the last room in the place. We dumped our stuff, got back in the car, and found, (you will never guess) that it was raining.

Setting off once more we negotiated more roundabouts, sets of lights and a new lake that had formed across the carriageway at some point, then found ourselves able to follow Rob's detailed directions. We still managed to miss a turning, but righted our wrong and approached the objective again, this time making a left turn where we had meant to take a right. "Are you sure this is right?" asked Audrey.

"Don't you know yet that I am always right?" I coughed. Audrey recoiled from the smell. Currently I am like Darth Vader without his helmet - people wrinkle their noses and look frightened. And it was raining. Slowly we climbed to the top of a hill, then took two lefts and began to descend the same hill. I recognised the gate that

divided us from the same dual-carriageway we had been going in different directions on for the last umpteen hours and realised that round the corner, was Rob's house. How we cheered. I got out of the car and would have kissed the very soil, but it was raining, and I might have drowned.

We staggered up the drive laden with booze, Coca Cola and Pizza. Rob and the Charnocks came out to greet us, with tired cheers. We cheered too, to stop ourselves from weeping. It was by now around four in the afternoon. Audrey and I had not eaten since breakfast and after all formalities we sat and fell to, surfacing to witness the repartee fly from one side of the room to the other. Actually, mostly stared at us morosely while we ate - well, cartledge did anyway.



Audrey & John recuperating from travel & hotel disasters (Photo Rob J.)

There followed an evening of endless reminiscence, picture taking, and deep and profound philosophising. Coral worked a mighty magic in the kitchen and produced curry (having already produced chocolate dipped fruits, nibbles and salad in a sort of popadom that doubled as a plate.

Old Man recorded a video. While he was thus occupied Rob and I stole away to find a water cannon or something to make an amusing diversion. We opened a cupboard and were buried in ton of kipple, none of which was a water cannon, although there was a bubble maker. I was confused.

After dinner, Slim Farto, that legendary blues man of the Harringay Delta entertained us with a song also committed to video, which managed to extemporize upon The Bar, the weather and digital bondage and spanking. Quite an achievement in about four verses. At length we departed. Only then did it stop raining.

Today, Sunday, Audrey and I are only now

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returned from a cultural tour of Sussex involving fine art and architecture and a whole meal whole hearted wholly too much dinner. I can't believe it is so quiet in here. I was going to have a rest next weekend.

Rich C:

Looks like everyone had a good time and got to stay in impressive yurts. I think I want to get a jacket like Coral has for walking dogs before winter sets in. I didn't realize that Coral was *that* much younger than you, Rob.

*Rob J: Errrrmm.... Well, I **am** better at grey hair (or lack of it) than she is. Without giving too much away, we aren't that far apart.*

Graham C:

My God, can't you see the balloon flashing above my head in neon: "Sense of Humour Folks!" I think Keith got it. Pat did too really, but she's so nervous about me offending people she had to



Coral wields Peter the Fish upon the editor (Photo Ian M)

hedge her bets by calling my piece post-modern. Look people, I had a lovely time, got drunk with people I liked, exchanged good bon mots and witticisms and heard lots of good anecdotes in return. Coral is lovely, Rob makes a great Mein Host, even the dogs were loveable. He and Coral have a great house and the gardens are incredible. I'm green with envy. Now the rest of you go away and polish up your irony recognition sensors.

Roast Vegetable Korma Curry *(one version of the famous curried veg)*

Coral Jackson

Ingredients	Quantity
Red Lentils	2 packets
Butternut squash	3
Carrots	2 packets
Garlic	2 heads
Red peppers	6
Red onions	8
Cauliflower	3
Coconut milk	4
Mango chutney	1 jar
Bhuna, jalfrezi and biryani paste	
Korma paste	2 jars
Vegetable stock	

Cover lentils with water; add vegetable stock and 6 tablespoons of Bhuna paste. Boil for about 15 minutes or until mushy.

Peel sweet potatoes, cut into smallish pieces and toss in olive oil. Put in roasting pan. Do same for butternut squash and carrots. Put in separate

pan. Chop onions finely, toss in olive oil, put in separate pan. Cook at about 180C until done.

Peppers: cut in half, remove seeds and roast. Put in plastic bag afterwards for a few minutes and then remove skins if you can be bothered. Separate cloves of garlic, toss in oil and roast. Allow to cool and squeeze the cloves into the lentils.

Add the coconut milk to the lentils plus desired amounts of various pastes – lots of korma and 2 parts biryani to 1 part jalfrezi paste. Add a generous quantity of mango chutney – to taste.

Cut the cauliflower into smallish pieces and steam until nearly cooked. Cut up all vegetables into smallish chunks and add to the lentil mix. Heat through and check for flavour. Season with miso paste or soy sauce if something extra is missing.

This lot serves about 12.

Flying Round in Circles

(An Orbital 2008 conrep)

Rob Jackson

I guess it was Rich Coad's doing to start with. He was the one who decided to fly over to this year's Eastercon, Orbital - literally a flying visit, arriving early on the Friday morning of the con and back to the Bay Area on the Tuesday after. A round trip of 12,000 miles for just 4 days. Given such devotion to duty, those Brits IntheBar (e-list) felt we couldn't possibly leave the poor chap to the tender mercies of the ravening hordes of non-baristas. So we arranged to gather round and provide a bit of distraction from the heathen masses.

Not sure how much he will have seen of the UK, given that his furthest expedition will have been to beautiful downtown Ashford, the Maule household no more than 5 miles from Heathrow to be precise, to freshen up immediately after touchdown in the UK. But never mind - the idea of a barista Gathering as an offshoot of the con was born. We decided we could orbit Orbital.

For me personally, the idea of coming to Orbital was pretty useful in two practical ways. A few months ago I started sorting the oldest of my fanzines, and various collectors spoke up for a series of lists of fanzines I no longer wanted or had house-room for. (No, make that garage-room.) Among those was Greg Pickersgill, who was keen on having a fairly extensive list of old British fanzines. It turned out he and Catherine were coming to Heathrow by car, and could put them in the boot for their return all the way along the lovely M4 to Haverfordwest. Saved a lot of expense on postage. Also allowed for me to bring my box of what I considered crudzines, and Greg helpfully volunteered to sort them, keep any he found to be of reference value, and dispose of the rest (presumably in recycling facilities).

The second clearout I hoped for was that a year ago, via Pete Weston's, Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer's good offices, I had sold - or thought I had sold - a few runs of 70s prozines, Analog, F&SF, Galaxy, If and IASFM - at the LFF auction at the 2007 Eastercon in Chester. The idea had been that I would mail them off to the successful bidder direct. Though the sales were made, only one bidder contacted me, the chap who bought the Analogs. He lived so close to me (in Havant) that I dropped them round. No problem. But I never heard from the other bidder(s). If he/she materialised at Orbital and said "where are my

prozines?", Claire, Mark and I would have been able to say "Here you are!"

So I set off with a boot so full of prozines, fanzines and other kipple such as 18 newly-printed "Core Fandom" T-shirts, that I had to put my boot's default contents (car servicing stuff and so on) on the back seat. I had to leave at 10 am prompt, so I was there in good time for the big kick-off at the bar in the Renaissance at noon on Saturday. Traffic was rather quiet, probably because the weather forecast was so awful - for near-blizzards, or at least squally snow showers - that all sensible people were spending the holiday at home putting another dog on the fire. (Oops, sorry, log.)

I was so early that despite the need to experiment quite a bit with the arcana of the one-way road layout of the A4 Bath Road near Heathrow, I had 40 minutes in which to (a) check there was no-one already in the Renaissance bar, (b) find out that though the hotel only promised rooms for check-in at 3 pm, my room was actually already available to dump stuff in, and (c) go across the pedestrian crossing and along the road through a sleet-storm to the main con hotel, the Radisson Edwardian, register and start mingling.

The lobby was thronged already. Pat C was one barista involved in registering, and other familiar faces were there - some I had already met again in the last year or two, such as Pam Wells, Rob Hansen, Bill Burns, Roy Kettle, Dave Langford, Keith Freeman, Brian Parker, John & Eve Harvey and Pete Weston; others, such as Julian Headlong and seemingly a hundred others not seen for years, as well as hundreds of so-far strangers - including, amazingly enough, Jim Linwood, with whom I had never really connected when active in the 70s and 80s, but is very much around now IntheBar. A group collected to go over to the Renaissance for the ITB Gathering.

When we got over there, mad fool that I was, I initially suggested I buy a single big round to start things off, but Rob H had the better idea of a £10-a-head kitty. My photographic memory (otherwise known as a camera) shows later arrivals by Ian & Janice Maule bringing along Uncle Johnny; Brian Parker, Graham Charnock, Linda Krawecke, Alun Harries & Rich Coad. At first we rearranged our bit of the bar into a great big circle, but as so many

Flying Round in Circles (an Orbital 2008 conrep) – Rob Jackson

people wanted to have so many conversations, we all just stood up and mingled.



The ItB (and ex...) gang (clockwise round circle): Graham, John H, Roy, Julian, Dave, Bill, Rob H, Keith, Peter W, Jim L, Pat C, Eve (back to camera)

I had to tear myself away for the panel in Mark and Claire's fan programme at 2 pm. They had asked me to be on the item about "A Way of Life or Just a Goddamn Hobby?" I guess I was the token old-phart degafiate, but with relevant tales to tell about drifting away and coming back. Of the other panellists, I know Catherine Pickersgill pretty well, but had never met Jess Bennett or Ang Rosin before. Tony Keen (whose name I know, but have never chatted with much) moderated, and did so well, maintaining control despite good and relevant audience participation. As you might expect, despite our different fannish careers we all had masses in common. We agreed on the common factor of enthusiasm or commitment, as well as SF as an aid to acceptance that the world changes around us; I suggested FIAPOL (Part of Life) and FIASOF (Source of Friendship) as balanced alternatives. As you might expect, those I'd not known before seemed Good People.

I was having enough fun in the main con that I didn't go back to the satellite minicon over in the Renaissance. Also, like Keith, I was ravenous; somewhat after 3 pm, Keith and I had a sandwich each in the Newbury Suite (a conservatory-like area set out as a cafeteria). £2.50 for competent if boring sandwiches, but the chocolate doughnuts at £1 each were much naughtier and more fun. A quick mooch in the Dealer's Room - enough to startle Rog Peyton as if I were the return of Marley's ghost - then back to the 4 pm fan panel on the BSFA in the 60s. Moderated by Eve Harvey, this was one of a series about the 5 decades of the BSFA, featuring Bill Burns of this parish as well as Pete Weston and Greg Pickersgill. This was fun and informative, and one of many with a common concluding gestalt that fandom is so much more complex and multi-faceted than it was and no one

person can keep up with all of it at once, any more than they can keep up with all of SF at once, any more. But we just have to live with it.

Permit me to pay a tribute to Greg here. Some are ambivalent about him, but at this con he was consistently entertaining, reasonable, self-controlled and good company. He is having some tummy problems which reduce his alcohol tolerance just now to pretty much zero; but every cloud has a silver lining.....



The 40 Years Ago BSFA panel: Greg, Peter, Bill, and Eve

Back to the (rather depleted) satellite ITB Gathering in the Renaissance. Given the prices of the restaurant food in the Brasserie - rather standard pub food fare at over twice pub prices, such as sticky toffee pudding for £6 - those of us left (Roy, Graham, Pam, Brian, Ian and me) started to fantasise about how to get hold of food. The idea of a 30-person Chinese or Indian takeaway delivery, eaten in two sittings in my bedroom, grew out of our fevered and famished imaginations. Once it turned 6 pm, Janice and Johnny had to get a taxi back to Ashford so Ian could stay. And Roy realised he had missed the chance to register as the desk in the main con hotel would have closed. Roy decided he couldn't pass as Pam Wells, but wondered about amending her badge with Tippex. Ram Wells sounds nice.

Or - with the S at the other end - Ram Swell, the well known porn star.

Pam said: "I'll never look at my name the same way again!"

Hunger drove us back to the main con hotel. Others had already bought tickets for the hotel's buffet dinner, which at £8 was good value if you got in before they ran out of food. But because of Pat C's need to depart promptly, 6 of us decided to book an Indian meal and get there by taxi. I booked one place on everybody's behalf, then

Flying Round in Circles (an Orbital 2008 conrep) – Rob Jackson

suddenly Chris Priest and family were added to the list, making 10. Leigh Kennedy (Chris's wife) told us that a different restaurant on the list had had good reviews, so I apologetically de-booked the first one and booked the second.

I'd stayed alcohol-free since my 2 pints before the panel, which reduced by 1 the number of taxis needed. Roy foolishly volunteered to come with me in my car, and even more foolishly stood beside me as I asked the concierge which way down the A4 the restaurant was.

"It's *that* way!", I said, expansively pointing to the east - and nearly cutting off Roy's nose with my fingernail as I did so. I think it's stopped bleeding by now.

The restaurant was pretty Spartan, more a sort of take-away with tables. Though they only served it on cold plates, the food was indeed of good quality with some imaginative menu items. I sat opposite Chris's 18-year-old daughter Lizzie, and scored a minor medical success when she developed hiccups. She announced they were likely to have set in for the evening (hic), but after I advised her to breathe in slowly, gently and deeply then out again a few times, they just stopped. Reassuring when some advice actually works.

Chris had wanted to eat early as he had to get back to the hotel to be on a panel by 9 pm. He rang for 2 taxis, but as they hadn't turned up by 8.50 pm I said I'd take him.

As his family don't like to be split up, I rammed the car maintenance stuff back into the tiny remaining space in the boot, and got Chris in the front and the others in the back so they got back to the hotel together and (just) in time.

Car back to the Renaissance car park, then once it was safely parked, I was back in the main con to let myself have a couple of belated glasses of wine. I got so engrossed in chatting in the (physical) bar that when at 10.05 pm I wondered where all the baristas were, I rang Brian P and he said "We're in the fan room, listening to Graham on his panel!"

Ooops - sorry, Graham. The panel was on how to make real life into funny material. I arrived just after his anecdotes had finished, but in time to hear Ian Sorensen boast about the size of his testicles (orchitis - needing a painful stay in hospital, before you wonder too much) and James Bacon also going on about Irish family misunderstandings. Distinctly bad timing.

The rest of the evening saw plenty of bar chat in the (rather cold) real ale bar. The temperature depended which room you were in. The fan room

and the dealers' room were close to boiling, but the real ale bar and (reportedly) the main programme room - which I never went into - were freezing.

When talking to Rog Peyton I suddenly realised there was a 34-year gap between Pete Weston's Fan GoH stint at Tynecon in 1974, and Rog's turn this year. I told him this.

"Oh, Christ, Rob, you're not making me feel good with that!"

The evening finished with Alison Scott, who is probably a miniature force of nature even when sober but certainly is when drunk, wrong-footing Roy who couldn't remember where they had met before - at work, in a Civil Service context. It's called situation-related memory. Alison was on a crusade only to buy drinks for people if they wanted beer (which was all they served in the real ale bar - other drinks were from the other bar). I eventually weakened, but only had about 3 sips of it, realised I wasn't enjoying it (I had already changed over to soft drinks after the wine), diplomatically put it down to go to the loo and decided not to return. Sorry, Alison - a bit of a waste in a way.

Overnight would have been OK had it not been for excessively soft pillows which didn't support my neck and aggravated a recent shoulder problem. Got back to sleep eventually with the aid of some pieces of a £3.75 chocolate bar from the minibar. Bet you didn't know that chocolate is worth its weight in gold.

After breakfast and checkout, I had to sort out the dumping of the prozines and fanzines. I came over to the main con hotel, did the dealer's room again and met Peter Weston. He suggested that we really ought to have one final attempt via Ansible to try and find the original purchaser of the prozines we had "sold". I brought them back home, expecting to have to try again, but the Ansible appeal worked. Thankfully the original buyer has made contact and there will be a handover in May. Thanks for the suggestion, Peter.

With Greg's and Catherine's help (Catherine bringing her car round next to mine to minimise the lifting and carrying), the fanzines are now ready for their new home in Haverfordwest (or in the case of the crudzines, a recycling plant, depending whether they have historic value or not). I had also put two boxes of mainly American sercon zines, such as Locus and SF Review, in the car to bring to the con - but as the huge piles of similar ones Greg put out as freebies were mostly untaken by Sunday afternoon, I lost heart, brought them home and they went to the Jackson family

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recycling bin. Catherine and I made an executive decision to let Greg decide if he wanted some Foundations I had also put in the sercon-zine box.

The 70s BSFA panel with Rob Hansen, Eve Harvey, Rog Peyton and Margaret Austin was fun, but more because it was "my" (most active) era than because it was actually about the BSFA. It was mainly reminiscences about the 70s in general. Doreen Rogers is a nice person, but she was in chatty mode from the audience and rather putting her own perspective at times, so Caroline Mullan's moderation could have been more assertive here. One further lunchtime chat in the Renaissance bar with Roy, Rich, Brian and others - actually about SF!

Back at the main hotel while buying a sandwich Peter Sullivan, a Sunderland fan who was hosting Chris Garcia on his TAFF trip the next week, asked me the fannish legends of Sunderland, such as they are. In particular he wondered if I could locate the site of the legendary Gannet pub.

My own simple answer was "Probably not," especially as the area has probably been rebuilt anyway. I have hardly been into the centre of Sunderland since 35 years ago, when the Gannet's landlord decided in 1973 that we as a group weren't drinking enough beer to be customers of his. (Oh the fannish ignominy.) I said he would do better introducing Chris once again to Harry Bell, who in turn would do a more up-to-date pub introduction - to the Aletaster (still involving traditional beer and British pubs, though). I dim-wittedly forgot to get Peter's email address, though.

After a few more farewells and a quick panic in which I reported my mobile as lost then found it almost invisibly tucked away in the car seat, it was back onto the M25, which thankfully was so quiet there was actually room to breathe; then home.

Overall I had an excellent time.

It was an interesting and welcoming hotel architecturally. Mark Plummer confirmed the thermostatic problems were his only real gripe about the con hotel itself, the only other drawback being the lack of decent eateries within walking range.

A few maze-dull rats (i.e. those with no sense of direction) such as Peter W complained about it being a rabbit-warren and not being able to work out where they were when they got out of a lift and had 4 identical corridors down which to disappear. Bit like an old-fashioned Dungeons and Dragons map.

But actually (being a maze-bright rat myself) I found the hotel had a rather interesting layout, with a series of marble staircases up to floor 3, and on that floor was a massive atrium bar with fountains and waterfalls out of which statues of ground-glass fish protruded, all lit by a wide glass roof for natural light. The con committee had thoughtfully put up an official notice "Do Not Feed The Fish", and some wag had replaced "Feed" with "Eat."

But having learnt the layout, Eastercon attendees will have the chance to revise their geography in 2 years' time, as the 2010 Eastercon is going back there. Good choice of hotel in my view. Also, as far as I could tell the staff were friendly and professional (though unavoidably sometimes overworked – but then that's queues at the bar for you).

The more the con went on, the more people who had come just for the ITB get-together actually blended into the rest of the con. Orbital struck me as well-organised, with very few glitches in the Ops processes (that I knew of anyway), and some bright ideas such as putting a small-print list of your programme commitments on the back of your con badge. Another innovation compared with the old days was the fact that the programme ran on time like clockwork.

It also felt more socially cohesive than I had expected. Though there were other obviously different groups and interests, such as the filk CD and T-shirt sales people, the hall costume wearers and so on, there felt to me to be a lot of tolerance of different interests and subgroups.



Rich at the Renaissance (not needing protection)

I didn't get my garage quite as fully cleared out as I had hoped, but the most important thing is that we didn't need to protect Rich from the heathen masses after all.

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Comment on Inca 2



Earl Kemp

Rob, forgive me but it's too damn hot. I'm almost out of it right now...around 120 at the moment.

When I received Inca 2 I eagerly opened it because of the advance hype about how good it is. Remember, out here in the sticks it takes at least one extra day for mail to reach me, even airmail, even special stuff I really want, like Inca 2.

It's really spectacular, you know, with all those gorgeous color photos, even managing to make me look passably good.

I loved your long trip report, incorporating not only Corflu Quire but your trip to the West Coast as well, and various curious airport stops along the way. And those crowds of funny looking, talking Brits you kept running into all over the place.

It really was a great convention. I enjoyed it thoroughly and I reenjoyed it all over again just reading your report. I could even taste some of that food we had at those big table meals.

I'm sort of a sucker for Harry Bell artwork anyway and your addition to the great Bellissimo (did I spell that right from memory?) portfolio was particularly welcome. He is a good drawer...pun intended.

It all makes me look forward to seeing you, and what you will do, with Corflu Silver next year in Las Vegas.

Choke, gasp, wipe away sweat...

That's about all I can do for now, Rob...not nearly enough to counter all the excellent work you put into Inca 2.

Robert Lichtman

Congratulations on finally getting out the second issue of *Inca*! It's been a long time, but definitely worth the wait. Your production values have improved greatly (despite Ted White's complaints) since 1979. One could wish for more D. West artwork of the quality of the wonderful cover on that first issue, but you make up for it with all those color photographs.

I see that some topics of discussion *never* change. In his letter from 1979, Mike Glicksohn refers to how "nobody talks like Ritchie Smith," and even before you published this issue his indecipherable accent was a subject that surfaced on InTheBar. Grooten gratten!

Jessica Salmonson's piece is fairly minor and, to be honest, somewhat of a slog in places—although I agree with her sentiments about the joys of friends visiting from afar. But I did resonate with her comments about the problems mixed groups of vegetarians and non-vegetarians can face when gathered together for a restaurant meal (or, as she notes in reference to a party at Vonda McIntyre's, a potluck dinner). I was a strict vegetarian for years, and I counted myself fortunate that for most of them I lived on The Farm, where (a) everyone was vegetarian and (b) we were all too poor to go out for restaurant meals. After leaving the community it didn't take me long to begin making exceptions to my vegetarianism. The first such as at the 1980 Glen Ellen Fire Department's pancake breakfast fundraiser, where I astonished Paul Williams and his then-wife Sachiko by downing a handful of

pieces of bacon. That was one of the carnivorous treats I missed most during my veggie period, and I couldn't resist.

Always a pleasure to see more of that nice Mr. Bell's wonderful artwork!

On to your trip report... where you first get a checkmark in your discussion of Bell's Law, which "states that men prefer the paper to roll off the top of the roll, while women prefer to pull it from underneath," and in connection with which you express the view that "Continental Airlines' toilets...are stocked by women." This is wrong on a couple of scores, the first of which is that Carol for one prefers "off the top" (she emphatically doesn't). The other is that institutional toilets such as those at Continental have their rolls stocked by both men and women, working late at night on a contract basis for a company that does "facilities maintenance" (and undoubtedly underpaid, but that's another story). When it comes time to change out the toilet paper rolls, they go as fast as they can—taking rolls out of a box or bag or whatever device they're transporting them in and putting them in place with absolutely no attention paid to whether they unfurl from top or bottom. I worked in the same office for eighteen years where the maintenance work was contracted out, and it absolutely varied from day to day which way the toilet paper rolled. On another front, most motel room service is performed by women—and I've never encountered a roll of toilet paper in any room that wasn't installed to unfurl over the top (and usually with the first sheet folded like an arrow).

((Does that mean you are disproving Bell's Law, then? Does sound like it.))

About Art Widner you wrote, "Art is a phenomenon, still totally tuned in to everything at 89. We had conversations about everything from earth shoes via healthy diets to his views on phonetic spelling." It occurs to me that other than Forrest J Ackerman, Art is the oldest living fan. And if you count actual fanac in the present time Art leaves Forry in the dust. Art is still a member of FAPA, and still pubs his ish. (I believe the next oldest is Dave Kyle, who probably these days doesn't care where you sit.)

"The fanzine auction was also fun and instructive. Now I see what interest there is for some historic items, I'll have a serious hunt for goodies for future fan funds." I've been doing the same thing, as you perhaps already know. A sizable portion of the money raised in the one-off fund to bring Bruce Gillespie to the 2005 Corflu and Potlatch cons in S.F. was as a result of the fanzines and other items I donated to the auction I conducted, and I've

brought fanzines to past Corflus that brought decent returns. As the recipient of numerous fanzine collections over the years, I've got plenty of future donations ready to scoop up at short notice and intend to continue doing so. I think it's a good way to recycle fanzines.

Thanks for the embedded egoboo for *Ah! Sweet Laney!*—which, of course, I share with Pat Virzi, who did the really hard work of production and distribution. For me, it was a joyous romp through many favorite fanzines of the late '40s and early '50s followed by a long photocopying session. I also "don't think I can ever remember seeing a better produced fannish publication," but am a bit mystified over your saying that "the choice of fonts and layout transport you straight back to the Fifties." It must be Pat's choice of typeface for the headings that does it—I remember that Terry Carr (among others) had a lettering guide that closely resembled it. But offhand I can't think of any fanzines in the '50s that were published in double-column justified bookface type.

((It was the typefaces I meant, not the production quality – that outshone most professional books of the time, let alone fanzines.))

Graham's Corflu report was a delight. I loved his references to Ted White ("Some grizzled old gray haired skeleton best past his resurrect date, claiming to be Ted White" and "Someone had given the crazy old guy a keyboard and he was riffing off on it like a man possessed, but unfortunately not of any talent") and his description of first entering the consuite: "It was a room full of zombies, perhaps best typified by Lenny Bailes" (who indeed is often found at conventions totally focused on whatever's on the screen of his laptop computer). He wonders, "Who is Gary Mattingly, and why did he avoid us when we visited San Francisco?" Thanks to my advanced age and additionally my unwillingness to sift through countless e-mails dating from the time the Charnocks' visit to the Bay Area was being "set up" (Burbee reference), I don't recall why Gary wasn't part of the festivities. Could it be because he's not InTheBar, or were there other reasons.

Back to you: About Moonstar you write, "How on earth the San Francisco Corflu two years ago didn't find this place and turn it into fannish legend I don't know. Perhaps it had only just opened." On the contrary, it existed as far back as 2003 according to the dates on a bunch of reviews I just checked out. The comments in those reviews, by the way, are fairly mixed. Perhaps Moonstar had gained a bad or questionable reputation from one of the locals that led people not to go there.

It was nice to see photos of the roof of our car and

the roof of our house all in the same fanzine. This doesn't happen very often.

Thanks for your appreciation of our knowledge of the wide variety of San Francisco architecture. It gave us great pleasure to get to show you the full range of it: from those 12-foot wide houses on Manchester Street in Bernal Heights to the opulent mansions, many of them created by world-famous architects such as Bernard Maybeck and Willis Polk, on the outermost reaches of Pacific Avenue. We were also happy to test your resolve at Stella Pastry, turn you on to the dim sum place conveniently located across from Green Apple Books, and to take you lot down the "windiest street."

Of the Marin Headlands in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area you write, "Totally unexpected wild beauty so close to the city; apparently nearly deserted in winter." Well, actually, it was pretty empty there because we went on a weekday. It gets considerably more overrun on the weekend. You also write, about San Quentin federal penitentiary, "This whole area used to be isolated but is now full of development." Indeed, the people who run Marin County (in which the prison is located) are currently fighting plans to expand the Death Row living quarters with a new facility, but over the long run they would like the prison to be completely relocated to Somewhere Else. They have visions of exclusive residential and commercial development on that prime bayfront property.

About Sonoma Grill you write, "This did prove that American cuisine can be really well cooked and presented; the burgers were great." Was there some doubt of that? Other than fast food restaurants, there are plenty of places that do a terrific job on our national cuisine.

I'm glad Coral enjoyed the photographs you took of our extensive Navajo textile collection, but sorry that it doesn't tempt her to accompany you to Las Vegas next year. You write, "Let's just say that the weavings Carol and Terry bought in the late '60s and early '70s have been very sound investments indeed." You have me confused with Terry, who wouldn't buy a Navajo weaving if it came up and bit him in the leg. All but one of the weavings you saw were purchased by me and/or Carol beginning in the early '90s. Perhaps my story of getting that "one on the floor...[that] dates back to 1910" at a yard sale in 1968 caused you to conflate your notes. "I hardly dared walk on it." That made me laugh, because it's been walked on extensively, and even survived living in a communal setting in Tennessee for the entire decade of the '70s. But all that aside, Coral is right that these weavings would cost considerably more these days than they did

when we got them. Even at the time they were good deals. We were lucky to find a place on the way to Yosemite in the early '90s called Paul's Indian Store with a vast stock they'd had for years and they'd never marked up the prices on the ones bought long ago. We bought lots of their older stock that appealed to us. In fact, Carol's favorite was one of them (photo attached).

Hugo's report was a pleasure to read. He writes (or speaks, since you say it was an interview) well and makes some interesting observations.

((I should have explained it was an e-interview, and his replies were written. The email only went from downstairs to upstairs, though.))

I chuckled at his miscalculation about how long it would take to walk to the Hyde concert: "I reckoned on a five-ten minute walk. The problem is, I'm used to *English* corners, not American ones." Blocks here can vary widely, of course, but the ones in places like Anaheim are on the big side.

"It was really interesting being able to see Grauman's Chinese Theater where the Oscars are held." Actually, the Academy Awards were only presented at the Chinese Theater for three years, 1944-46, and they're currently (since 2002) at the Kodak Theater just down Hollywood Blvd. from there. For a more complete listing of all the venues, check out Wikipedia. I agree with Hugo that Grauman's is "quite a magnificent building, despite its location." That area used to be much more upscale back in the day than it's been for decades now, as is the case with much of Hollywood.

"Guacamole. That was another low point." Huh!? This needs some explanation.

Overall, an enjoyable issue. Will there be another next year with your Corflu Silver report?

((See later in this loccol for Hugo's guacamole explanation. And Inca 3 is too early, as you should be able to read this by Corflu Silver. Who knows what will be in Inca 4?))

John Hall

Thank you very much for *Inca*. It's a fine production and I think those who call attention to small details of layout etc. pedants – overly concerned with form at the expense of content.

And what content! Your Corflu trip report would ordinarily have been enough for any fan, but to add to that your account of your visit to SF – it's almost a surfeit. I was struck by the song quotes in

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the dividers. I didn't recognise them all – but I noticed that one of them is Procol Harum from *Grand Hotel*:

A golden dish
With every wish
Where's my continental bride?
We'll continental slip-and-slide

There won't be many people other than myself who'll get that one, chief!

I appreciated Harry's art (Gannetfather of the Month – poor old Ian – what a pity we don't hear from him as we used to do) and laughed as the only appropriate response to Old Man Charnock's own version of the trip to Austin.

((Ian isn't entirely absent – see the end of this lettercolumn!))

But the thought provoking content came in your interview of Hugo about the Animé convention (I take it you cut out the anxious father bits - How much money did you spend? What pills have you swallowed? Did you remember to use a condom?). I so agree about the difference between Animé and its western equivalents in terms of the thrust of stories. It's the reason I still cannot really muster up much interest in the American comic superheroes.

Somewhere I have a video of an Animé called *The Wings Of Honiamisse* (I've probably spelt that wrong). I have not watched it in years, and that's probably because I'd be even more tearful now than I was at the time when I first saw it. The characterisation is so much more human, and I felt that I had so much more in common with the lead even though its basically a fantasy set someplace else in the galaxy. It has a quality that European and American comics have never had for me. (Naturally, I put it down to the Buddhist element in Japanese culture, but then, I would.) Anyhow, bloody good interview with your very talented and perceptive son.

Please let there not be another twenty eight year interval between this issue and the next. I don't know how good I'll be at writing LoC's when I'm knocking ninety!

Hugo Jackson Funnily enough, I think the same about anime taking core elements from Buddhist teachings too. Interesting, that.

Many thanks to John for his kind comments ^_^

Guacamole explanation: it was just quite bad guacamole, served with some tacos I ordered. I'm not too fond of eating things that are green and slimy at the best of times, and this was green and slimy and fibrous and had an outer crust. I thought I might have been given lightly cooked algae scraped from underneath the pier by mistake (this was in Santa Monica, by the way). I did try a bit, and was affirmed in my belief that I shouldn't have done.

The tacos were nice, though.

P.S. And if you really need to know, had I come across the opportunity to use a condom, I would have. As it was, my trip was an incredibly celibate one. Damn it...

Lloyd Penney Wow, issue 2 of Inca. Twenty-eight years onwards? That's before I even got into these fanzine things. Welcome back, to the faned occupation, anyway, and many thanks, and now to see if I can make up a loc that makes some sort of sense.

Heard so many good things that came out of Corflu Quire, I guess your return is just one of those good things. Some say it's bad, but there's nothing wrong with going on to other things that turn your crank, like conrunning...my wife and I are returning to help with the 2009 Worldcon in Montréal after announcing our retirement after 25 years in the convention trenches. The more variety in your fanac, the more knowledgeable you are about fandom in general, IMHO. Pat Virzi showed that when there's one person on the committee, it's much easier to schedule meetings and make important decisions.

And oh geeze, there's Glicksohn again...Mike is still around, trying his best to enjoy his retirement from teaching while trying to improve questionable health. He lives about a ten-minute drive away from us, and we spent some time with him and his wife Sue Manchester a few weeks back. Sue is a very good artist, and every year, as the summer starts to draw to a close, Sue hosts an Art in the Backyard session to enjoy the company of friends, and even sell a piece of art or two. I hope you've been in touch with Mr. Glicksohn lately, and that you will send him a paper copy of this fine fanzine, for he won't touch anything e- or .pdfed.

The WAHF list is full of people who I've never heard of, or who I have heard of, but haven't seen in a fanzine in some time, or who have passed away, or even those who are still around, or as the

habit goes now, have returned to once more be a member of the happy asylum.

I've always liked Harry Bell's work, and when Mr. Glicksohn has his annual get-together, he usually uses Harry's shortage of scotch cartoon.



Anaheim has lots of our kind of conventions, I guess...the convention centre is probably the only place that could house a 40,000 person anime convention. When we got to Anaheim a few days early before the Worldcon in 2006, the hotel we were in had a gigantic ochre yellow Pikachu hanging between the escalators. Alas, it was not for us, but for the World Pokémon Gaming Championships, folding up as Worldcon was getting ready to move in.

Yvonne and I are planning to go to our first and probably only out-of-town Corflu, and it will be in Las Vegas this coming spring. We are going to make a vacation out of it, and see some of the flashy sights of LV before settling down for a fun convention.

((Yaaay! See you there. With luck you will be given a copy of this fanzine.))

Hugo would probably like Anime North in Toronto. I helped the initial organizers pin down the committee structure, told them to start small so that failure would have less of an impact, and should you grow, grow slowly. They listened, and now they are an annual 15,000 person event held in a mall convention centre and three hotels out by the airport strip. I like to think I am the godfather of the event, and a good portion of local fandom goes out to help, especially in the registration area. We've helped out in the past, too, but usually the event takes place the same time as the aforementioned Glicksohn annual get-together. If the weekend were different, we'd be working their cash office, with lots there to do, as you might imagine.

Well, how's that? I hope you are planning a local, and if you are foolish enough to include this little missive, go right ahead, and many thanks. I look

forward to issue 3, hopefully not 28 years in the future. See you then.

Mark Plummer

I'm having something of a Life on Mars experience right now. I'm sure that -- pace your comment on Mike Glicksohn's letter -- nobody actually gets 63 fanzines in two weeks any more (I know I certainly don't) but in the last few weeks I have received fanzines from John Hall, Peter Weston and you. Am I mad, in a coma or back in time? Whatever the explanation, I feel sure it means that it's now the turn of my cohort to fall from dominance (tm Joseph Nicholas), crushed beneath the born-again enthusiasm of the seventies revenants. What a way to go.

I can't remember whether I told you this in Austin, but I'm quite a *Maya* fan, albeit from an after-the-event perspective. I got a copy of #14 at the 1996 Eastercon as part of a bundle of recycled fanzines passed on by Greg Pickersgill and subsequently we've been able to pick up all of your issues from one place or another, and a couple of the Ian Maule incarnation too. In fact, I read through all of them again in the days just before Corflu this year. Aside from the stellar productions values -- by the standards of their own, or any, era -- I was impressed by the sense of congenial fannishness which remained comprehensible to the relatively uninitiated. Not that I'd necessarily have put it that way -- but you did, in the 'Incantations' editorial of *Inca 1* in July 1979, and your words sum up the sentiment quite neatly so I'll toss them back at you.

From which you'll deduce that we have a copy of *Inca 1* too, again acquired after the event and so you're entirely correct if you're thinking you don't remember us from your mailing list back then. I was fifteen in 1979 and Claire was nine; and we were both still some half-dozen or so years away from any kind of fannish contact. Our eventual appearance on the fan scene does, in fact, seem to roughly correspond with the beginning of your own hiatus, although I trust the two incidents are unrelated.

From a trivia standpoint, I'll add that a pencil annotation on the top right-hand corner of the cover suggests that the particular *Inca 1* that now resides in our collection went originally to Dave Piper. Coincidentally, we did buy at least part of Dave's fanzine collection from his widow shortly after his death in 2002, but I don't recall the *Inca* as being amongst that consignment which suggests it must have travelled on from Dave at some point before then, passing through unknown hands before presumably coming our way via a small

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terraced house in Haverfordwest. I also note a further pencil annotation implying that at some stage it was offered for sale at 25p. Less than half cover price and a real bargain, I'm sure.

It was I think a sound move to put out 'The Return of the Native' as *Inca 2*, such that I'll even forgive you for invoking Hardy's horrible, horrible novel that so vexed either my 'O' or 'A' level English years (I forget which now). The continuity with your last publishing incarnation seems appropriate for something that's born out of Corflu, and *Inca 2* does successfully bridge the years, I think. I note how many familiar names appear in both your WAHF column and Jessica Salmonson's article about a Seattle social whirl that's twenty-seven years gone.

I could probably say all sorts of things about the Corflu coverage, both your own outré flight of fancy and Graham's more linear portrayal of events, although it's more in the order of points of detail. I can, for instance, clear up the mystery of what happened to Lilian Edwards in the aftermath Sunday evening County Line trip. She travelled back to the hotel with us – well, technically with Tom Becker and Spike whose car it was, but with all of us blissfully ignorant of the search party that was still combing the restaurant for her.

But mostly I guess I just want to agree with your assessment of Corflu as an 'overwhelming and wonderful experience'. Technically, the first Corflu I attended was the one in Leeds in 1998, but I think that was something of a special case: presumably because it was a mostly British convention albeit with a substantial influx of Americans, it didn't feel significantly different from a number of other conventions I was attending in the same time-frame. Thus I tend to count my own involvement with Corflu as dating from 2002 in Annapolis. It was also my first time in America and thus the trip was overflowing with exotica, but I still came away with a strong sense that here was a different kind of convention and a difference that couldn't be simply put down to a limitless supply of free beer in the bathroom (I still can't get my head around that one) and a bizarre insistence on driving on the wrong side of the road. We have at least intended to attend every one since although we didn't go in 2004 due to what we thought was an imminent house move or in 2006 due to a late confirmation of venue which came too late for us to arrange time off work. And in the meantime I just live with the carbon impact of my hobby.

Chris Garcia

OK, I'm late. I know, I

know, I know. I'm sorry. I've actually started to LoC more than once and pulled up a few times not sure how to properly LoC such a fine piece of work. It's never easy, you know, LoCing. I'm amazed at the letterhacks out there who manage to do it and do it well so often. I'm not on that level, but I'll try and see what I've got for *Inca 2*.

Let's start at the very beginning, with the cover. Corflu craziness and fun in a photo collage. I love it. That photo of Burns, Moorcock, Earl Kemp and Peter Weston makes me think that one of those things was not like the other (and it's either Kemp, the only American, or Weston the only one not currently living in the US. Or maybe it's Moorcock as I don't think any of the others have ever had such a fine beard!) Photos are important, I keep telling people that. The only way we'll be able to make the next few generations of fans understand what was going on is by doing photos of everything and finding a way to present them. I think that Rusty Hevelin's photo DUFF report from the 1970s was the best idea and I'm hoping that we'll see someone else do something similar again. It's much easier now with all the technology we can bring to play.

That's a fine postcard ((by Bob Shaw)). You don't see many like that anymore.

28 years is a long time. Think of it like this: when the first issue of *Inca* was new, I was 4. I couldn't have read *Inca* if I'd wanted to! Jimmy Carter was in the White House, Vince Carter was playing outfield for the Cardinals and Nell Carter was a hit on Broadway. That may have been far too American for a comment to a British zine. These things happen.

Letters from so long ago. When some of the zines I've read that took long breaks do that, invariably there'll be one or two from long-gone fans. I saw one a few weeks ago with an LoC from Harry Warner and another from Walt Willis. It's like voices from beyond the grave, it is.

Love the Bell Art. The Kamikaze one is my fave, but I can't help but argue that reality is in fact formed by a scotch deficiency. I'm often far too real when not plied with Scotch (or Bourbon, take your pick).

It was excellent to get to meet ya at Corflu. I had a blast (and I wrote a lot about it in *The Drink Tank*, probably somewhere around issue 125 or so). It was one of those cons that you just can't stop thinking about. Between the White-Charnock arm wrestling to the fine ditty that Graham busted on me, to the wonderful food (and those giant ribs at the BBQ place) to the general enjoyment of the entire crowd. I can't say enough about how

wonderful it was. And I've still got the shirt with the cows driving. Nothing better than Cows motoring about!

Graham's writing always makes me smile. I have taken heed, Mr. Charnock, and am fully aware than none of my thoughts are of interest to anyone but myself. That doesn't mean I should throw them at the world so much undercooked spaghetti, but it does mean I shouldn't expect anyone to care. That's the great part about being me: you can be fully aware of the non-consequential nature of your work and still be totally happy just doing it! There is no question that Graham's ditty was the highlight of the con for me. Just too damn funny!

If I had known y'all were gonna be out in SF, I'd have invited you down to visit the Computer History Museum! We're just a bit down the road from San Fran!

I've never been to an AnimeExpo, but it was only a few days later that we had the Worldcon in that very same building that I got to know very well. I'm not much of an Anime guy, though I did work the first big US anime convention and was blown away by how much creativity exists in that fandom. While we have our zines, they have costumes and fan videos. We've got different traditions, but we're the same at heart: people who love stuff going places to hang out with people and do things. In the end, we're all the same... just don't tell too many people that because I'm pretty sure that's the kinda thing that'd get me booted out of Fanzine Fandom!

((But see the end of my Orbital conrep for more of the same view.))

John Purcell

It has been quite a while since I downloaded and printed out *Inca #2*, but I really want to tell you how lovely a zine this is, and to welcome you back to the wide, wonderful world of fanzine pubbing. Twenty-eight years since the first issue isn't too bad.

You are quite right at the energizing effect of Corflu. I had no idea that Corflu Quire would have such repercussions; many fans have credited it with giving them new life and encouragement in pubbing again. Look at what it has done to the eminent Peter Weston. His *Prolapse* has been coming out quite regularly ever since, has grown substantially in page count and content, and as a result has assumed a prominent place in the fanzine world nowadays.

But back to your zine. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and squinting at the pictures. Yes, indeed, it certainly appears that a good time was had by all. Corflu really was a splendid little con, and I am glad I finally had the chance to meet you. Funny thing, we really didn't get much of a chance to natter with each other, but we can catch up next year in Vegas. Your trip report was enjoyable, especially the part where you and Graham Charnock hooked up with Mark Plummer, Claire Brialey, and the eminent Peter Weston in Houston's airport for the short – but lengthy – puddle jump up to Austin.

Speaking of Graham Charnock, he's a rather cranky old phart phan, isn't he? *((You noticed!!))* His Corflu report, though entertaining, is replete with all sorts of little asides, bizarre conclusions, and innuendos. It certainly makes me wonder which con *he* was attending. But that's Graham's style. His report was fun because of all the odd things he said. Thank you, Graham – I guess.

So let's hope the next *Inca* doesn't take another 28 years before it raises its head. You should aim for cutting that gap down by 75%, which means the third issue will come out in 2014. That's not bad...

((I think I've done better. Is 9 months OK?))

Take care, and thank you again for the zine. See you in Vegas!

Bruce Townley

Thanks very much for sending *Inca 2*, which came in yesterday's mail. It's a very nice, good looking production. Thanks also for the kind words you said about me and your obviously very enjoyable visit to the Bay Area. Makes me feel kind of bad that I have a quibble. Those fold-down racks on the fronts of San Francisco's buses are for carrying bicycles *only*. Don't think you can even fit a wheelchair in there. Most SF buses do have provisions for boarding wheelchairs, involving a platform lift that extends from the front entrance. Also some of the seats fold up to provide space for wheelchair riders. It's actually a pretty impressive operation.

((That's not a quibble, Bruce; that's a clarification.))

Murray Moore

I am humbled by your energy. I managed four pages describing a two-week visit to London and the Eastercon in Chester; you publish 54 pages describing Corflu Quire, your adventure in

California, and more.

((Kind of you to see me as energetic. I just tended to scribble down things that happened during the trip. I did intend to make it a trip report, though. But I myself wrote only 25 pages of lastish, and those contained 25 photos – so make that about 20 pages..... Oh all right then, I did babble on a bit.))

Ian Williams

Logged on to eFanzines a few hours ago, several months after my bookmarks disappeared and I had to rebuild them from scratch. I tended to use it previously mainly for Earl Kemp who produces such wonderful stuff and I've three to catch up on. Needless to say I spotted *Inca* and read it and this is a feeble excuse for a loc, partly because I'm crap and partly because it's not the sort of thing that has many comment hooks unless you were actually involved. Needless to say, yours and Graham's pieces were all enjoyable and well-written.

Things that did catch my attention.

Harry has a new partner. Well, it's new to me.

((Pat's a lovely person – been around for nearly 3 years now.))

How come there were no decent photos of you? Come on, we've all aged but I'm sure you're as good looking as ever and don't, unlike me, resemble a small grey-haired beer (or in my case more appropriately wine) barrel.

*((There was a photo of me, on page 45, taken by Robert Lichtman. But if you are saying it wasn't a **decent** photo, then I see what you mean. My right shoulder was way up – I've been doing my own exercises to put it back to where it should be, ever since.))*

Somebody in your family, and I'm guessing it wasn't you, was (and may still be) a fan of Georgette Heyer. Venetia, Dulcie? And I wouldn't be surprised if Hugo was the name of one of her (Heyer's, not Coral's) heroes. I'm a librarian, you can't sneak these things past me.

((Coral has an ancient history of reading lots of Heyer... so you may be right.))

Being mildly familiar with anime/manga, I found Hugo's piece (well, yours with him I suppose) interesting. The con, however, sounds like hell. I particularly like Osamu Tezuka (some of his more adult material is recently being reprinted (the Buddha series and other single pieces) by Vertical

which you might find interesting as (a vile enemy of Scientology!) shrink. Also Hayao Miyazaki and Hiroku Murakami. Actually Murakami is a novelist working in the area of magical realism and he is brilliant, weird, wonderful, and unputdownable. My favourite non-genre author. I even prefer him to Iain Banks (as opposed to Iain M Banks who writes skiffy rubbish) whose stuff I love -The Crow Road is one of my favourite books ever, along with Shogun, The Grapes of Wrath, and Another Country.

((Oooh goody, another mention of science fiction – it's been a little sparse in this fanzine so far!))

WAHF: Neville J. Angove, Dave Haren.

Email addresses of main correspondents:

((Deliberately typed without @ in the middle, so they can't be spotted by botnets. Maybe trying to hide one's email address is a losing battle anyway, but I support anyone who wants to preserve what remaining privacy they have....))

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