

"This zine hails from that Peter Pan of fandom" – Keith Walker, *Fanzine Fanatique*



"The lady wants to know what all this has to do with science fiction"

We celebrate the 50th anniversary year of 'Kettering 57' and the first 'St Fantony' ceremony
– With the usual apologies to 'Giles'

INSIDE: 'The Convention Time Forgot,' by Tony Keen: 'St Fantony – A Grand Fannish Jape?': 'The Real New Wave' by Dick Ellingsworth: 'My time in The Pen' by Bruce Burn: **PLUS** Aldiss, Harrison, & more.



PROLAPSE

This is *Prolapse* 9, just managing to come in under the wire for the 50th anniversary year of Kettering '57 and the birth of St Fantony, and published by Peter Weston at 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS. I'm hoping this issue may change some opinions but whether or not it does I'd love you to e-mail a LoC to me at pr.weston@btinternet.com. This remains a 'Paper First' fanzine because I like it that way, but I'll also send out a pdf on request and the issue will go onto *eFanzines* a month after copies have been posted out. *Prolapse* zips up and down the time-stream to cover the many and varied aspects of British SF fan-history. Chief Researcher; Greg Pickersgill. Assistant Deputy Researcher (1st class); Mark Plummer.

"Peter seems to be so excited about his new toy, and the excitement is infectious" – Randy Byers, *Banana Wings* 31

Keen types will recall that last time I went on a bit about Walt Willis' collected fan-writing (in *Warhoon* 28, and I hope you've bought your copy by now) and James White's THE WHITE PAPERS, also from NESFA. But, I said, 'Bob Shaw has fared less well in having his fan-material collected into permanent form,' and I then suggested that NESFA could usefully do a companion volume to THE WHITE PAPERS with the best of Bob's fan-writings and short stories. No sooner had the issue hit the door-mat down in Croydon than I received this communication from Mark Plummer, in which suggestions of a misuse of advanced technology along with the paradoxes of intra-Universe manipulation are mingled with just the merest sniff of editorial criticism. I may have to reconsider that promotion;

"You're certainly correct that Bob Shaw is overdue for collection of his fan-writing in some more permanent form. There's definitely a nice little volume to be constructed out of – off the top of my head – 'The Bermondsey Triangle Mystery' and 'The Return of the Backyard Spaceship' (from *Maya*); 'Up the Conjunction' (from *Drilkjis*); the *Seacon*'84 speech 'Ten Years, but not Decayed'; plus of course some of the *Hyphen* stuff like 'Pyrotechnica' (#12) and 'The Man in the Grey Flannel Toga' (#24). Yes, somebody could easily put together a good collection out of that lot and call it... oh, I don't know, MESSAGES FOUND IN AN OXYGEN BOTTLE, maybe? Yeah, that's got a ring to it. I'm sure we could talk NESFA into doing it, and it's only a shame that they missed the opportunity to publish such a collection as a dinky little back-to-back Ace Double-style hardback along with a similar Terry Carr collection in 1986 when Terry was Fan Guest of Honour at the Atlanta Worldcon and Bob was Toastmaster.

"But, you know, now that I've had this great original idea – all on my own – it seems to me that it's just too good to let it lapse into regrets and might-have-beens. So I'll print out a copy of this e-mail and send it together with a copy of *Prolapse* (the weight of your recommendation could make all the difference) back to 1985 in a time capsule, in the hope that it will plant this great idea in the mind of some appropriate NESFAn so that they can publish in time for *Confederation*. They're a good bunch at NESFA, and they've done some good fannish volumes. They did that autobiography a few years ago, something about a bloke keeping his eye on the stars, wasn't it? Anyway we'll see what happens. You keep your eye on the NESFA catalogue to see if my idea – well, OK, *our* idea, I'm prepared to give you some credit – actually came into being.

"Which is a long-winded way of saying NESFA have indeed done a hardback collection of Bob Shaw's fan-writing and it's apparently still available from them for what seems a very reasonable \$15, the same as the post-convention price in 1986. People in the UK can also get it from The Fantasy Centre bookshop* and they also stock THE WHITE PAPERS, although not *Warhoon* #28 or that book about the bloke who got a star in his eye. (Tangentially here, like you I'm really quite astonished that *Wrhn* #28 is still available. I was amazed when I bought my copy twelve years ago, because it was really not anything I thought I'd ever *see*, let alone be able to buy. Do you know how many copies were produced? Oh, minor point, but while it carries a 1978 date, I think it wasn't actually published until 1980 as supported by the fact that it was Hugo short-listed in 1981. Perhaps not cosmically significant, I know, but you're running a journal of fan-historical record here.)

"Now, I know you can come back to me and point out that MESSAGES FOUND IN AN OXYGEN BOTTLE isn't entirely the kind of volume you were suggesting in that it doesn't include both short fiction and fan writing, so I should make clear that I think that a Bob Shaw collection modelled on THE WHITE PAPERS would still be a good thing, because the fan writing's good but so's the fiction and Bob's books have pretty much all dropped out of print in the last few years. I don't know, these days it's easy to forget just how many novels and collections he wrote – we have twenty-six and that's not all of them, although now that you've got me curious and I've started looking into his bibliography I see we have separate editions of GROUND ZERO MAN and THE PEACE MACHINE, and of VERTIGO and TERMINAL VELOCITY, and having perused the shelves and contemplated shedding one of each pair as they're basically re-titlings I've decided to keep them all because there are textual variations and, well, you never know, do you? I'm sure people like Rog Peyton – from whom I know I bought many of these books – welcomes this attitude as it helps keep him in cheese on toast."

To which I replied to Mark, "Hmm, funny thing, but I now seem to have a book on my shelf titled MESSAGES FOUND IN AN OXYGEN BOTTLE which I'm sure wasn't there last week, so your ploy must indeed have worked. I did actually check with Rob Jackson and Dave Langford to see if any Bob Shaw collections had appeared in the years while I hadn't been taking much notice, but both of them blew it. I should have just asked you."

And he said, "OK, so that's a result then: by our collective efforts we've managed to bring a Bob Shaw fan-writing collection into being twenty-one years ago. And I bet they don't even acknowledge our role. The world will never know..."

On a slightly more serious note I've since heard from Bob's son, Ian Shaw, who is administering the estate and who confirms his desire to get his father's work back into print. This includes Bob's fan-writings so long as people have the courtesy to ask him before they consider any reprint – as we shall be doing for future issues of *Prolapse*.

*Fantasy Centre bookshop: <http://www.fantasycentre.demon.co.uk/booklists/nesfa.html>

In search of a Unified Grand Theory of British Fandom

This issue of *Prolapse* has been the hardest one yet to put together; partly, it's true, because I'd cleverly manoeuvred myself into having to do a long article on 'St Fantony' and since I always find it difficult to begin an original piece of writing I kept putting-off the evil moment with the excuse that it needed more research. The arrival of the companion 'Kettering' essay from sensible, reliable Tony Keen finally kick-started me into some sort of motion, and once I began to put words onto paper I experienced what can only be described as a moment of epiphany, a sort of burst of cosmic revelation, after which British fan-history took on an entirely new perspective in my mind.

As Kari Maund wrote in #6, "The historian is left looking at all these different witness statements and trying to find a line – or series of lines – through them from which to construct an improved understanding of what happened and how and why." And suddenly, I saw exactly such a 'line' which explained the whole story of British fandom throughout the fifties. Quite simply, it's a matter of rivalry between the London fans and everyone else.

Now, this might not seem a terribly new idea because the 'Bloody Provincials' clash between London & Manchester around 1953/54 is well documented, but some comments from Peter Mabey opened my eyes to a realisation that this rivalry went on long after *Supermancon*. My theory is that it influenced just about every fannish event for the rest of the decade.

The first two articles in this issue explore this contention as it applies to Kettering '57 and the creation of The Order of St Fantony, but there's much more to it than that. Seen in this light even the London worldcon in 1957 was not exactly the result of a united fandom, because renewed squabbling had broken out when Northerner committee-members suspected (rightly) that they were being side-lined over programme decisions and choice of hotel.

I think the underlying story is that throughout the fifties London fandom gradually lost its former position of dominance, and they resented it. This was the group that in 1951 & 1952 could attract nearly 200 people to conventions, and post-war the national con had *always* been in London – until 1954, when it went out to the regions with *Supermancon*, and it didn't come back. Londoners tried, and failed, to regain the Eastercon in 1955 but it went to Kettering instead, and I'm sure there must have been some forgotten politics behind that decision. They bounced back, and Vince & Joy Clarke ran the con the following year – but still in Kettering. Then as we show, the London Circle conspicuously failed to support the impromptu 1957 event, and the same thing happened with both the 1958 & 1959 Eastercons, all run entirely by 'provincials' with minimal participation by Londoners.

The London Circle had been by far the strongest fan-group in the country until Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Cheltenham fans formed their own local clubs. These rapidly became more active than the LC, meeting regularly, attracting new members with their projects and in two cases acquiring their own club-rooms. The same thing took place with the fanzines – by the mid-fifties almost all of the top titles were being produced outside the London area. In fact, I suspect the whole decade shows the gradual decline of the LC in terms of both numbers and activity, and it may well be that the much-discussed 'crisis' in British con-attendance was actually due almost entirely to the slow collapse of fandom in the capital.

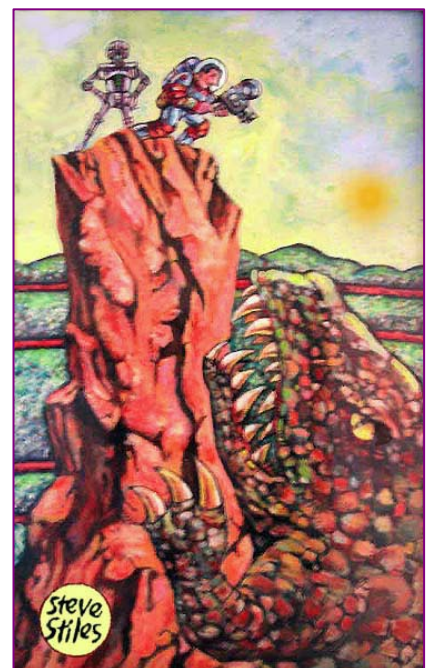
Look at the BSFA itself – it's very largely the creation of regional fandom. The founding meeting in 1958 was chaired by Dave Newman (Liverpool) and out of the thirty-seven people present only seven were Londoners, and of those only two – Ted Tubb and Bobbie Wild – were of any long-standing in the London Circle. Of the original committee, four of the five members were appointed from the regions with Ted Tubb again being the honourable exception (as editor).

I've been reading fanzines of the period which complain of the 'sameness' and dullness of the 'Globe' meetings in the second half of the decade. Even Vince Clarke noted in *Smoke #1*, "the old, independent London Circle had wilted badly... the old group spirit went away and died somewhere." And I think it must have been in reaction to this feeling – and perhaps in subconscious reaction to the way in which the rest of the country now perceived the Londoners (newcomer Ella Parker said that "rightly or wrongly the LC has been regarded as the 'Black Sheep' of fandom") – that the LC made a conscious attempt to pull itself together.

As Ken Bulmer wrote in *Vector #3*, "History was made at the Globe Tavern on the Thursday before Christmas, 1958. The world-famous 'London Circle', renowned for its lack of organisation and complete anarchy, became an organised body with cash subscription, positive purposes and a new spirit of cohesion sadly lacking in recent months." Ted Tubb became chairman, and George Locke noted in *Smoke #2*; "The rejuvenated London Circle started looking for suitable activities to sustain their interest" which led directly to the Cheltenham 'pilgrimage' at Whitsun, 1959 (described in *Prolapse #7*), the 'Conversazione' (or Symposium) in October, and their offer to run the 1960 Eastercon in London.

ince had also said, "some radical changes were needed to infuse new life into it my own solution, after seeing the Liverpool club-room last summer, was that a club-room was needed in London." Similarly, Ken Bulmer had cast envious eyes on the Cheltenham rooms when he visited them during the 'pilgrimage' and as a result at least one determined effort was made to find a comparable site for London. But before they could get that far the group imploded in a spectacularly nasty bout of in-fighting immediately after the 'Conversazione'.

It was disbanded on 16th October, an event which the Chief Researcher and I have only recently begun to understand through reporting in a minor fanzine titled *Northlight*. It's petty, dispiriting stuff, involving something like "who authorised £2.00 to be spent on hot-dogs?" but the underlying story is one of personality clashes and changes which had been happening, unrecognised, in the London Circle itself. Some members – Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, Vince Clarke, Charlie Duncombe and others – had been around since the 'forties, and after the LC break-up several of them left for good, but for some time newer fans had been quietly appearing in the London area.



Problems with hard-of-hearing time-travelling robot: "I said sixty years, not sixty eons".

These new faces were people like Ella Parker, George Locke, Jim Groves, Ivor Mayne and Mike Moorcock, and it's no coincidence that they formed a successor club – the SF Club of London (SFCoL) the week after the LC break-up. They had few memories of London's previous glories and no axe to grind, so they were able to re-build on a new base. Within a further six months or so the remaining centre of 'old' London fandom – the Inchmery group – would also dissolve in tears and heartbreak, and this, in my opinion, finally put paid to that old rivalry between North and South.

Well, that's the outline of my theory, anyway, and it's by fortunate coincidence that the two remaining articles in this issue are set in that transition period. In 'The Real New Wave' Dick Ellingsworth discusses his own induction into London fandom and observes all the upsets from a position as a relatively uncommitted newcomer; in a future article I hope he will go on to cover the emergence of the short-lived but influential grouping of young fans known as the 'Kingdon Road set'. And Bruce Burn's episode of the 'Forgotten Fans' feature covers Ella Parker – a woman who entered fandom in 1958 but who swiftly became the queen-bee around which London affairs revolved. Ella had some faults – and Bruce lists them – but she salvaged the 1960 Eastercon and started the shift of emphasis of British fandom back towards the capital, while maintaining reasonably cordial relations with fans elsewhere in the country. The problem that British fandom would now face was no longer a geographical split but a far more deadly 'generation gap' – but we'll discuss that some other time.

More about the 'Pilgrimage'

In #7 I ran a feature which pulled-together four accounts of the Cheltenham 'pilgrimage' in an attempt to give an all-round view of this unique event. Last issue I mentioned that a further report by Archie Mercer had come to light, and now I have to admit that due to sloppy research work (mine, not Greg's) we missed yet another account, this one by Sandra Hall and Bobbie Wild, which appeared in *Orion 23* – a fairly obvious place to look. Once this current issue is out of the way I'm very tempted to re-make the entire feature, adding all the extra material, and while I can't do anything about the printed copies I can put it into the on-line version of *Prolapse #7*. So give me a week or two and then take a look if you're interested.



Above; Ken Bulmer's battle-gear. Photo by Andy Sawyer). Below: Ina Shorrock & PW at *Novacon-37*, Photo by Ian Whates.



And another thing; in his letter in the 'Melting Pot' this time Andy Sawyer mentioned some helmets and weaponry he was given by Ken Bulmer's son, Larry, which had been stored in his garage for many years. Naturally I shot up to Liverpool the following week, brought them back for examination, and put them on show at *Novacon* a few weeks ago. Miraculously the shield at least appears to be the very same one Ken Bulmer described making back in 1959. I know this because on the rear it has a little sackcloth pocket for Ken's cigarettes and a cardboard enclosure to hold an old penny, marked 'F.D.I.D' (for damsels in distress'), just as he described in #7. As additional proof, that emblem of Ken's was drawn and described by George Locke in *Smoke #1* (there's a clearer image on Page 29).

I'm not sure about the provenance of rest of the gear – two helmets, a short sword, and long sword in scabbard, but the helmets look very much like those on a picture I have from the 1969 'joust' at Oxford. They've been cleverly made from hardboard, formed and bolted together (Gerry Webb told me that Ken used to soak the hardboard in his bath for a few days before bending it into shape), with draw-down visors and face-plates of wire mesh. But they're very uncomfortable to wear despite a certain amount of foam-rubber and old carpet 'padding' inside, and I'd hate to intercept a blow from someone like Ted Tubb or Brian Burgess, even if only with a wooden sword! From the numerous cuts and dents both helmets and shield have clearly taken part in an epic battle at some time or other!

There's just space to record my triumph at *Novacon* – yes, by wearing one of Ina's hand-made beanies (from *Loncon II*, 1965) I may finally have become a trufan at last! Ina only ever made the two, but she brought them to the con this year and they were worn by some of the most unlikely people (yes, pictures were taken). And I won a *Nova* Award for *Prolapse* – genuinely unexpected, but very welcome, and for which I give grateful thanks to all who voted.

Lastly, a special note from James Bacon; to show his commitment to the continuity of British fandom, he will generously be giving FREE membership to *LXcon* in 2009 for anyone who first attended a convention in 1965 or before. See their web-site for details.

LOOKING BACKWARD:

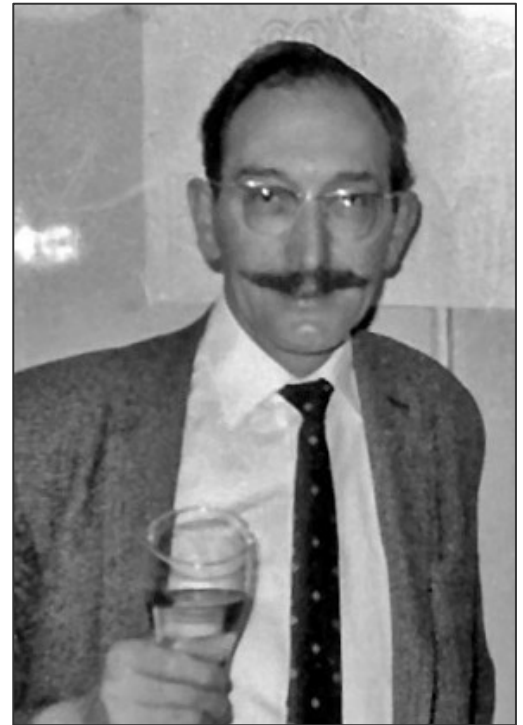
The next issue should finally see our feature on the 1994 *MiSdemeanour* convention at Burnham-on-Sea, with reporting by Ann Green, Catherine Pickersgill, Paul Vincent and Martin Tudor, along with Dan Morgan's much-postponed 'The Invisible Fan'. There'll be another in the 'Forgotten Fans' series, this time with Jim Linwood covering Archie Mercer, and hopefully Ken Slater's 'House of Horrors'. For the future I have a wonderfully-detailed article from George Locke on the second-hand SF bookshops of London, backed up with additional material from Stan Nicholls and others, and 'The Wandering Ghu', a long piece from Bruce Burn, mostly never before published, giving his eye-witness account of what it was like to arrive in Britain from New Zealand in 1960 and make a first visit to Ella Parker's 'Pen' and to the legendary 'Globe'. Epic stuff!



This all seems a long time ago now but in my day we talked about ‘the con’, simple as that. Oh, properly they might have been titled ‘The British Science Fiction Association Conventions’ but we gave them familiar names like ‘*Brumcon*’ and ‘*Yarcon*’ and as far as we were concerned they’d been going since the 14th Century – well, pretty far back, anyway – because as I’ve said before, we were the fannish generation without a past. So when dear old Ken Bulmer produced his famous chronology in 1970 (though he didn’t call it anything so posh) we took it as gospel – after all, those ‘*Cytricons*’ seemed incredibly remote and who could ever check up on anything that long ago? But thanks to the *Prolapse* time machine Tony Keen has been able to go back and take a look and it turns out Ken got it just a tiny bit wrong...* (pw)

Kettering ’57 –the convention that time forgot: (or at least Ken Bulmer did)

By Tony Keen



Ken as Guest of Honour at *Thirdmancon*, Buxton, 1968.
Photo; Stan Nicholls

The story begins, as such stories often do, in a pub. Though actually, this particular meeting in a pub is chronologically almost at the end of our story. Never mind, that’s the way it needs to be told.

In this particular pub, The Angel in St Giles, London, back in early 2002, was Pat McMurray, then keeper of the Memory Hole Annexe, a repository of documentation and ephemera relating to conventions. He announced that he was completely unable to find any evidence that the 1957 Eastercon had ever taken place. There were no publications, badges, or anything.

Backtrack a bit. In 1970, as described in *WITH STARS IN MY EYES* (p. 196), Peter Weston wanted to know how many British National SF Conventions there had previously been, in order to bolster his attempts to persuade reluctant hoteliers that there was no risk involved in the 1971 Eastercon he was trying to organise. He enlisted the aid of the late Ken Bulmer, who produced a list of twenty-one, beginning with *Whitcon* in 1948, up to *Scicon*’70. Peter’s convention duly became *Eastercon 22*. Ken’s list had three cons in Kettering, *Cytricon I, II and III*, in 1955, 1956 and 1958. It included no Eastercon for 1957 (it also left out the conventions before and during the Second World War, but that’s not important for our story).

In 1989, Rob Hansen revised the list for the *Contrivance* programme book. To quote:

‘Previous convention lists have not shown a national convention in 1957. Recent research has, however, revealed that one took place, which necessitates a certain amount of renumbering. Fortunately, a case can be made for not counting *Festiventon*, in 1951, as a national convention. It was planned as an international convention, to tie in with the Festival of Britain ... With these adjustments, the 1971 convention can still be called *Eastercon 22*, and *Contrivance* remains the 40th British National Science Fiction Convention.’

(Personally, I don’t think the case for discounting *Festiventon* is that strong – indeed, the 1990 list restored it to the sequence – but re-numbering the conventions since 1971 is a worse prospect. At least *Festiventon* is still on the list that appears in every Eastercon souvenir book, albeit unnumbered.)

So, the record now accepts that there were *four* Kettering cons, *Cytricons I-IV*, from 1955-1958.

* I’d like to thank Tony for generously going along with my ‘rivalry’ theory of British fandom in the fifties, though the evidence here does indeed seem to give it some support.



Above; Eric Bentcliffe & Terry Jeeves outside the George Hotel, 1958. (Photo by Terry Jeeves)
Below, Residents' lounge and 'Devil's Kitchen', from hotel brochure of the time. (From Greg Pickersgill)



ONE OF THE FOUR LOUNGES

GEORGE HOTEL

KETTERING Northants
A.A. & R.A.C. APPOINTED TELEPHONE 2705

THE GEORGE HOTEL, which has been standing in Kettering since mediaeval days, occupies a central and prominent position in the town and in the town's history.

It has been brought up recently to a very high standard of comfort and service and enjoys a reputation second to none throughout the East Midlands.

A magnificent Coronation Wing of new bedrooms and other rooms brought up to the same standard were recently constructed and are considered by travellers to be the finest bedrooms constructed in the United Kingdom since the war, apart from some of the luxury hotels in London. Considering the comfort and convenience provided, they are offered at very low rates to the travelling public.

Nothing has been spared for the comfort and convenience of guests.

Flash forward once again to the pub in 2002. Pat is telling us that this convention that Rob restored to the annals left no actual trace. Was it possible that it had indeed never happened? This being a pub, we knew what we had to do (and I regret to say this may have been my idea). We had to bid to run the Eastercon *in 1957*. And so we did, sort of. In 2002 flyers were printed up for *Helicon-2* in Jersey and left around the bidding session (opposite), though we chickened out of actually presenting the bid. A few T-shirts were made with the slogan "Kettering in '57! ... because somebody's got to!" Ina Shorrock was amused, and pointed out that they already had, and she'd been there. (Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer's side of this account appeared in *Banana Wings* 17 [May 2002], p. 37, together with the flyer, on facing page.)

There I thought my part in this story had ended. Then, in 2004, Greg Pickersgill posted to the *Wegenheim* e-list, asking if anyone could provide him with a programme book for the 1957 *Cytricon*. I replied and said I thought it unlikely, because of the conversation I'd had with Pat. At this point, Kettering in 1957 suddenly stopped being a bit of a joke; instead it became a fan-history project that I was interested in looking into. The rest of this article is the culmination of those researches. It's taken longer than I planned (I had meant to have something for the 2005 Worldcon), and it's more of a preliminary report than I had hoped it would be, but time has been against me. Both I and Peter Weston feel that it is important that the commemoration should come out in the fiftieth anniversary year.

The 1955 and 1956 national conventions had both taken place in the George Hotel in Kettering, which had proved a popular venue. But in 1957 London would be hosting the Worldcon, which tended to overshadow everything else. Vinç Clarke's *Science Fantasy News* was on hiatus from 1955 (#14) to 1958 (#15), so provides no information about 1957. However, in the late Ron Bennett's *Contact* # 1 (October 1956), we find the following:

'No further news has been forthcoming on the London Convention next year. As this is the World Convention British fans have decided to stage an informal 'Kettering type' convention over the Easter weekend (no program, but plenty of fun) probably at Harrogate.'

In # 3 (November 1956) there's more:

'First issue's statement that a con would be held over Easter next year seems to have been hasty. Indeed Harrogate has declined the honour (or rather the hotels have decided they like nice quiet roomers) and hence the sponsoring body has faded away. Poor Ron. Discussions are however under way to hold a business con over Whitsun in order to clear the path for the September World Con and although there will be bheer around the place, time will be devoted mainly to arranging the programme of the larger event.

'The location of this Whitsun meeting has not been decided but will most likely be made public after the Liverpool group visit to London. Other than the con committee a small body of active fans will be invited to attend the Whitsun affair, mainly those who will in one way or another be responsible for part of the convention activities.'

According to Rob Hansen's THEN, *Contact* 3 contained further discussion over whether there should be a national convention at all. But the Eastercon refused to die. Liverpool fan Dave Newman had been asked to head a committee advising the Worldcon on programme, and as part of this activity he put out a newsletter called *Natter*. In the second issue (15th-20th November 1956), he wrote:

'Enclosed with this wad of guff is some advance gen [which does not survive] about the proposed fan-social weekend at Kettering next Easter. As the demand for this event has been quite large, it is likely that most of active Anglolfandom will be present and this, of course, includes the worldcon committee. It seems to me that this will provide an excellent opportunity for the whole committee to get together for a couple of business sessions – particularly as there will be no official programme to add distractions to those already present in the form of parties and serious boozing. How about it, you lot?'

KETTERING IN '57 – the flyer

Up in the French mountains the winter nights are cold and long. Who knows to what a young man's thoughts might turn under such circumstances, especially if that man is Jim de Lisceard? The answer—much to the surprise of everybody, including Jim—turned out to be science fiction conventions. In some respects, the essence of the problem was that the nights were insufficiently cold, as were the days. There was no snow—or at least not enough snow for snowboarding, because the Powers That Be insisted on moving what little snow there was onto the piste for the benefit of the nice skiers, leaving the skuzzy snowboarders sorely deficient in one of the key components of their pastime. This is a particular bummer when, like Jim, you have chosen to take five months off work to go snowboarding. And that's where the science fiction conventions come in. Have you ever wondered what people talked about at the first convention? After all, it's a pretty safe bet that a prime topic of conversation at the second convention was what they did at the first one, but what did they do when they had no previous conventions to mentally revisit and consign to anecdote? Perhaps they talked about science fiction, a notion that is so utterly abhorrent to a section of the fan community that it has dedicated itself to ensuring that such an aberration never happens again.

But yes, large chunks of convention time are devoted to the analysis and reliving of past convention stories. Jim, in company with Kay Hancox, decided that maybe we need to formalise this situation. Rather than simply talking about what happened in olden days, back in the distant past when nobody had even heard of Pat McMurray, maybe we should actually set out to re-enact those conventions—a kind of science fictional version of those societies that recreate battles from the English Civil War or the Napoleonic Wars. And, indeed, unlike those groups who end up seeking to represent 120,000 men on the field of Waterloo with four men and a dog, we could probably do those early conventions—which were actually attended by four men and a dog—on a one-to-one scale without any difficulty. Thus was the Convention Re-enactment Society born.

Any minute now Pat McMurray will enter the scene, late as usual, but first we must travel back to 1971 and *Eastercon 22*. The convention got its name because Pete Weston and Ken Bulmer had decided to work out exactly how many preceding Eastercons there had been and came up with the answer: twenty-one. So the 1971 Eastercon became *Eastercon 22*, locking down the list of British National Science Fiction Conventions starting with *Whitcon* in 1948. Significantly, this list included no 1957 Eastercon. It listed events in Kettering in 1955, 1956 and 1958—*Cytricon I, II* and *III* respectively—but nothing for 1957, the year of the first British Worldcon, when presumably the idea of two conventions in one year was just too much to contemplate. This Bulmer/Weston list was used for nearly two decades.

Time passes. In 1989 Rob Hansen revised the list. He'd found evidence that there was a 1957 Eastercon, again in Kettering, and that this was the real *Cytricon III* with the 1958 convention thus becoming *Cytricon IV*. A problem, though: this would mean that *Eastercon 22* was in fact the twenty-third Eastercon. A bit of hasty retro-engineering eliminated the 1951 convention, *Festvention*, from the list on the grounds that it was an 'international' rather than national convention. All was thus right with the world, *Eastercon 22* was still the twenty-second Eastercon, and there were now four consecutive Eastercons in Kettering in the 1950s. The Hansen list takes over from the Bulmer/Weston list.

At this point Pat McMurray really does enter the scene, late as usual. Pat has a Hole into which he stuffs all manner of convention memorabilia—'tat' to most people—for archival purposes. As a result, he has a really quite remarkably detailed knowledge of past conventions, something that's all the more striking given that he's a relative newcomer himself (a fact that, incidentally, he will never be allowed to forget). And he's found out something particularly notable about the 1957 Kettering Eastercon: absolutely nothing. There appears to be no hard evidence that this convention ever happened. There are no badges or convention book, no PRs, no documentation at all. It's almost as if... *as if the convention never actually happened*. Speaking to veterans of the era, everybody seems a bit vague. They remember they went to Kettering 'a few' times in the late 1950s—but three, four, more? Nobody's quite sure. And whilst there is a write-up of the 1957 convention in Ron Bennett's fanzine *Ploy*, one does note that Ron has been a bit of a hoaxer in his time and it's not entirely inconceivable that a few people made the whole thing up to confuse future generations. And if that's the case then *Cytricon IV* becomes *Cytricon III* again and *Eastercon 22* is now the twenty-first Eastercon, unless we subsequently reintegrate 1951's *Festvention* which has already been conclusively eliminated by Rob Hansen. So, what to do?

Fortunately we now have the Convention Re-enactment Society. Thus their first project—which in a typically fannish way isn't necessarily a re-enactment in the strict sense of the term—becomes Kettering in '57, to ensure that the convention does in fact take place and that *Eastercon 22* continues to be the twenty-second Eastercon, proving to everybody that science fiction fandom can at least count. Accordingly, the Convention Re-enactment Society will be bidding to run the 1957 Eastercon in Kettering (science permitting).

Including the following programme highlights:

Arthur C Clarke's Network in the Skies: Will It Ever Work?

The Russians Can't Win the Space Race.

Tolkien: More Influential Than We Think?

Why There'll Never Be a British Science Fiction Association.

Worldcon in Britain: Once Is Enough.

Wouldn't 'The Sentinel' Make a Great SF Movie?

And a performance of a new play by David Wake: *Three Minutes to Eight*.

Membership currently costs £2, rising to two guineas after April 1st. Pre-supporting memberships are available for 2s. 6d.

KETTERING IN '57. You know it makes sense.

The Convention Re-enactment Society is based in Greater Croydon

In *Contact #5* (December 1956) the con has been confirmed as going to Kettering:

‘Everybody having had a say about the various types of convention that will see the light in 1957 in England, we finally seem to get some definite news on at least one of them. KETTERING is the place, the EASTER WEEKEND the time, for a social convention: no programme whatsoever and the 6 bob dues to go on booze. So far twenty-two people have booked to attend, and overflow is *not* catered for. Why not drop a line to Dave Newman if you feel like going?’

‘London fandom is not too happy about this event as a whole, especially because of the additional expense which may well cause some Kettering conventioners to stay away from the main world convention in September. Although this matter of an informal con was mentioned this year at Kettering, nothing more was said about it at a later date, and the sudden springing of the news on London without further talk has irked several con-members.’

Reading between the lines, London fandom, their energies likely to be taken up with the Worldcon, thought the national con should be dropped for a year. Other fannish groups, presumably, given Dave Newman’s location, Liverpool to the fore, disagreed. The London fans thought that the issue had been settled, but it turned out not to be so.

There were further causes for disagreement. In *Natter #2*, Dave referred to *Contact #2* and said dryly that the ‘Programme committee were rather interested to discover that somebody had already planned the programme [for *Loncon*] for them.’ He mentioned the ‘apparent discourtesy of the central committee in not giving we North-Western types the chance to comment on the ideas prior to publication.’

Worse was to follow, in the very brief *Natter #3* (put out the very next day after #2, on 21st November) where Dave complained that the central committee had now announced (again without consultation) that *Loncon* would be held at the unpopular Royal hotel. And in #4 (16th January), with the backing of the full programme committee, he protested vociferously and at length about the hotel, calling it ‘a morgue, operated on a shoestring’*. Although the decision had by this time been announced in *Loncon*’s first PR, the venue was eventually changed to the Kings Court, but I dare say this did not make Dave and the other Northerners too popular in London circles.

As Rob Hansen reports in *THEN*, ‘a new round of bickering had broken out between fans in London and those in the North. It was a lot more limited in scope than that which had wracked British fandom earlier in the decade, but still gave cause for concern.’ And *Contact #7* carried the following observation from Archie Mercer:

‘... it strikes me that it might be a good idea to assemble everybody concerned at some likely spot – such as Kettering or Trowbridge – assort them in pairs on the basis of their London or Northern affiliations, and knock their heads together – *hard*. If it’s just a put-up job to make it seem as if Anglofandom’s more alive than it actually is, same applies.’

Mercer presumably mentioned Kettering because of the upcoming Eastercon, and Trowbridge because it was the home town of Norman G. Wansborough, somewhat of a figure of fun in those days.

A further notice for *Cytricon III* appeared in *Ploy 8* (March 1957). Ron Bennett wrote:

‘There should also be some mention made of the two SF conventions which are to be held in England this year. In chronological order, there is the informal no-programme get-together for the Easter weekend, for which the popular George Hotel at Kettering has been booked. Details from Dave Newman ... Do try and come, the affair promises to be a three-day-long Liverpool-type party.’

Some further brief notices appeared in Terry Jeeves’ and Eric Bentcliffe’s *Triode*. Interestingly, the 1957 con gets no notices in *New Worlds*, *Fantasy Times* or *Science Fiction Times*.

So what actually happened? The convention took place from Friday 21st April to Monday 24th. Aside from some brief notes in *Triode*, only three con reports appear to exist. The first appeared in a Cheltenham fanzine, *Spasmodic News* (May 1957), written by Audrey Eversfield, who had only recently joined the group. She gave it the title of ‘Phheewww’, saying, “this was how I felt after Easter – and I love it!” Unfortunately it’s a fairly silly report notable only for her account of the way the Shorrocks made up an apple-pie bed for Eric Bentcliffe on the Saturday night, and for confirming only six members of the Cheltenham club attended.

The second report was by visiting U.S. fan Dave Jenrette, first published in *Ploy 10* (September 1957) and somewhat better, though it devoted half of its length to the shortcomings of British restaurants. See the excerpt opposite.

The third and strangest report appeared in *Triode 11* (August 1957) under the title of ‘Oh My Head’ by one ‘Sandra Laurence’. This is clearly a reference to London fan Lawrence ‘Sandy’ Sandfield, but who wrote the piece? Jeeves? Bentcliffe? Sandfield himself, writing in a camp style? This last is Jim Linwood’s opinion, and it seems as likely as any of the other possibilities. It’s supposedly written by a dizzy femme-fan, is hopelessly affected and contains almost no useful information among passages such as, ‘My skirt caught round the beer pump and as I wasn’t wearing any I had to cover my embarrassment with my hands. As I drew my dignity around me I heard a gentleman remark in detached and academic tones: “Yes, one can tell with blondes, can’t one?”’ The piece was slated in the next issue of *Triode* [Winter 1957/1958] in a letter from seventeen-year-old Michael Moorcock, who commented, “I thought it stank – it was just outright sordid. Maybe I AM narrow-minded, I don’t know, but I just can’t think why people should write muck like that – perhaps both writer and editors are frustrated. The writer is surely.”

* The Royal was used for the 1952 convention and would be the unpleasant home of the 1970 *Sci-con*. According to Dave Newman’s informants, by 1957 it was already a pretty seedy, run-down establishment.

This Was Kettering (excerpt)

by Dave Jenrette, reprinted from *Ploy #10*, September 1



Is this Dave Jenrette? Otherwise-unknown person learns to play Brag in the small hours, under the benevolent guidance of Ron Bennett, Ina and Norman Shorrock. Photo by Terry Jeeves.

also an innocent coat holder in a ferocious duel between Bennett and Shorrock using stamp tweezers as weapons. And so on and so forth. Rusty got tired and so did other people and they drifted off to bed.

Being a serious student of games, I was interested in a game called Brag that the English fen play. Ron Bennett and Norman and Ina Shorrock began my education. At first (deuced clever of them) I was an easy winner but this was not to last. Things kept getting worse and worse and when play halted at 4.30 a.m. I found myself loser to the extent of about twenty-two shillings. Ron Bennett made Brag history by taking in a pot of four pounds and seventeen shillings on one hand. (Editorial note; [from Ron] this included a dollar bill, a Penny Black and a couple of pounds sterling).

.....Plans were made on Saturday night to meet Eric Bentcliffe, of *Triode* fame, at the railway station with glasses of beer. I wasn't on hand to cover that event. Rusty and I decided to lie down for an hour or so before the evening's party started and, when we awoke, it was 4.45 am. I dressed frenziedly and rushed up and down corridors searching for the carefree sounds of fan-activity. All was serenely silent. What could I do? I went back to bed. [Having missed the St Fantony event! – pw]

That day, Sunday, included some Brag (Rusty joined me among the ranks of the losers) in which Eric Bentcliffe won an alarming amount of money. We heard the sterling production of 'Last and First Fen'. It makes you proud deep down inside, to be a fan. Eric bought us all dinner out of his winnings. There was a party later on in which Peter Reaney was tried for that most heinous of all crimes – failure to consume alcoholic beverages during a convention. Punishment was a tall glass of rum, to be consumed at one drink. Reaney accomplished this and then practically passed out, though Ted Tubb assured me that it was well watered. Eric and Margaret Jones busily managed to record the trial of Reaney with Dave Newman as judge, Ted Tubb as prosecutor and various others as jurymen and executioners.



Left, Ken Slater marks down the October 1956 issue of *Infinity* to Ken McIntyre. Photo by Terry Jeeves.

Right, Dave Newman's beer can explodes to Eric Bentcliffe's advantage. Photo by Norman Shorrock.



Ken Slater, only huckster present, managed to get Rusty and I off alone and sold us some smuggled U.S. magazines. About this time a certain fan managed to earn the *Ploy* award for outstanding service to fandom by concealing Sandy Sandfield's guitar. Party-like madness prevailed until early a.m.

Newman discovered the madness of opening warm canned beer that had been carefully shaken (by yours truly). There was assorted bopping going on to the tunes of Little Richard and Elvis Presley. Some people became interested in other people's wives; a few people tried to commit suicide; and others got drunk. Truly, a fan's convention. Next morning we left, taking Ron Bennett along with us. Total commentary on English fandom: it's practically impossible to tell it from the U.S. variety.

– Dave Jenrette.

These three reports confirm the impression given by the pre-publicity, such as it was – that there was no programming, and most of the time was spend drinking or playing cards. There seems to have been precious little connected with actual science fiction, beyond Ken Slater selling some magazines. Little wonder there was no programme book or badge; the Eastercon had simply become a lengthy party, and why would one want have a badge or documentation for a party?



The statuette; in the colour version the 'Null-A' symbol of LāSFāS can be clearly seen on the left shoulder of the Knight, while the disembodied head has the black beard and moustache of Bert Campbell! Photo by Bill Burns.

As far as attendees are concerned the following were mentioned in various reports or shown in photographs, so were definitely present: Eric Bentcliffe, Les Childs, Audrey Eversfield, John Humphries, Terry Jeeves, Dave Jenrette, Rusty Jenrette, Eric Jones, Margaret Jones, Ken McIntyre, Archie Mercer, Peter Reaney, Bob Richardson, Lawrence 'Sandy' Sandfield, Geoff & Eunice Shaddock, Ken Slater, Ted Tubb, Jill & Cyril Whitaker and Jack Wilson. Those who were 'knighted', according to the official 'Decree' in *Spasmodic*, were Ron Bennett, Bill Harry, Eddie Jones, Dave Newman, Ina Shorrock, Norman Shorrock, John Owen, John Roles, and Norman Weedall. That's just thirty people in all, with only Ted Tubb, Lawrence Sandfield and Ken McIntyre from the London area. There may have been more – Brian Burgess, possibly – but who else?



Bill Harry (centre, with Ron & Archie) was the founder of *Mersey Beat*, and the first person to give decent press coverage to The Beatles. Photo by Norman Shorrock.

The one thing that is known to have happened at Kettering in 1957 was the first St Fantony ceremony, which took place in what was referred to as the 'Basket Lounge'. Peter is writing about the history of St Fantony; here, let us just say that the original statuette presented to the Liverpool group is the most concrete piece of evidence for the con's existence. It passed into the hands of Norman and Ina Shorrock, and in 2004, Ina gave it to Bill Burns for safe-keeping.

It's a cigarette-lighter, in fact, and on its base is an inscription, which reads: 'Presented to Liverpool S.F. Society by Cheltenham S.F. Circle at Kettering, Easter 1957, in recognition of their battle for provincial fandom. 1951-2051'. There's an obvious barb in that for London fandom!

The con also seems to have produced its own alcoholic beverage, 'Poleaxe Punch', descendant of the famous 'blog'. Of this, Dave Newman wrote (*Space Diversions* #9, 1957):

'Now we come to *Cytricon III* and *Poleaxe Punch*. This definitely comes under the heading of exotica and, as made, comprised three bottles of Polish White spirit (140 Proof), one and a half bottles of Jamaica Rum, one bottle of medium-sweet sherry, half a dozen lemons, three large cans of fruit salad and ten small bottles of sparkling lemonade. Served by the half-pint, it very soon injected its own note into the party spirit and it was interesting to observe that a number of justly-renowned toppers were only able to manage one helping. The only fault with this brew was that it was a trifle too sweet but the recipe has now been amended ... The name, incidentally, is by courtesy of members of the Cheltenham mob who managed, very nicely, to combine major ingredient and effect into an easily remembered *nomen*.'

Harry Warner, Jr, mentions Poleaxe Punch in *A WEALTH OF FABLE* (page 168), but notes that it never really caught on. (Incidentally, Peter now thinks the photo in *Prolapse* #7 of Dave Newman and Ina Shorrock dispensing Poleaxe Punch dates from 1958 rather than 1957, as the result of some further detective work involving the tie Terry Jeeves was wearing!)

Frustratingly, there are very few photographs from 1957 apart from some recently discovered from Terry Jeeves, so further reconstruction is difficult after so long. But we can establish that many well-known fans weren't present. As noted in *Prolapse*, Peter Mabey visited his parents while Keith Freeman declined an invitation in favour of going home on leave from the RAF. John Brunner was marching with the CND, Inchmery Fandom stayed at home, while others absent included Jim Linwood, Derek Pickles and (probably) Stan Nuttall and Bill Harrison, two other Liverpool members. Both appeared in later lists as having being inducted into St Fantony in 1957, but were not shown on the original 'Decree' and are not otherwise known to have been at Kettering.

As for Ken Bulmer himself, from correspondence we know that he and Pamela were at Kettering in 1955 & 1956, but after that the family spent Easter for the next four years with Walt & Madeleine Willis in Northern Ireland.

But whatever happened to Dave Newman's fond hope that 'it is likely that most of active Anglolfandom will be present, including the whole of the *Loncon* committee'? Where were the other Londoners? Many, of course, would be saving their pennies for *Loncon*; this is certainly what Ethel Lindsay says in *Scottishe* #11 (Spring 1957). However, *Cytricon III* was such a *very* small convention that it's possible the outbreak of bad feelings earlier in the year had caused some to deliberately avoid what was regarded as 'another convention by the bloody provincials'. In the same fanzine Ethel reports rather angrily that financial reasons for staying away were generally greeted with disbelief by those outside London. And afterwards Sandy Sanderson's *Blunt* 5 (Autumn 1957) said, rather snottily, "we had a Kettering-type convention at the Globe last Thursday. Slightly more fans than had been at Kettering – 35 of us."

So how did it come to disappear from the record? At first there was clearly no confusion, because when *Science Fantasy News* returned in February 1958, it announced *Cytricon IV*, the 1958 Eastercon (implying that there had been a third);

‘*Cytricon IV*, the fourth Convention at Kettering, Northants, will take place on April 4th-7th at the George Hotel, previous venue of these highly successful cons.’

Further reference to four Kettering conventions can be found in *Skyrack* #5 (28th July 1959). However, the entry for ‘*Cytricon*’ in *Fancylopedia* 2 (1959) states:

‘Any of the conventions at Kettering, England: 1955, ’56, ’58. From *Cytri*, the Roman name for the place.’

Already, the 1957 event was starting to slip off the fannish map. How did this happen? I have a theory. Writing in *THEN* about the formation of the BSFA, Rob Hansen says:

‘There was evidence to support [the proposition that SF fandom was moribund] in the attendance figures of the previous few Eastercons. Those attending in 1954 had numbered 150, but there were only 115 in 1955 and 80 in 1956. This drop coincided exactly with the shift in emphasis of Eastercons from strongly SF events to largely social affairs, and the fifty or so fans who turned up at *Cytricon IV* realised that drastic action was called for.’

The absence of a figure for 1957 has been noted, but is probably not significant. Hansen’s figures come from Peter Mabey’s chart (see *Prolapse* #7) published just after Easter 1956. No figure for 1957 was ever published. The authors of *Fancylopedia* possibly reconstructed the history of British cons from *Science Fantasy News*, which as noted was not published for the period when *Cytricon III* would have been mentioned. It was probably assumed that *Cytricon IV* for the 1958 con was either a misprint or a joke. Ken Bulmer, rather than just forgetting about 1957, probably went to the *Fancylopedia* and took its word. After all, he hadn’t been there in either 1957 or 1958, so he had no first-hand memories to rely upon. Moreover, memories were probably already slipping about what happened in Kettering, and when. Certainly I discovered when researching *Cytricon III* that personal recollections are now veiled through the mists of time; Ken Slater remembers a number of events at Kettering conventions in the 1950s, but not what happened in specific years, and two people reported the BSFA being founded at the 1957 con, whereas that actually happened in 1958. These matters rested until the late 1980s, when Rob Hansen conducted his researches into British fan history. He found the Jenrette material, and wrote in *THEN*:

‘Over the Easter holiday of 1957 a small and informal convention was held at the George Hotel, one that appears on no convention listings and isn’t included in the numbering of Eastercons! Among those present were Ron Bennett, Ken Slater, Ted Tubb, Eddie Jones, Archie Mercer, visiting American Dave Jenrette (who later wrote the whole thing up for *Ploy*, and also touched on it in his own *Quelles Horreurs*), and a contingent from the Liverpool group consisting of the Shorrocks, Dave Newman, and newcomer Bill Harry. The convention was largely unprogrammed, but it was here that Bennett became a Knight of St Fantony.’

On the basis of this research he updated the UK con listing which leaves just one final question, raised by Mark Plummer. Why did the 1971 listing remain unchallenged for seventeen years? Unfortunately, that’s not a question I can answer! //

– Tony Keen, September 2007

(This article has benefited from the help of the following: Bill Burns, Rob Hansen, Keith Freeman, Jim Linwood, Peter Mabey, Catherine Pickersgill, Greg Pickersgill, Mark Plummer, Pat Rigby-McMurray, Andy Sawyer, Ina Shorrocks, Ken Slater, Ted Tubb, and Peter Weston. My apologies to anyone I have missed out. None of these, of course, are responsible for any errors contained.)

Another brief report appeared in Terry Jeeves’ column ‘Interlude’ in *Triode* #11, August 1957.

**Bob Richardson, Les Childs,
Dave Newman and Geoff
Shaddock take a breather in
the car-park.**

Photo by Terry Jeeves.



‘Kettering proved an unqualified success, and the thanks for this must go to Dave Newman. I don’t remember much about the affair, other than the fact that Eric did not discover his apple-pie bed. On the other hand, he did discover several tons of winkles deposited in his room by Geoff Shaddock. Geoff, incidentally, came down with me and posed as a press photographer. He even borrowed the equipment and took several photographs, perhaps the best one being that taken in the bar. Geoff posed his group, fiddled around with flash and camera, called out ‘Hold it!’ and a blinding flash was followed by a dull thud as the plate fell out of the camera....ah well, remember the old slogan... ‘Have a wrinkle’.

‘Incidentally, Dave found the hood of his duffle coat filled with the things. Naturally he blamed Geoff, and proceeded to fill Geoff’s glass (of beer) with winkles. This really amused me... I was the geezer who filled the hood with winkles. The best sight of the weekend was undoubtedly Peter Reaney. I managed to coerce him into showing his co-ordination by stretching his arms wide and then bringing his finger-tips together. He had to do this six times with eyes closed. The event took place in the crowded bar, and when Peter opened his eyes at the end he found himself alone but for the goggle-eyed residents.’

In the previous pages Tony Keen took us to Kettering in 1957 and the very first St Fantony ceremony. Now, let's go back again to discover how and why the Order was created. Fortunately, Ina Shorrock has lived in the same house for nearly fifty years and doesn't believe in throwing things away, which has meant that just about all of the source-documents were miraculously preserved when I came looking for them (pw)

The coat-of-arms – by Eddie Jones, on tracing film. Letters are scarlet on a black background, with green bar and blazons and yellow border to shield (from Ina Shorrock).



A Grand Fannish Jape!

(or, the Order of St Fantony
as interpreted by Peter Weston)

Well, it's a bit late to mark the exact half-century since the founding of The Order of St Fantony – last Easter was the proper time for that – but at least we're still in the 50th year since Eric Jones and his Knights first took the fannish stage at Kettering in 1957. And what a grand entrance they made! Who could fail to have been taken with the imagination, the ingenuity and the spectacle of that first ceremony? But with time memories fade and perceptions subtly alter so that the Order is now viewed quite differently from the way in which its founders intended; and there certainly is no shortage of different opinions about 'St Fantony'!

Let's start with Ethel Lindsay, who in a letter to Jenny Glover¹ in the early 1990s wrote, 'the Order came into being at the [1957] London worldcon. It was the first con to expect a group of visiting American fans. The con committee was very small, British fandom in its entirety was very small, and how to entertain these Americans was a worry. The word went out from London – please help with program ideas. It was the group around Eric Jones who in answer to this call invented St Fantony. This was to be a medieval fantasy that they thought would amuse and entertain the Americans.'

That's a good story but unfortunately it happens to be completely wrong in every detail, which is odd since Ethel herself *was* a Knight of St Fantony. Then there's Chuck Connor, who in a LoC to *Conrunner #11* (1989) wrote that 'the Knights were set up to greet people at conventions, to break the ice if you will.' Which is a nice thought, but wrong again. And how does that stack-up with Peter Mabey's recent assertion that 'although the Order of St Fantony originated as a gesture of provincial solidarity against London fandom, it later tended to become a sort of fannish Hall of Fame'?

Let's take a look at the 'official' party-line in a 1974 'History'² produced by Stan Nuttall & Keith Freeman. It says here that 'the Order was originally founded in 1957 by the Cheltenham Science Fiction Circle to honour the Liverpool group for their work in fandom.' Well, yes, I know what they were trying to get at, except that I think 'honour' is a bit of a slippery concept in such an egalitarian, anarchic group as fandom, where 'respect' or maybe 'affection' is probably about as much as anyone can hope for. So I have a few reservations about Stan & Keith's rationale and prefer instead something Eric Bentcliffe wrote in *Xyster #5*, (1984), 'From the outside, of course, all this looked a bit like snobbish SMOFery, or it does in retrospect but the fandom of the times realised what it was.....a Grand Fannish Jape, and took it as such.'

Fair enough, I thought, although I know some fans have never been very keen on the whole idea. In a LoC to *Prolapse #7* Peter Roberts said, 'I still wonder how a joke and a bit of fun in the 1950s remained such a conspicuous and off-putting feature of British conventions for more than ten years.' Chris Priest was even less enthusiastic, writing in 2004, 'all I know about St Fantony is that it induced feelings of cringe, and a wish to end it all.' And Jim Linwood really put the boot in by saying that 'the whole business was sickening exclusiveness, not part of any fandom I wanted to belong to and I was glad to see it fade away; furthermore they didn't invite me to be a member! Remember the old Groucho Marx quote?'

Peter, Chris and Jim are entitled to their opinions but I feel they're being unnecessarily harsh – after all, the very nature of being 'fannish' is on occasion to be a bit silly as I'm sure they appreciate, whether we're talking about the Attacking Budgie Dance, dropping bottles down hotel chimneys, or any other bit of light-hearted nonsense. Past fannish generations came up with crazy ideas like the Staple Wars, the Hum-&-Sway and the Astral Pole, and modern-day fans keep the tradition alive with performances like Ian Sorensen's mock-operas and James Bacon's occasional convention spectaculars ('Hammered by the Irish' indeed!). It seems to me that St Fantony was a particularly creative version of exactly the same sort of thing – so yes, Eric Bentcliffe was right, it really *was* just a Grand Fannish Jape!

But Peter Mabey makes an excellent point and I think he's right that St Fantony definitely *was* in part conceived as a reaction to the geographical split in British fandom of the fifties, and the on-going misunderstandings and suspicions between the Londoners and 'provincial' fan groups. To put this into perspective I have to go back quite a long way and re-trace some familiar ground, so bear with me...

At the start of the decade the capital held all the aces. It had the largest concentration of fans and most of the writers (Arthur Clarke, John Wyndham, Sam Youd, Bill Temple and so on), the editors, publishers and the magazines. They enjoyed weekly meetings at the White Horse from which grew the first post-war national conventions in 1948 & 1949, the 1951 *Festivention*, and subsequent events in 1952 & 1953. Understandably this bred more than a little arrogance towards the thin scattering of fans elsewhere in the country, climaxed by Bert Campbell's infamous remark in the White Horse prior to the *Coroncon* when he observed the visiting American pro-editor Bea Mahaffey talking to some Manchester fans, "For God's sake get her away from those bloody provincials".

Yet those Mancunians had been among the first to get themselves together after the war, forming the Nor' West Science Fantasy Club (NWSFC) in June 1951 with Eric Bentcliffe and Dave Cohen as founding members. Close behind was Liverpool, where Norman Shorrocks and John Roles were leading lights in starting the Liverpool Science Fiction Society (LāSFāS) in November 1951. Take notice of that Null-A symbol, which was adopted by the club (with their motto 'Thought, Time & Space') because it's an important part of the story. Liverpool was also unique in being the only group to have its own clubrooms, which gave them a great sense of permanence and stability.

Eric Bentcliffe lived only thirty-odd miles away so he was no stranger to LāSFāS, nor was Terry Jeeves though he had a somewhat longer haul across the Pennines from Sheffield. Eric and Terry were both at *Festivention* where they got together with Eric Jones, probably for the first time. They all met in London again in 1952 (the first con for Liverpool fans Norman & Ina Shorrocks, John Roles, Les Johnson & Norman Weedall) and were joined by a strong contingent from Manchester. The NWSFC was promoting *Mancon*, a regional to be held in the autumn, and they also made an unsuccessful bid to hold the 1953 national event in their city. (Ina recalls wryly that the Londoners seemed to think it was "too expensive, too far, and uphill all the way").

Well, you know what happened next. *Mancon* was successful but no-one from London attended (Bert Campbell said afterwards that they could 'hardly have expected celebrities to come'). So the *Coroncon* saw a fair amount of bitterness, and even though Manchester somehow managed to secure the con for 1954, the London fans immediately started their spiteful, semi-serious 'Operation Armageddon' intended to disrupt *Supermancon*.

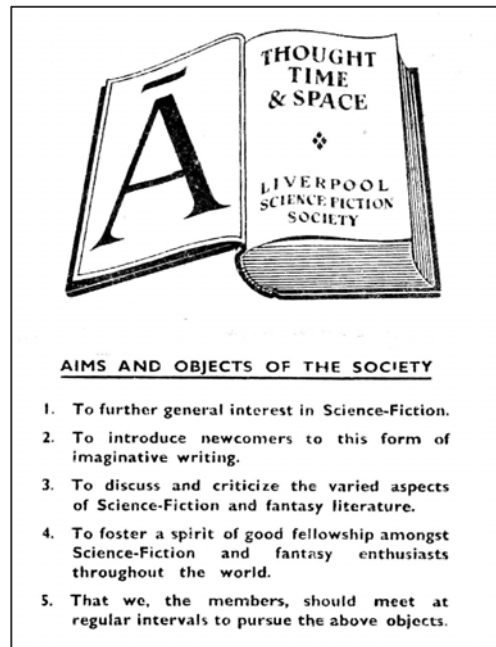
It wasn't put into effect and it turned out not to be necessary because the local group had been far too over-ambitious with their programming (which blew up in their faces), but as Tony Glynn noted in a recent letter, "at this first meeting of North and South on northern ground, there were certainly some from the South who must have ventured gingerly into the region, probably believing that Lancashire was populated by barbarians who were born with clogs on their feet and flat caps on their heads, and spent their days leaning on lamp-posts warbling George Formby songs. As I remember it, the Mancunian meeting of the two regions did not end the rivalry, which was still to take some grotesque forms."

Fortunately, despite a few spats a great time was had by all at *Supermancon* and the previous nastiness seemed to have evaporated, at least on the surface, when the 1955 con moved to neutral ground at Kettering, almost exactly halfway between the two dissenting foci. I don't want to make too much out of all this and I'm sure many friendships were made across the Great Divide but I feel it did shape the entire development of fandom throughout the fifties. The main result was that it tended to make fans outside London draw closer to one another, something which is clearly shown in their fanzines.

In July 1952 LāSFāS had begun pubbing *Space Diversions* which ran for twelve issues, and in August Eric Bentcliffe started *Space Times*, which became the NWSFC's official organ. In early 1953 he gained Eric Jones as co-editor and then Terry Jeeves, and Bentcliffe put out nineteen issues before the title fell into the hands of Londoner Stuart MacKenzie in April 1954, who promptly upset everyone so much that it soon folded. However, later that year the trio of Bentcliffe, Jeeves and Jones bounced back with *Triode*, which became one of the major fanzines of the period with eighteen issues by 1960. And newcomer Ron Bennett began *Ploy* in August 1954 and put out thirteen issues in just five years. These impressive performances were matched by few London titles and I'm fairly sure – though haven't yet done an exhaustive analysis – that most of the contents of these fanzines were provided by the 'provincial' fans themselves.

So how does any of this relate to St Fantony? Well, as I've tried to illustrate, many fans outside London had made common cause and had become good friends (and after *Supermancon* this included Archie Mercer and Ron Bennett). The first major expression of this solidarity came at Whitsun 1956, when the Liverpool group held one of their parties, this time with a rather special theme.

As Stan Nuttall explained in Dave Kyle's article in *Mimosa #11* (now on the St Fantony website³), "We did a fake medieval ceremony – direct from Danny Kaye's 'The Court Jester' – with lots of 'Yea, verily, yea' in it and decided the highest honour we could bestow on anyone was to be an ex-Chairman of LāSFāS without the rigours of being one in the first place. We had a party up here in the clubrooms and invited people from all over, and the first two to be made ex-Chairmen were Eric Bentcliffe and Eric Jones, the Chairman of the Cheltenham Group".*



John Roles' membership card, front & back. Original size 2½" x 3½", printed in black on deep maroon. (From Roger Robinson)

* Stan was writing nearly twenty years later and it's unclear whether the Cheltenham Circle had actually been formed at this date;



Left: 'King' Stan Nuttall officiates, complete with crown & sword. Centre; wearing their 'null-A' head-bands, the two Eric's drink a toast to LaSFaS. Right; a delighted Eric gets to work on a fanzine (*They're Off* according to Archie Mercer), with trusty tape-recorder visible at rear. Centre picture from John Roles' album, others from Norman Shorrocks.

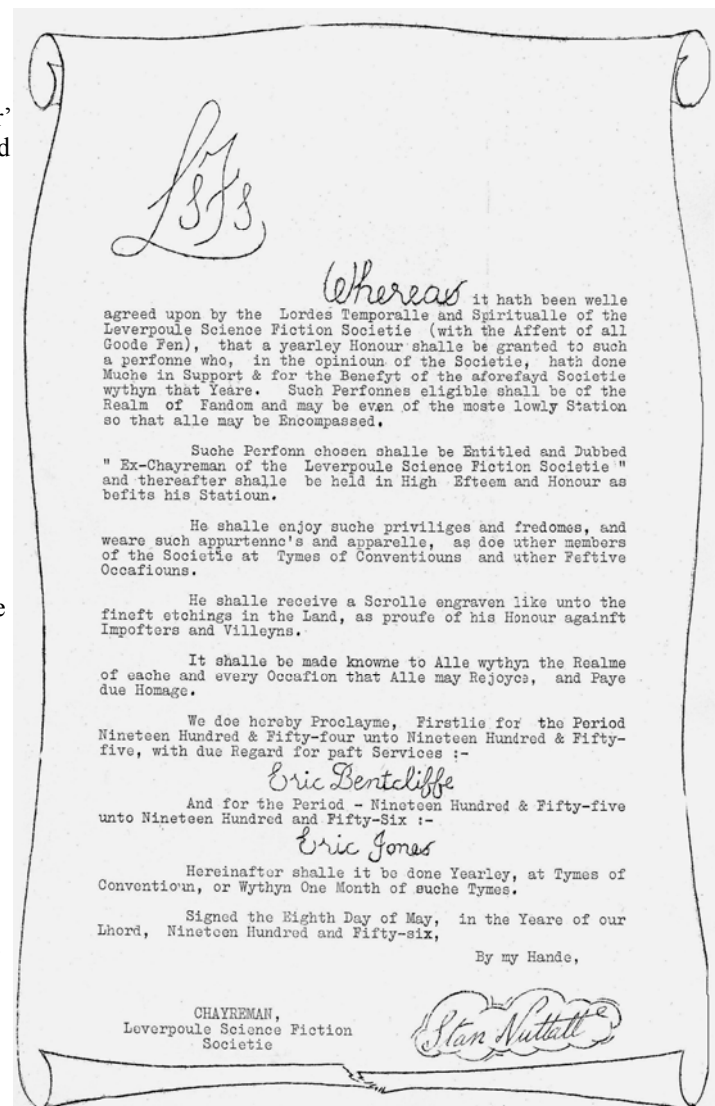
Archie Mercer wrote up the occasion in *Sidereal* #4 and in his usual way listed the participants – twenty in all, with the local group, Archie himself, Ron Bennett, Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe, and Eric & Margaret Jones from Cheltenham;-

"I'll cut to the House of Shorrocks where momentous Events were in the course of preparation. To wit, the ceremonial installation of the two Eric's in the honourable office of Ex-Chairman of the Liverpool Science Fiction Society. This was a most noble occasion, presided over by Chairman Nuttall (crowned) with John Roles officiating as High Priest and all the trimmings (such as priestesses, etc)..... The two initiates were in turn anointed with correcting fluid, bedecked with head-bands bearing the Null-A symbol, and finally received the ceremonial accolade, after which they were handed ceremonial scrolls – the work of Don McKay, signed by Stan and sealed with a Fyffe's Bananas label* - and then the signal was given for them to take up their new duties and the festivities recommenced in real earnest."

You can probably see where this is going. As I tried to show in the 'Forgotten Fans' feature last time, Eric Jones was a practical, creative sort of chap and even as he travelled back to Cheltenham I'll bet he was full of the desire to 'return the favour' as it were, to repay his friends in Liverpool for their kindness and at the same time do so with an even better, more elaborate ceremony than the one in which he had just participated.

And the time was absolutely right for Eric. For nearly four years he had struggled to establish an SF group in his area without a great deal of success, apart from having found Peter Mabey in early 1956. Now, they took a stand in the Hobbies Exhibition at the Town Hall and suddenly found 'real fans had come knocking on the door'. The Cheltenham SF Circle was up-and-running, with newcomers such as Audrey Eversfield (who became Secretary), Les Childs, John Humphries, and the most significant of all, Bob Richardson. As was noted in *Prolapse* #7, Bob had been a naval officer in WWII serving as a commando and frogman on miniature submarines. He was a judo expert and an authority on traditional armour, and Keith Freeman says Bob also fought in the Spanish Civil War. Just the man to have around as the outline of 'St Fantasy' began to take shape – and I suspect Bob's appetite for fake-medieval pageantry was at least as great as Eric's own.

But the Liverpool influence was absolutely pivotal; not only with that Whitsun 'installation' but also because of their spectacular Fancy Dress presentation at *Cytricon II* that Easter. As Eric wrote in *Sidereal* π, "they made their appearance in costumes ranging from Vikings and Norsemen to Egyptian beauties, harem maids, green goddesses, and Norman Shorrocks wore a most weird rig-out which comprised a Davy Crockett hat complete with a powered propeller." Months later Eric must have remembered their showmanship as he searched for a unifying theme that would enable his new club to do one better.



* The Liverpool group's St Vincent Street clubroom was in the cellar of a banana warehouse!



The LaSFaS Kettering line-up; top, from left; René McKay, Dave Newman, Don McKay, Pat Doolan, John Roles. Bottom; Stan Nuttall, Ina Shorrock, & Don's sister. Photo; Norman Shorrock

death in flames. In his martyrdom for fans and fandom he became a patron saint. Today the town is a famous spa, for from the ground where he had thrust his staff in his final moment a spring gushed forth. The waters of S.F. – Saint Fantony – still flow today and the burghers of Cheltenham profit by them. But only the trufen can taste the fire within the water.’

Well, I think it's very clever – corny, but clever! Peter Mabey continues, “as Cheltenham was known for its spa water, we decided that it would have to have mystic significance – only to be appreciated by the trufan (the actual drink provided was initially a water-white wheat spirit, made illicitly by one of our members). I never heard that Eric or Bob were members of the Masons but Masonic rituals provided a lot of input to the structure of the ceremony, though of course we took care to avoid plagiarism, and later on we arranged for it to build up to the Test in which we got a volunteer to play the part of the fakefan, who would be given plain water. On failing to appreciate the fire, he was dragged offstage and executed by Norman Weedall. We never used actual spa water, which would not have been appreciated by the unwary, as the 'fakefan' always knew what was planned.

“There was taped music – part of the Mussorgsky-Ravel ‘Pictures at an Exhibition’ for the reading of the Legend, timed to give appropriate accompaniment to the pursuit of Fantony by the mundanes, and the bursting forth of the spring which yielded the spa water. We also used Holst's ‘Marching Song’, slowed down by Frank Herbert's variable-speed machine to make it sound more solemn, as ‘The March of St Fantony's Men’ for the first ceremony, but I don't think it was played on later occasions.”

In *Prolapse #8* Keith Freeman described another stage in the myth-making process, “the meeting I first went to was plotting out (literally) the ‘history’ of St Fantony. Eric had been window-shopping in Cheltenham and had seen a display of made-to-order blazer badges containing (in theory) the wearer's initials. At once he saw the possibilities of getting blazer badges with S/F on them – and then only had to flesh out a suitable *raison d'être* in order to buy and dish them out to fans who had been instrumental in keeping fandom alive in Britain. Eric, in his usual manner, encouraged the ideas that flowed and at the same time controlled the situation so we didn't fly off into unnecessary side-tracks (well, not too far off, anyway).”

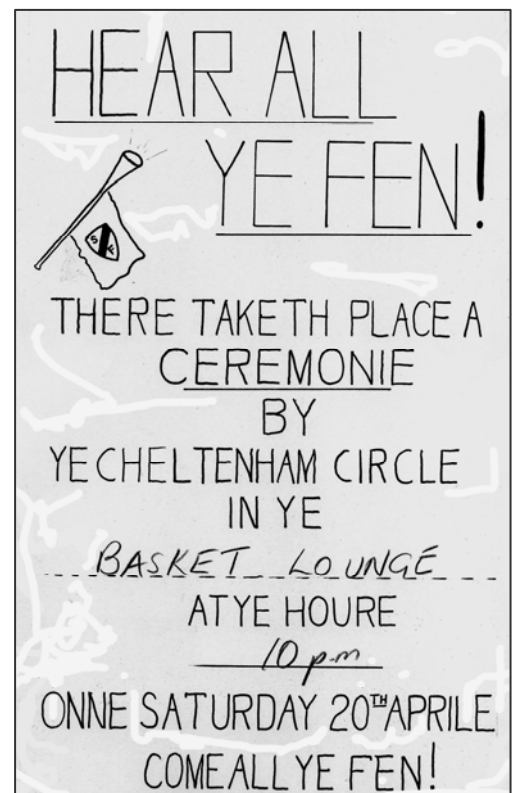
The ceremony to ‘knight’ the members of the Liverpool group took place at the third Kettering convention – Stan Nuttall is definitely wrong when he suggested (in *Mimosa*) that ‘we were invited down to Cheltenham (early in '57, I think) for the first ceremony’. On reflection Stan now agrees that he was thinking of the following year – February 1958 – when LaSFaS visited Cheltenham for the official opening of their new clubrooms. As Keith confirmed, in 1957 the CSFC were still meeting in a room over a pub so they could only rehearse the ceremony at their homes – although Bob Richardson did send a photograph to Terry Jeeves with a note written on the back to say that it had been taken during a dry-run in the market place! (His costume appears to be the later version, so the picture would have been taken *after* *Cytricon III* but *before* the worldcon).

So, at last Easter came round and all was ready for the big surprise. The first anyone knew was when posters were put up at various places about the George Hotel announcing ‘a ceremonie’ at 10.00 p.m. in the Basket Lounge. There, in front of an assembled crowd of at least twenty people (and while Dave Jenrette slept soundly in his room), the performance was staged by the six members from Cheltenham who were at the convention.

Peter Mabey sheds some light on this formative period, “When Eric or Bob (don't recall which) spotted a statuette of a knight in armour on a plinth [illustrated in Tony Keen's article], this looked like an ideal champion against the London oppressors. We embellished it with a commemorative plaque and the SF emblem on his shield, and as we were looking for a way to respond to Eric's honour from Liverpool we decided to devise a legend to go with it.”

And so they did. They created an entire mythology about discovering ancient documents which (summarised from the *Mimosa* article) told ‘of a certain visionary who carried writings from the past, the present, and the future’. This inspired roamer was Fantony, and small groups who heard his message called themselves Fantony's or Fan's, while ignorant mundanes sneered at the awesome stories he told.

‘The wandering Fantony was set upon by disdainful mundanes and captured in the rural hamlet of Cheltenham. They jeered at the works of Verne and Wells and Poe, and threw him on his pile of books. They torched the papers and the pulps, and caused his



The poster has miraculously survived – the original is an Ozalid print, with the time & location written-in during the weekend.



Left; you wouldn't want to meet Bob Richardson in Cheltenham market-place! Right; LaSFaS members line up for the first ceremony at Kettering, as Margaret & Audrey unroll the scroll for the Grand Master. (Photos from Terry Jeeves).

When I get my Time-machine working properly I want to go back to that evening and see it for myself, although thanks to Terry Jeeves we do have a picture of the proceedings. Margaret and Audrey were Priestesses in cotton dresses with sashes and head-bands, John Humphries (who was probably nearly twenty but looked thirteen) wore a silk tunic and turban as Herald, Les Childs was Knight Master of the Rolls with wig and false beard, a hat, some sort of medallion in the middle of his forehead, and what looks like an embroidered farmer's smock. But the two stars of the show – Bob, and the Knight Grand Master, Eric Jones – had black bow-ties, embroidered vests or waistcoats, flowing cloaks and gleaming helmets adorned with crests and propeller beanies.

I'm impressed with the high quality of the raiment considering how quickly it must have been put together. Keith again: "I became the 'model' for the initiates into the Order of St Fantony – suffering the attempts at pinning on the badges (I still have the scars to prove this). Margaret made the costumes, though I'm sure even here Eric had a lot of input." However, as his title of 'Knight Armourer' implies I'm certain Bob Richardson would have been heavily involved in the provision of the helmets and more martial aspects of the regalia, though I should note that St Fantony was never the main promoter of 'jousting' – that was a separate, parallel innovation from Ken Bulmer and the London Circle.

The attending members of the Liverpool group were lined up in front of the stage and the Grand Master began to chant, 'Before Gernsback there was no fandom.... Then came *Amazing...*' Unfortunately the rest of the proceedings are lost to us (though I do have a copy of the script prepared for the 'beefed-up' ceremony at the London worldcon, six months later, which was much more elaborate). According to a 'Decree' published in the Cheltenham fanzine, *Spasmodic*, nine new members were inducted into the Order on this occasion. These were Eddie Jones, John Owen, John Roles, Dave Newman, Ina Shorrock, Norman Shorrock, Norman Weedall, Bill Harry, and Ron Bennett. The *Mimosa* list also claims that Archie Mercer was knighted at Kettering (although he is not mentioned on the Decree) and I think we have to assume he was simply forgotten when *Spasmodic* was being prepared.

The list also states that Stan Nuttall and Bill Harrison (aka Sir William Makepeace Harrison, and not to be confused with any American SF author of similar name) were similarly elevated, though as far as we can tell neither one of them attended *Cytricon III*. It also shows, wrongly, that Terry Jeeves and Eric Benteliffe were made Knights at the Easter convention, though from the *Loncon* photographs it's clear that both were inducted at the worldcon. *Spasmodic* also contained a long epic poem by Bob Richardson titled 'At Kettering Field' modelled on the address given in Henry V – as I said previously, I think Bob was pretty carried away by the whole idea of St Fantony!

**'And all non-fen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhood cheap whilst any speaks
That drank with us upon St Fantony's Day.'**

There we have it – St Fantony was created simply as a reciprocal bit of good fellowship towards the Liverpool group, a joke, a leg-pull, and very much as a one-off event. But of course it didn't stop there; Dave Newman was head of the programme committee for *Loncon* and I'm quite sure he immediately saw that the ceremony would really give the American visitors something to remember.

So, six months later St Fantony had a second outing on the Sunday afternoon at the worldcon. This time twelve more subjects were lined-up, seven of them from overseas (including Bob Silverberg), plus Ken Slater, Walt Willis, Terry and Eric, and Bobbie Wilde, the convention secretary. She was a fairly recent recruit to fandom, and significantly, the only Londoner called forward. They endured the ritual, sipped St Fantony's waters, and at the close of the ceremony touched Bob Richardson's sword to be admitted to full membership of the Order. It must have made tremendous theatre and for at least one of them – Rory Faulkner, an elderly lady from the American Mid-West – it was probably an experience she would cherish for the rest of her days!



Above; The 1957 ritual takes place, with Eric Bentcliffe and Ken Slater touching Bob's sword. Below; the new Knights and Ladies – Bobbie Wilde and Rory Faulkner in centre. Only the American, Dale R. Smith, is not shown. Note the tapestry behind the Master of the Rolls (Photos from Norman Shorrock).



Costumes and regalia had been completely worked-over and this time the 'Priestesses' wore matching red mini-skirted dresses with tiaras and elaborately-patterned cloaks ("curtain material", said Ina). 'Humph' the Herald sounded a fanfare with his 5-foot horn, from which hung a blue banner embroidered in yellow with the motto, 'Ghod Blesh St Fantony'. Norman Weedall was a suitably menacing figure in black, wielding a huge axe as the Executioner, while Eric and Bob were helmeted and splendidly attired in cloaks and medallions. Bob wore a magnificent patterned jerkin in metallic grey picked-out in silver which gave the effect of chain-mail, with belt and sword at his waist. Eric was resplendent in orange-yellow silk tunic and pantaloons, a dagger in his wide belt and his hawkish features framed by folds of material so that he looked like nothing so much as some sort of Oriental potentate!

That might have been the end of it – except that the Cheltenham Circle acquired their own clubrooms in early 1958 (Another idea I suspect Eric Jones took from Liverpool) and once they had these premises all manner of things became possible. From Ken Bulmer's account in *Prolapse #7* we know that the group was able to turn an inner room into a temporary 'shrine' for the ceremony held to 'knight' Sir Edward Tubb and Sandy Hall (secretary of the London Circle) on their visit in 1959. In a similar way TAFF-winner Ron Ellik was inducted into the Order at the clubroom during his trip to the UK in spring, 1962. But no more large-scale inductions were staged at Eastercons and it's possible that St Fantony would have slipped quietly into oblivion – especially with the sad death of Bob Richardson in 1963 – if London had not won a second worldcon for 1965.

I said earlier that memories fade and perceptions alter, and so it was with St Fantony. In correspondence, Keith Freeman agreed that the last thing Eric Jones would have wanted would be for his Order to have become an exclusive elite, "with the fifty to eighty active fans around when St Fantony was started – yes, it could well have been envisaged that they'd all be knighted. At between five and ten at a time it wouldn't have taken long!" But fandom had changed by 1965 – nearly two fannish generations had passed. The North/South divide was long forgotten but the 'generation gap' had opened between old fans and BSFA-inspired newcomers and misunderstandings were creeping in.

Another ceremony took place at *Loncon II* and this was where (to quote Peter Mabey again) the Order started to become a fannish 'Hall of Fame'. Of the nine new Knights inducted, only one – Harry Nadler – could be said to be a 'new' fan while Ken Bulmer and Ted Carnell dated back to the pre-war era. This sent a very misleading signal in that it suggested St Fantony was just something for the older fans, with little relevance to the in-coming generation who had no idea what it was all about. Ethel Lindsay was inducted that year and as we've seen, even she didn't really understand!

Some had always had mixed feelings about St Fantony; Walt Willis was quoted in *Prolapse #7* as saying, "As far as I'm concerned all this Fancy Dress and Armour stuff is all right for a laugh as a 20-minute convention turn, but for me it's not part of the fannish way of life. These long drawn-out and half-serious rituals and initiation ceremonies remind me too overpoweringly of the Masons or the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffalos." And on the *wegenheim* e-list in 2005 Ted White noted a similar comment: "I'm trying to remember the undercurrent of conversation between Jim White, Bob Shaw, Chuck and Walt Willis at or just after the '65 London Worldcon on the subject of St. Fantony. It was in general negative. They didn't approve of the way it was done and maybe not of what it was, either."

Not surprisingly, by 1965 many of the newcomers since 1957 – of whom Jim Linwood and Chris Priest were fairly typical – dismissed St Fantony as irrelevant, or worse, as a relic of a bygone age. My own feelings were ambivalent; I was impressed by the colour and spectacle of that first occasion without having the least idea what it was all about. In later years I came to enjoy the more comic aspects of the ceremonies while still feeling vaguely disconnected from these people, although I knew some of them quite well. Later, after I began organising things of my own, I came to realise how difficult it is to carry off *any* sort of performance, and to appreciate the magnitude of the effort the Knights had been making for our entertainment.

The Order *did* try to change with the times – In late 1965 Eric Jones put out a short statement⁴ ‘to bring latter-day fen into the picture’, in which he wrote that [it] ‘has also become a memorial to Bob; his interest in pageantry being mirrored in the St. Fantony ceremony which will, in future, take place at Convention time. The Order was never intended to be a serious and constructive ‘in-group’, its main aims in life are good room-parties at cons and at other times.’

There was an investiture at *Yarcon* in 1966 but sadly, Eric died at the beginning of 1967. Again, the Order was nearly wound-up but Keith Freeman (egged-on by Ken Slater!) ensured it continued, with ceremonies at the 1967 & 1968 Eastercons, and again in 1971 when Bob Shaw and Jim White were knighted at Worcester (not mentioned in the *Mimosa* list). It was around this time that it took on the role that Chuck Connor mentioned – it said that those wearing the badge would always be glad to help newcomers find their way into fandom. And in the *Eastercon 22* Programme Book the Order stated that its purpose was ‘to recognise fans who had done good works and were convivial, but wouldn’t necessarily be eligible for TAFF’.

After that the story becomes uncertain; I feel certain there was one further British ceremony, but no-one seems to know when, or who was knighted; my guess would be *Tynecon*, but you’d think someone would remember! There’s some circumstantial evidence that a revival was attempted that year, in that Keith and Stan Nuttall produced their ‘History’ and Eric Bentcliffe & Norman Shorrock put out the impressive first issue of *Blazon*, intended to be the ‘St Fantony fanzine’, in April 1974. On the *wegenheim* e-list Ken Slater added a little more to the story (though I think he’s wrong about the location):-

“To the best of my memory the last ceremony was at one of the Brighton conventions; I cannot recall which, but I think it was the one at which the fanzine *Blazon* was published. I remember some comparatively new fan asked Phil Rogers about the badge, and we offered an explanation. Queried why only one person was wearing a blazer, Bob Shaw said we only had the one, and whoever was on ‘duty’ wore it ... as you probably realise, Bob, Phil and I were somewhat different in build, and we passed this off with some comment like ‘it adjusts’.

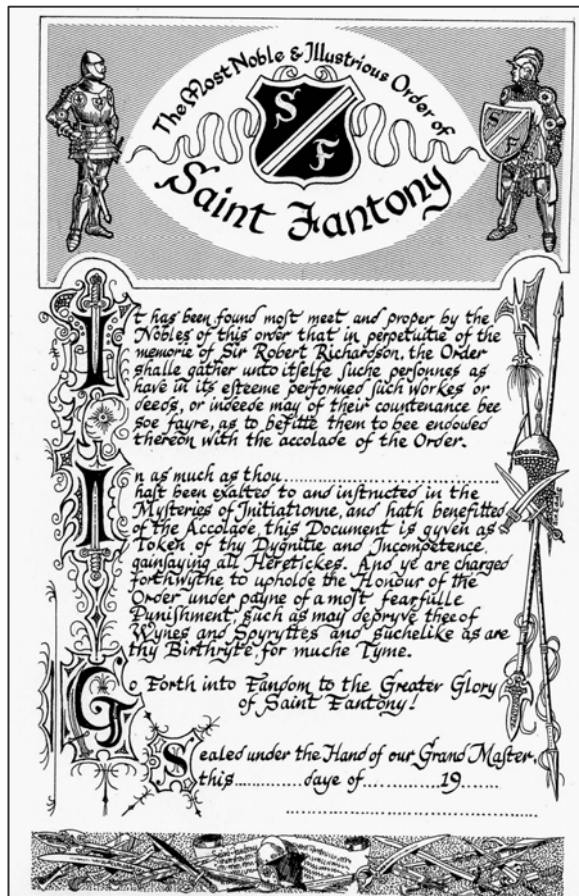
“I recall that we had a meeting in someone’s room, discussing selling the fanzine, and what to do (if anything) with St. Fantony who seemed to have served his time, and was no longer an ‘in-joke’ or an ‘honour’ that anyone appreciated. I’m not sure whether there was actually was a ceremony; I know we talked about one, but it wasn’t a simple matter for Keith to ring or write to a dozen or so ‘knights’ and collect suggestions for new people to be ‘honoured’. Too many existing, too thinly spread.

“Some years later I tried, with Keith and Phil’s approval, to get some other people to revive the scheme, but it never jelled. I think one time was when Lianne Norman was chairing *Eastcon* (which finished up about as far West as you can get and stay in the country) and I passed over the notes and stuff I had on the ceremony to whoever was doing the programme. But it didn’t happen, and I didn’t get the notes back – or only part of them – so decided that ‘St. Fantony’ time was behind us, and forgot all about it.”

Unfortunately, as the years had progressed St Fantony had become irrevocably disengaged from the mainstream of fannish activity out of which it was born, and with its passing some of the magic left British conventions. // pw.

References

1. Greg Pickersgill notes, “This is a handwritten piece that Ethel appears to have done for Jenny Glover at some point in the past, probably before the 1995 Glasgow worldcon according to an inference in the accompanying letter. It may even have been published in one of Glover’s fanzines.” (In Greg’s possession.)
2. A foolscap, photocopied document prepared in 1974 by Stan Nuttall & Keith Freeman, circulation unknown but possibly linked to the appearance of the St Fantony fanzine, *Blazon*, in the same year. (My copy from Ina Shorrock.)
3. Article in *Mimosa #11* (December 1991), now available on a website: <http://jophan.org/mimosa/m11/kyle.htm>
4. A flyer, ‘produced and printed by Ser Eric Jones and Ser Keith Freeman at the M.N.O.O.S.F. Press, 44 Barbridge Road, Cheltenham, Glos. Eng. Distributed by Ser Ron Bennett with *Skyrack* – the only publication officially used for torture of fen who fail the ‘Test’. (27.9.65)’ The reverse side carried a ‘Decree’ which announced the names of new Knights inducted at *Loncon II* and was illustrated by Eddie Jones.



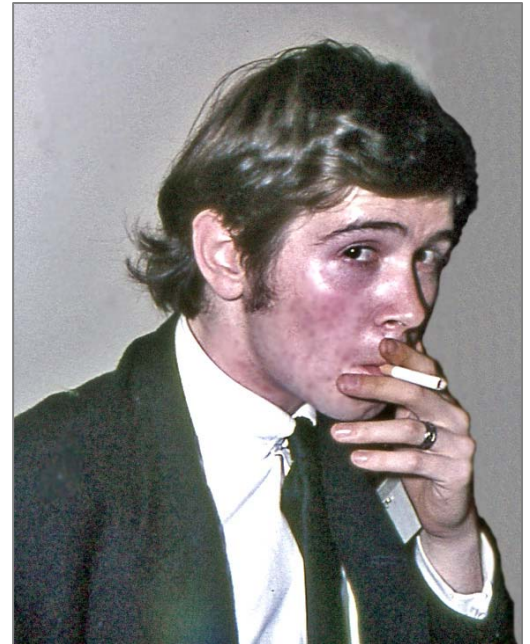
‘Sir’ Eddie Jones was a superb artist and he produced this ‘certificate’ for new members of the Order, which also honours the memory of Bob Richardson.

It was Jim Linwood who pinned the ‘New Wave’ label on the fannish class of 1964, which included Charles Platt, Chris Priest, Beryl Henley – and me. We might have thought we were the bright young sparks who were going to revitalise British fandom, but after the dust had settled I realised this had never been true. The *real* ‘New Wave’ broke in the generation immediately before us with Jim himself and his contemporaries Alan Rispin, Bruce Burn, Jim Groves, Pat Kearney, and a whole bunch of others (including Mike Moorcock) who had arrived in the late 1950s to inject new life into an ageing fandom. Many of them moved into an apartment house and became the ‘Kingdon Road’ set, and Dick Ellingsworth was one of their number. (pw)

The *real* ‘New Wave’ – Part I

By Richard Ellingsworth

In characteristic pose
at *Loncon II*, 1965
Photo; Peter Mabey
(colour)



Late one Saturday morning in early September 1957, along with a crowd of other kids, I emerged from the Odeon cinema in Hayes, Kent, just in time to see my bus trundling past. At fourteen, I would normally have considered myself too mature for Saturday morning pictures, so I can only assume they were showing a science fiction serial: probably either *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* or *The Purple Monster Strikes*.

The Flash Gordon serial was something I would never knowingly miss and, not too many years later, I would be meeting with Pat Kearney each week, to watch it at the News Theatre in Charing Cross Road. The Purple Monster thing always intrigued me because it was, of course, in black and white, which made the insistence on the colour purple rather redundant, and also because I never really managed to detect anything that remotely resembled a real plot.

However, the point was that I had missed my bus. If I'd been just a little faster leaving the cinema, or if that

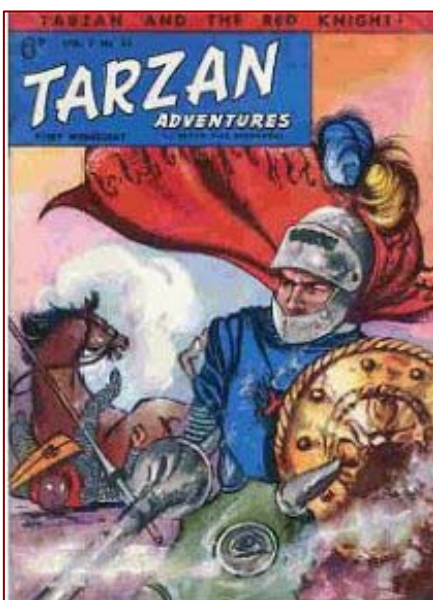
bus had been just thirty seconds later, my life would have gone in a completely different direction. Rather than wait for the next one, I decided to buy a comic from the station bookstall and walk home. The bookstall was something of a disappointment: they didn't have any of the comics I would normally have bought, but I picked up one carrying a picture of an armoured knight on the cover, and flicked through it.

It was *Tarzan Adventures*, volume 7 number 22, dated August 31, and sandwiched between the Tarzan strip and the Buffalo Bill serial at the back was a Burroughsesque tale, *Sojan the Swordsman* by one Michael J Moorcock. I bought the comic and was impressed enough by the Sojan story that I placed an order for future issues. Over the year that followed, Mike ran a number of Sojan stories, plus material by authors such as Syd Bounds, Jim Cawthorn, and Ron Bennett (under the Bob Lumley house name).

More importantly for me, he also ran a couple of pieces on fandom, including photos from the recent London Worldcon. I began a regular correspondence with Mike and, a year later, we'd already met a couple of times (we lived close to each other) and I had co-authored the final Sojan story with him, which was published just after he left TA. It was at our first meeting, incidentally, that Mike saddled me with the name of ‘Dick’, presumably in an attempt to soften my inbuilt formality.

Of course, I'd already known that there was such a thing as fandom, from reading SF pulp magazines that were sent regularly to my next-door neighbors by their Canadian cousins. Until now, however, I had always believed it was a purely North American phenomenon. Now that I knew better, I wanted to become part of it!

I was still at school and although Mike was the only fan I had actually met, I tried my hand at publishing a fanzine. Without access to a duplicator, it had to be typed with as many carbons as I could squeeze into the typer, so the circulation wasn't huge. It was only a few pages, but it brought letters of comment from no less than Archie Mercer and Vic Ryan, both very kind and encouraging. However, I



The start of it
all, 31st August
1957 – this issue
put Dick on the
road to fandom!
Photo; Mike
Moorcock

wasn't going to do the bit with the carbon paper again, in a hurry, so my pubbing activities were put on hold for a while.

I was also subscribing to a couple of fanzines and corresponding with some overseas fans, including a Canadian, Harry Phelan, who sent me things like old *Planet Comics* and *Flash Gordon* newspaper strips, and even some new Gnome Press books, in exchange for British publications. One of the greatest pleasures from those days was the periodic duplicated booklist from Fantast (Medway) Ltd. I couldn't afford to buy much from it, but reading the list itself was nearly as good as reading a book.

I left school early, at Easter 1959. I wasn't exactly thrown out. The headmaster just suggested politely that it might be in my own best interests, as well as those of the school, if I were not to return after the Easter break. That suited me down to the ground. I'd noticed that one of the young men in my street, who was a reporter for the local paper, always seemed to be surrounded by pretty girls, so I thought maybe I should become a journalist. It didn't occur to me that the fact that this guy was six feet tall and owned a flash car might have something to do with his success with the opposite sex. Fortunately, the nice lady in the Youth Employment Bureau quickly talked me out of my ambition to be the new Clark Kent and, within a couple of weeks, I had a job as a very junior clerk in a major magazine publisher close to Victoria Station in London.

The National Magazine Co published titles such as *Good Housekeeping*, *She*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, and imported such magazines as *Cosmopolitan* and *Popular Mechanics*. Nothing of much interest, but it was a foot in the door of publishing. Although there probably wasn't a single individual lower than me in the company hierarchy, I actually had two offices all to myself, and one of those contained a duplicator! It was a Fermaprint, an electric, twin-drum machine that nobody else seems to have heard of -- even Googling the name only turns up one (unhelpful) result! That machine (and the paper and ink perks that went with it) was to do sterling work for fandom over the next couple of years...

Now that I was working in London, Mike would occasionally drop by my office and we'd go for a sandwich or a coffee. It wasn't long before he took me along to my first Globe meeting, and introduced me first to Lew, the landlord. Being only just sixteen, I'd expected Lew to want to eject me from the premises, but he was very understanding and said I could stay as long as I didn't drink alcohol and I didn't try to get served at the bar. To be honest, I'd expected most older fans to be disapproving of my pimply presence, but most of them were extremely kind and went out of their way to make me feel accepted. Syd Bounds and Frank Arnold were especially welcoming, and they would each greet me warmly every time I turned up at the Globe, and would always find time for a chat. Syd knew the editor of *She* magazine, one Joan Werner-Laurie, and seemed tickled pink by the fact that I worked for the same company. I think I only spoke to the lady once or twice in the four years I worked there, (she was in a different building) but Syd always asked me how she was, even long after I left the firm.

I was amazed by the sheer number of people that were crammed into that bar. As well as Syd and Frank, there was the imposing figure of Charlie Duncombe, Ron and Daphne Buckmaster, Vince and Joy Clarke, Sandy Sanderson, Ella Parker, Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, Arthur Thompson, Bobbie Wilde (soon to become Bobbie Gray) and the younger generation of fans such as Pete Taylor, Barry Bayley, George Locke, Ivor Mayne, Sandra Hall,

Tony Kline (who was later to disgrace himself by running off to join the Scientologists), Alan Bale, and many more.

It was a time when the London Circle was trying to get its act together. If I remember rightly, there were even membership cards. However, the same troubles that were to beset the BSFA were already showing themselves. From what I can remember, the Buckmasters seemed to be the most vocal proponents of the sercon viewpoint in the argument which eventually laid Elsie to rest. From what I could gather, there was one group which seemed to think that fans could actually have a significant effect on what was written and published, and another group who thought we should just spread the word and have a good time. Of course, that's over-simplifying matters, but it's the only sense I could make out of what was going on.

In all the discussions that went on around me, I just found myself agreeing with whatever Ted Tubb said. That man was so persuasive he could have sold me a second-hand car I already owned. Some years later, I observed him exercising his salesmanship talents on a stand on the main concourse one of the London mainline stations: he was surrounded by a throng of enthralled potential customers and even his young female helpers were open mouthed with admiration.

In the months that followed, I did the duping for what I think was Mike's last fanzine, *A Fanzine Called Eustace*. It was done piecemeal, with me doing two or three pages at a time as he passed the stencils to me. As a result, his optimistic remarks about the London Circle at the start of the zine had to be turned around by the time we got to the last page. Elsie had committed hara-kiri.

Despite the fact that I wasn't a member of the BSFA, I supplied much of the paper for, and assisted in the duping and collating of *Vector 6*, which was finally put together over a weekend in Sandra Hall's flat in Kensington, by Sandra, Mike, myself and Pete Taylor. Tikwis, Sandra's lovely younger sister, showed herself once or twice, I think, but I don't recall that she actually helped.

I also took over the *Burroughsiana* title from Mike. I pubbed one issue, but it had a very limited circulation because one of the key stencils, a full-page illo by Jim Cawthorn, disintegrated after only about a dozen copies.



Jim Cawthorn's haunting image of Imric, for the back-cover of the one issue of *Burroughsiana* that Dick edited.

Perhaps it was just as well, since the only piece of note was an article by Mike, about L Sprague de Camp, that had appeared already in *Vector* 6. In due course, *Burroughsiana* did see the light of day again, but not until the mid 1970s when it made a brief appearance under the aegis of the British Edgar Rice Burroughs Society.

Later in 1959 was the Symposium, which was really just a big fannish party in South Audley Street. Ken Bulmer (among others) had wanted to call it a *Conversazione*, which would probably have been more apt. The attendees included a young bloke called Peter McIntyre, a cousin of Sandra and Tikki Hall, who wasn't actually a fan, and at one point we went out for a short walk, to find a cigarette machine. While we were out, Peter let off a firework and, of course, about a minute later, a policeman loomed out of the darkness. Peter got a good talking-to by the copper and then persuaded me not to say anything about it when we got back to the others.

Among the attractions was the famed Moorcock/Taylor double act, where Mike would play the guitar and they would both sing 'We Met On The Steps Of A Moscow Latrine', to the tune of a Cossack dance. The first line would just be repeated several times, to be followed by 'Then we slept on the steps of a Moscow latrine' a couple of times. After each chorus, they would break for a bit of patter: "Igor Igorovitch invented the penny-farthing bicycle." - "Correction! Igor Igorovitch invented the rouble-kopek bicycle!" Or: "Christopher Columbovitch discovered America." - "Christopher Columbovitch was a dirty fascist traitor!" This, of course, was a time when the Soviets were claiming to have invented everything from bubble gum to toilet paper, so the patter evoked rather more laughter than it probably would today.



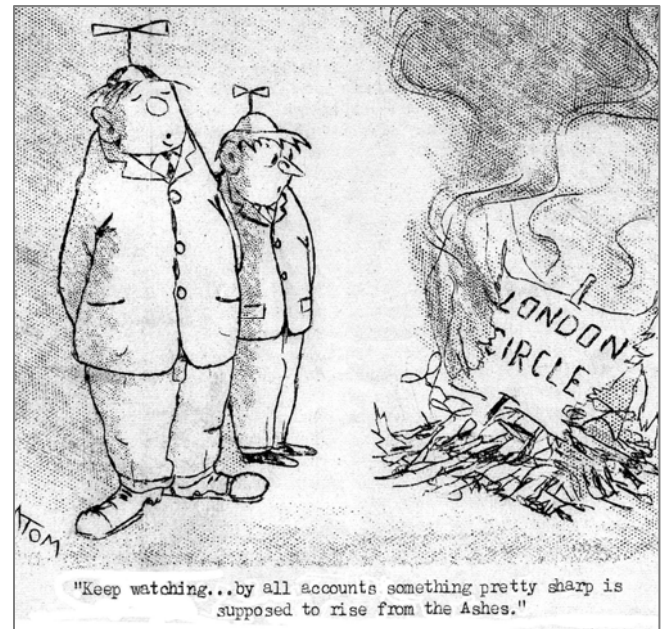
Mike Moorcock, August 1957, at the desk of *Tarzan Adventures*, which he edited at age 17.

Photo from Mike.

Another number, sung to the tune of 'Home On The Range' went something like:

"Oh, give me a home / Where the wild reindeer roam, / Where the yak and the Russian bear play. / Where we met the man / With the second Five Year Plan, / To make the first Five Year Plan pay." **Chorus:** "Home, home in Siberia / It's the home of Bulganin and Beria / It's here you are led / If you're not a good Red, / With a dear old Cossack commissar to take care o' ya."

Second verse: "It was down in these mines / Not that far from Ukraine / That Lenin and Trotsky first schemed. / 'Twas here that they dreamed / To get rid of the Queen / and the rest of those Romanov fiends." And so on



Topical Atom illo from cover of *Hyphen-23*, November 1959

Such entertainment notwithstanding, The London Circle collapsed in a heap that very month, to be replaced immediately by The SF Club of London.

I didn't have very much to do with the SFCoL at first. My limited finances meant that I could attend either SFCoL meetings or the Globe. I chose the latter and I still believe it was the right choice, since that was where fans from outside London would occasionally turn up. I'm pretty sure it was at the Globe that I first encountered such luminaries as Jim Linwood, Alan Rispin and Ken Potter. Later, too, there was Pat Kearney, Pete Mansfield, and a host of others. Even Arthur C Clarke turned up one evening, showing off stills of '2001' that was currently in production. The Globe was a good place to be for a young fan.

Easter 1960 was just three weeks before my seventeenth birthday. I don't think my ultra-conservative parents liked the idea of my spending an entire weekend in the company of weirdos and freaks, but they probably realised that if they said "No," I'd have gone to the Con, anyway.

It was a little less than a year since my first evening at the Globe and I'd already witnessed the Decline and Fall of the London Circle, and the Rise of the Science Fiction Club of London. The Symposium had further whetted my appetite. Nothing was going to keep me away from the Sandringham Hotel. Or so I thought...

I'd emerged from the tube at Lancaster Gate, I think, (though I could be wrong about that,) and was consulting a piece of paper with directions, when a female voice hailed me with, "Are you a fan?" It was Gill Adams, who explained there had been a change of hotels, and redirected me to the Kingsley in Great Russell Street. I never got around to asking Gill just what made her think I was a fan, but I felt rather flattered that she had recognised me as one.

The Kingsley was just down the street from the British Museum, where I would be working in a few years' time, and just round the corner from the Atlantis Bookshop, where Sandra Hall worked, I believe. It was the sort of shop that these days would be called 'New Age' — the sort of thing that litters places like Glastonbury.

I was sharing a room with Don Geldart, a quiet man with a good, subtle sense of humour, and we hit it off from the start. For many years, he was one of my best

mates, in fandom or out of it. After dumping my stuff in the room, I bundled down to one of the lounges where everybody seemed to be congregating. Soon, with a few other young fans such as Brian Jordan and Jim Linwood, I was sitting on the floor at the feet of Ella Parker and Ina Shorrock, admiring Ina's legs, in true fannish tradition. The management initially had some objection to fans lolling around on the floor but since there weren't enough seats to go round, I think they eventually just threw their hands in the air and retired, muttering darkly to themselves.

In reality, I suppose, it was all pretty shambolic, but the main organisers, Ella Parker and Bobbie Gray, had worked a minor miracle in getting the Con going at all, considering the way the Sandringham had cancelled the arrangements at such a late date. There wasn't too much of a programme but, since I managed to miss most of it anyway, that didn't matter to me and it didn't seem to particularly bother anyone else, either.

Most convention goers had apparently been told beforehand about the change of hotel. It seems I hadn't been notified because I'd been expected at the Globe the previous evening but had failed to show. I was far from being the only fan to turn up at the wrong place and later, Dave Kyle showed up and announced that he'd already made a speech at the Sandringham and wasn't going to do it again now.

Dave wasn't the only American at the Con. The TAFF delegate, Don Ford, was very much in evidence throughout the weekend, towering head and shoulders above us tiny Brits. The man seemed to be everywhere — even on our frequent forays into the great outside to look for food, we'd usually spot his head in the distance. The other foreign fan of note was Sture Sedolin, a young man from Sweden, who was continually attempting to get people to



Don Ford, TAFF-winner and Fan GoH, was certainly popular with the ladies; l-to-r, Ethel Lindsay, Daphne Buckmaster, Margaret Jones, & Ina Shorrock's legs. Photo by Keith Freeman

talk about science fiction, but without much success. Taking pity on him, I attempted to talk with him at one point, but found it pretty heavy going. For a long time afterwards, "You want to talk science fiction?" was a catch phrase among London fans.

As I said, I managed to miss most of the programme but so, it seemed, did a lot of other people. I wouldn't say it was the *best* Con I ever attended — I'd have to award that honour to Worcester in 1971, but it was certainly the most fannish. Most of the time, I seemed to find myself in company with Jim Linwood, Alan Rispin and Brian Jordan, all of them slightly older than I was but the closest to my own age that there were. I have always thought I was the youngest attendee, but I see from his Con report (recently copied for me by Jim Linwood) that Archie Mercer awarded that honour to one Harry Gilbert, who is not someone I remember.



Brian Jordan, Alan Rispin and Jim Linwood, in Manchester, Whitsun 1959. Photo from Brian

The beautiful Tikwis Hall was also present but was being monopolised by another young fan, Doug Lacey. At some point, a group of us spirited her away from him, leaving him to wander the corridors, mournfully wailing, "Tikki? Where are you, Tikki?"

I think it was on the Saturday night that the room parties seemed to be at their best. One that I especially enjoyed was in Dave Kyle's room. Apparently, he'd gone to bed before being besieged by loads of fans and remained there, seeming rather bemused, until we dispersed, at the management's urgent behest. I found it impossible not to like Dave: he seemed to turn up at almost every Con and was always friendly and interesting.

After being chased away from that room party, I headed back for the room I was sharing with Don, only to discover another, somewhat quieter party going on in there. Ken and Irene Potter were sprawled across my bed and, since it seemed I wasn't going to get the use of it that night, I dropped into a vacant space on the floor next to Ivor Mayne. Don was there, of course, and I think George Locke was probably one of the others. It was a quiet, conversational sort of party, the loudest noise being the occasional deep chuckle from Ken. Nobody who heard Ken laugh could ever forget it. I don't think I got any sleep that night.

The film on Sunday was *The Day The Earth Stood Still* but I missed it. I was sprawled across my bed at the time, catching up on my missed sleep. I have still never seen that film.

I returned home on Monday a very happy young man. Though my fannish activities were still not as frequent as I would have liked, the groundwork had been laid for the next major change in my life: my entry into Kingdon Road fandom. //— Richard Ellingsworth



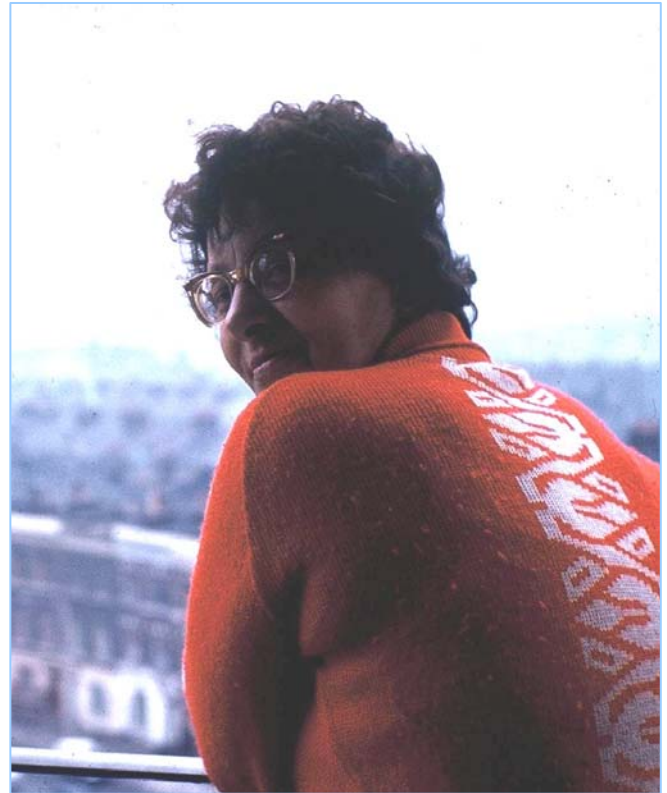
Ella Parker first appeared at Kettering in 1958, but she moved quickly to the heart of London fandom. I never really knew her, only went to one (the penultimate) gathering in her flat and spoke to her only a few times, but distinctly remember that gruff voice, her commanding personality. When I came along in 1963/64 she was committed to running the second London worldcon but was already starting to back away from fandom. After *Loncon II* she held no more meetings, pubbed no fanzines, and though she attended a few more conventions she took very much a back-seat. Her fannish career had lasted for little more than ten years – but for a while she was at the very centre of things, as 20-year-old Bruce Burn discovered when he arrived from New Zealand in 1960. (PW)

Forgotten Fans #3 Ella Parker, Mother Hen

Or, My Time in the Pen

By Bruce Burn

High-rise living; Ella looks over the London rooftops just after moving to Wm. Dunbar House in 1962. Photo; Bruce Burn (colour)



I have always had the greatest respect for Ella Parker. You might not think so, and perhaps I didn't always demonstrate great respect, but I admired her and was constantly surprised at the hidden depths in her character.

Ella Anderson Parker appeared well into her thirties when she first became involved in SF fandom during the late nineteen-fifties in London. Her first name was Isobel, but she didn't like it and adopted the diminutive. Ella was Glasgow born and had already survived the tussles and troubles of life by the time she encountered fans. She'd worked as a canteen assistant, bus conductress, typist, and factory hand. It seemed to me that the new friends she found were a relief from whoever she may have known before, and by the time I met her first she had embraced her new way of life with enthusiasm.

Of course, Ella had a whole lifetime of experience behind her by the time I first met her in August of 1960, and as a fan she'd attended several gatherings, with her first convention being in 1958, the year she met Jim Linwood. Jim knew her for much longer than I did – until well after I had left England and returned to New Zealand.

Jim says "Ella was raised in a Scottish orphanage with her brother, Fred, and both came to London during the war. She worked as a bus conductress during the Blitz and saw some dreadful sights. I think she contacted Archie Mercer via a prozine around 1958 and he suggested she go to the Globe meetings. There she met Paul Enever and inherited *Orion*. Bruce Burn deduced from her passport that she was 39 when she visited America in 1961. Ian McAuley courted her for a while and even proposed marriage – at the

time she asked me, a callow 19-year old, what she should do. She always treated us Youngfans like adults and although she could be very spiky at times I regard her with some affection."

Jim adds, "Ella saw the importance of networking (the current usage of the word hadn't been invented then) among the young BSFA recruits and through her I met fans of my own age and we set up (under Ella's guidance) the YSFRG which included several future well-known fannish names. Her own regular Friday night meetings at their height in the early sixties were much more popular than the Globe until a certain person started jumping over the settee and Ella closed them down."

Ella once told me that the difference between 'ordinary' people and fans was that fans met as if they were already friends, continuing a conversation they'd begun elsewhere. It was the difference, she said, between meeting with fists and meeting with a warm handshake.

The strange closeness one can feel to people met only through letters and fanzines was immediately welcome in her life. She was awed by the people she met in her early days as a fan in the London Circle. One suspects the awe she felt never lessened, even though many acquaintances became familiar visitors to her home.

That home had tales of its own. This was 'The Penitentiary', or the Pen for short: a three-bedroom flat above a butcher's shop at 151 Canterbury Road in Kilburn, an inner-city suburb of north London. The whole district appeared run-down, as well it might since most of the buildings were due to be demolished to make way for large tower-blocks of flats.



Ella and Ethel Lindsay in Canterbury Road, probably around 1961. Photo; Peter Mabey (colour)

Much of the land around had been owned by the Church of England for many years, and most had been bought by the local Council, who planned the improvements that would include the apartment towers and all the spread of vertical slum-creation that was to provide the environment for the coming couple of decades. Ella found she had a low rent to pay, and by staying on in the old flat she would be guaranteed a flat in one of the new towers. In the housing scene of North London, it was a good option.

Ella shared the flat with her brother Fred, and as her involvement with fandom grew, so it made inroads into her home, but both she and Fred were hospitable to every intrusion. Eventually, the main room became a place for fanac, dominated by an electric Gestetner in front of the windows that overlooked Canterbury Road. In one corner was a bed, used mostly as a couch by visitors, but also the overnight resting place for many a travelling fan. Against one wall was a table with a mirror behind it, and the other walls were mainly backgrounds to an assortment of chairs and stools and small tables or boxes.

And what a background! The walls were covered by light tan wallpaper with thin vertical stripes in shiny gold with a flocked design reminiscent of Edwardian flower vases. On it, Ella had hung framed pictures and original sketches and cartoons, and numerous odd mementos, including plaster mouldings and at least one toy reptile. The other rooms of the flat were spread over two and half floors with a narrow stairwell providing a spiral connection between them. A curiosity was a basin with running water halfway down the stairs from the main room, alongside a small toilet cubicle. Beside the fanac room was a bedroom which I recall was used as a television watching space, and upstairs were Ella and Fred's own bedrooms. Somewhere there must have been the usual facilities of bathroom and kitchen, but I can't picture them these many years later, and am told by Jim Linwood that the place was known as a 'cold water flat' which apparently would lack the usual amenities.

Later, about the start of 1962, Ella would move to a tall apartment block, the William Dunbar Tower, built by the local council. I recall a working bee to move some of her gear from the old Pen to the new one, a two bedroom flat on about the eight or ninth floor of the building, with a view from a small balcony looking over the site of the old Pen. It was that near!

In the main room of the original Penitentiary, the Gestetner was in constant use, producing copies of *Orion*, Ella's personal fanzine, SFCoL publications, *Vector*, and

innumerable other fanzines including the original *Atom Anthology* and *Parkers Peregrinations (The Harpy Stateside)* about Ella's long USA trip in 1961. Many other fans would give a hand to produce the fanzines, particularly when it came to assembling the issues and stapling them. I can remember doing a great deal of interleaving on *The Atom Anthology*. That's why she gave me some discards to use as extra sheets in my own *Sizars* of the time.

A once-famous story of the *Anthology* concerned a stencil that Arthur Thompson had inscribed so heavily that we were able to print only a couple of dozen copies before the stencil fell apart on the silk screen. Ella rewarded her team of helpers by ensuring they received copies with the extra 'monster' picture inside. A later reprint by Ken Cheslin many years later included the monster picture, but that was all done with photocopying.

Ella had a special friendship with Arthur Thompson, 'Atom', the great fan-artist. They were both Glaswegians, and were staunch allies to each other. Arthur was a generous and kind person who donated his incredible talent for illustration and cartooning whenever he was asked. He could appreciate that Ella was essentially holding London fandom together, and worked in with her on any publication she might produce.

On most occasions, Ella would simply type the words onto a stencil, and leave spaces for Arthur to sketch his fabulous drawings. He'd happily fill in all the empty spaces and the headings for articles, usually without bothering to do a preliminary sketch. When Ella moved from 151 Canterbury Road to the nearby William Dunbar Tower, Arthur helped a great deal in setting up her new flat, painting, decorating, and putting up bookshelves

Arthur worked for Triang Toys in south London, where he lived with his wife Olive and their young daughter. Much of Arthur's work at Triang involved design of new miniature model cars and Trade Union activities and weekly meetings with the three brothers who owned the company. He and Ella shared their glory as working class kin, and, probably because of my Kiwi egalitarian ways, I was privileged to be included among their friends.

Ella herself was a complex person: not conflicted, however, she was completely in balance. She tried to project a rough take-it-or-leave-it exterior. Underneath that she was a caring person who'd been knocked about a bit by



Ella and Orion, January 1960 – it saw nine issues under her editorship and was not a bad fanzine, lively and (predictably) with a strong personality. Photo; Norman Shorrock



Ella with Sheila & Mal Ashworth, and Ron Bennett in foreground. The framed Atom illo on the wall is now in the possession of Billy Pettit. Photo; Ethel Lindsay.

life. The work she'd done was wide and varied, but she certainly was able to do office work because I took her along to the Graydon Bureau in the Strand and she got casual work through them (as did I while I was in London) to build up funds prior to her trip to the USA, as recounted in *Parker's Peregrinations*.

Ella Parker was extraordinarily generous, with her time and her resources. She was genuinely concerned for the welfare of young fans, many of whom came into fandom via the British Science Fiction Association. That was probably why Ella supported the members and organisers of the BSFA so strongly.

Look at the situation she found herself in. There had been two main centres of fannish gatherings in London in those days: The Globe pub, and the home of Vince and Joy Clarke and Sandy Sanderson at Inchmery Road in east London. Without any warning, Joy decamped with Sandy and Vince was left literally holding the baby, Nikki. A fannish centre had simply ceased to exist.

While Ella was relatively new to fandom herself, she felt she had to provide a new place for fandom in London. Poor Ella found herself the only one in a position to become totally involved in fandom and therefore the only one to be able to offer a home to fans from far and



Ella is kind to Brian Burgess at *Brumcon*, 1959, as Norman Shorrock sets up the projector. Photo; from Norman.

wide. She really had the role of running a 'focal centre' whether she liked it or not. She took that role quite consciously. We were all younger, and much too idealistic.

Ella also decided someone had to help nurture the young SF readers attracted for one reason or another to fandom. She felt she had become *in loco parentis* to the younger fans, and would seem very protective of them. In effect, Ella accepted what she saw as a Mission thrust upon her by circumstances to mother-hen a loose association of young fen. I think she also wanted to keep them away from the boozy crowd that we were in those days. But to do that she clearly found herself fighting human nature; I gained a distinct impression some of the younger fans were rebelling against her, seeing in her an Authority Figure that belied the genuinely warm and caring person she was. It would be interesting to hear from those who were the young fans concerned, to see if my impression was correct or off the planet in Cuckooland.

In later years, well after I had quit the scene, Ella herself left the fannish crowds and gradually hid away from old friends. Jim Linwood recalls, "It's a pity she became a recluse in later life, and I regret never dropping in on William Dunbar House to see her, but Vince Clarke had warned me that she had become unsociable."

Which really sounds quite extraordinary. I find it hard to imagine that her liveliness and her ability to draw around her groups of people who would help her organise conventions and tour groups and innumerable gatherings where her renowned two-spouted teapot would bring the teams together could all have withered away in such a short time. Could the stresses of living in a focal centre have worn her down? Did she finally run out of patience with her Friday night Youngfan gatherings which stopped abruptly in 1964? Was there exhaustion after the 1965 London Worldcon? I don't know, because I wasn't there anymore.

In the few years I knew Ella, we had only one falling-out and that was caused by my unwise attempt to be an accurate reporter in providing a word-picture of her in one of my fanzines at the time. Just because I called her "middle-aged" I got shat on by all and sundry. At the time, I was in my early twenties; she was in her later thirties or early forties.

To complicate the issue, it all occurred about the time I left the UK to return to Godzone and once home again I entered the challenging working world of commercial radio announcing and finally found the Right Lady and within a year was married to her. Still am, but for my by-then tenuous connections in fandom it was Bad Timing, because you couldn't really have a drag 'em out row from halfway round the world in those days of snail mail.

It might help a later generation to know that when we talk of Ella being gruff or untidy or older, everything is relative. Well, except for the gruffness, because that was part of the shield she felt she needed in order to face the rougher people of the world, and it had become habitual. Her appearance was...comfortable. She dressed for comfort in her own home, and who can complain at that?

But, in those more caring times it wasn't done to give graphic unflattering descriptions of people which might be taken as criticism, and I fell into that trap when writing in my own fanzines. Generally, if a person went out or was in the public view a person would put on their "Sunday best", and commentators reciprocated by ignoring that which was unflattering. The 'warts and all' attitude of Cromwell had not survived through the Victorian ages! But, for the sake of rounding this description of a fine person, here's some of the material I wrote, provided in an attempt to give a full picture of a lady I liked very much:



Holding court in her bedroom, last morning of LXIcon, where everyone came to say goodbye. Photo taken by Bill Gray.

“Ella Parker is....one of those rare people whose basic instincts lead her to Command. She has a personality that crackles on the senses and a manner so vivid that it tends to damnation or praise, hate or love. Perhaps she contains deep loves and bitter resentments: certainly the manner that allowed her ability of command to develop has tended to inhibit the growth of her ability to love until now her love of friends seems to be expressed by her ordering those people she likes, to pander to her whims. It’s as if when she likes someone they become ‘important’ to her, and the only way for her to feel sure of her ‘importance’ to them is to see how happily they accede to her wishes.” (from *Sizar 9*, in mailing comments to Lynn Hickman)

“...My first impression of you was that you were a rather washed-out-looking and slovenly-dressed middle-aged bourgeois woman. On later meetings this purely physical impression was modified to: a washed-out-looking and scrappily-dressed middle-aged-looking working-class woman..... Your voice was loud, but I’d heard loud voices before. There was hardness to your voice that I didn’t like..... Later still in our acquaintance I began to see beneath your threadbare appearance and flamboyant manner (which complement each other), especially in those long, long talks we used to have together. Remember? I particularly remember the night we talked away after you had returned from the USA. We talked and talked of so many things and when I eventually left (to go to work!) I felt that I really knew you.” (from *Sizar 10*, in mailing comments to Ella)

You might think those descriptions are not nice things to write, and perhaps you’re right. They certainly suggest I had the hide of an elephant. In my defence I should point out the first comments to Lynn Hickman were simply examining some interesting ideas concerning motivations and how people interact, and perhaps I got carried away. The second piece was a direct response to Ella questioning my perceptions. Again, I think I got carried away.

However, the follow-up to all of this was an attempt by Mike Moorcock to blast me out of the water, and he succeeded! Why he entered the fray I don’t know, except he said it was because I made such nasty comments about “...an attractive and personable woman whom I admire and greatly respect.” He then did as I did: went too far and blasted me: “That Bruce should make these comments from New Zealand is, I realise, typical of him. He should be careful not to display his innate vulgarity in future.” (*Scottish 35* pub. Ethel Lindsay, March 1964)

Now, that I felt was most unfair. The exchanges concerning my impressions of Ella began while I was in London, well before I left to return home. I met her several times after the first round of opinions had been exchanged, and neither of us felt aggrieved at each other. Ella held a “farewell Bruce Burn” party for me in her new flat prior to my departure, and Mike’s insinuation of some sort of cowardice was empty.

I had previously looked on Mike as a close friend, so the result of Mike’s uncalled-for intrusion was that I felt betrayed by friends half the world away and I ditched fandom completely until reluctantly excavated from my idyllic little life in a personal paradise nearly twenty years later by a new bunch of kiwifans who were doing what English fans did in the early seventies – re-discovering the history of their hobby.

Now, that’s my sad tale, but it should not reflect badly on anyone but perhaps myself. Certainly not on Ella Parker, for whom I have the fondest memories. You see, respect and fondness are merely challenged if you don’t like how someone dresses; they are not lost. Admiration at the writings and the dedication of a person never ceases even though you may cringe at the sound of their voice. Had we been able to continue the debate with another exchange it may well be much of it might have been resolved and perhaps life might have gone on its merry way.

I might have learned to use a tone less harsh in my fan-writing, as I certainly was able to do in any other writing and broadcasting. Ella was tough and might have told me to “hud yer whisht” or whatever the expression was that she used to suggest a speaker should “hold his wind”. Who knows?



Ella and her nemesis Charles Platt (the sofa-jumper), at the very last meeting in The Pen, December 1964. Photo; Dick Howett

But I do know one thing: Ella didn’t like being treated too kindly. Perhaps it got under her defences when she realised someone could see through that tough exterior. Well, that’s my impression after all these years.

During that night when she returned from the States we talked almost to tomorrow about her experiences there, and she constantly expressed her amazement at the kindness and hospitality and sheer generosity she had been shown by the Americans. I might say, she’d pretty well run out of money for her trip soon after the half-way mark, and had it not been for those Yanks the last part of the trip would have been quite miserable. Mind you, the trip, as I recall, was extended through that generosity! You see, Ella had one other remarkable attribute. You just had to *love* her.

- Bruce Burn //

The Melting Pot

That's what comes of drifting off-topic, right Steve?

So here's *your* chance to fly close to the Sun and heat-up some gossip from long, long ago.... (as Lilian might say). Unavoidable editorial interjections in *italics* and [brackets] in the usual way.



“You have unleashed a gusher in a field that appeared to be tapped out.” – Murray Moore, LoC

*Let's begin with a nice juicy letter from Brian, one of my earliest fanzine correspondents (his first LoC to Zenith in March 1965 more-or-less began the whole 'new wave' controversy). And now Brian also holds the record for **fastest** respondent – his copy of the last issue was posted at 4.00 p.m., second class as usual, and I was amazed to see a reply pop up in my inbox at 12.03 the next day. As always, Brian, you're an example to us all!*

Brian Aldiss
Oxford.

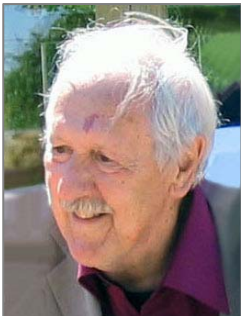


Photo: PW 2005

Dear Pete,

“How flattered John Brunner would be to find that we still take an interest in him so long after his body temperature has dropped by several degrees. Mike Moorcock says that Harry and I hated him. I'd say it was more a fascinated loathing. John was always trying to put you down. In any case, I recall one beatific evening when all present were all the better for drink and there was Mike, sitting by an open fire, burning something. I staggered over to see what he was doing and found he was attempting to burn all of Brunner's books – with considerable success. This is a bit the case of the consumer of pot calling the kettle black.

“When I was first around in fannish circles, John was very pleasant to me. We were staying in some ghastly hotel at some long-forgotten (but some reader will remember it) con. John and I were sitting at the same table; he could be very amusing. The coffee was served, almost cold. I grumbled. John said, ‘No, wait, it's slowly coming up to room temperature.’

“Then there was a Christmas shortly after Margaret and I were married, when he rang me and asked if he and Marjorie could come over. I said of course. They were escaping from John's Mother, always represented as tyrannical. (The Brunner family are pretty well-heeled; a distant relation, Hugo Brunner, is Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, and a pleasant cultivated man). Anyhow, we had a cheery time that day, with plenty to eat and drink and all of us very jovial. John and Marjorie sat on our chaise longue, from which later Darko Suvin, talking too vigorously, was destined to fall full length to the floor.

“But then came a time when I was getting some success. The green brunnerine eye flashed brightly. From then on he was in the mode of jealousy, of always trying to go one better. Harry could tell you tales to that effect. Brunner had an eidetic memory, which made him seem more intelligent than he really was. His dealings with publishers were sheer folly. No one wanted the hassle of publishing him. Not I, Mike, who ruined him, but his own egotism. I persuaded Charles Monteith of Faber & Faber to publish one of John's books, TELEPATHIST. He could have been set for life, or at least for a few more books, but he was so tiresome Charles vowed he would have nothing else to do with him.

“Harry was always more outspoken than I. Indeed, he was almost the last person to speak to Brunner at the Glasgow con where – another reckless gesture! – he died. I recall a time when, following one con or another, several writers congregated in my place in Marston Street, Oxford. We had to initiate an Avoidance Strategy, since Jim Blish was there and so were two of his wives, one an ex-. Also, if memory serves, as it is less skilled at doing these days, Fred Pohl was also there with two of his wives, one an ex-. Or maybe both were. Anyhow, we got on okay, helped with plenty of noxious liquid. But also present were Poul Anderson and his wife. They flung themselves on the floor – I had under-carpet heating – and opened up on what were bound to develop into leg-over activities. At this point, Harry gave Poul a good kick and asked him how he dared make such a student-like display in the home of Brian Aldiss. Maybe one day Harry will tell you of Mrs Poul's farewell kisses...

“The green brunnerine eye flashed brightly...”



Together again – by Jim Barker, from the BCFG Newsletter, 1975 (from Steve Green).

“We used to go – or maybe once we went – to Brunner's embarrassing parties, where a goodly number of Argentinian movie directors were gathered. Then he upped sticks into darkest Somerset and that was about the last I saw of him. Looking back, I can't help feeling compassion. Rich matrons make poor mothers. I hope you will be hearing from Harry on The Johnny Brunner Case. Meanwhile, I have another anecdote to offer. Part of Brunner's problem was that he was unsure of his identity. He was therefore uncomfortable – and made others uncomfortable – as indicated by the bizarre conduct so amply reported in your columns.

“I'm sure Mike Moorcock knows that John would dress up in what he regarded as hippie gear when he went to see Mike. John Bing, the Norwegian SF writer, stayed with the Brunners, and said that John had a special Going-to-the-Pub outfit, which included yellow leather gloves. He would drive to the pub, a mere hundred yards away, to complete the Pukka Sahib outfit. Of course all this seemed terribly pretentious to us plebs. Insecurity led to this sort of pretentiousness.

“In the days when Petrushka Whitebait, Ken Campbell and I were putting my show on the road (this is *SF Blues* – always kindly received in Brum), Ken said, ‘I'd better come to one of these cons, to see what's going on’. He came. At one point, a few beers in to the general frolics, Ken went for a slash. You peed into one of these long aluminium troughs, of the sort you might easily fall into after a few academic discussions. Ken was at one end, when he realised the chap at the other end of the trough was Johnny Brunner. ‘I could have a chat with him after I've shaken these drops off’ – so I imagine Ken thought to himself – when in charged a young con-goer. Seeing Brunner there, he rushed over and asked Brunner which of his own books he liked best.

“To which Brunner replied in all seriousness, ‘I believe my greatest work’ – and this was prick in hand, mind you – ‘my greatest work is *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*’. ‘My greatest work’... Jesus!... Ken slunk away.

“Having mentioned Mike, possibly I might tell you a story about him. The 1965 con at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham was over when Mike and friends drove up in a big car. They went into a sort of ground floor bar-cum-cloakroom place but were barred from going further. A bossy bugger came out of his hole and began slagging them off. I stuck my nose in and said we were part of the con. It cut no ice. Another nasty appeared. Mike demanded a drink. ‘We only sell bottles’, said Big'ed. ‘How much for a bottle of whisky?’ Mike asked. ‘Twenty-five quid,’ said Big'ed – a lot of dough in them days, mates...

“So Mike plonked down twenty-five quid on the counter. ‘We got no glasses,’ said one of the uglier minions. I grabbed the money. ‘No glasses, no sale.’ ‘Give them the bloody glasses,’ ordered Big'ed. So we stumped up – or Mike did. We took the glasses and went and sat at a little table to drink the whisky. This loathsome boss and his staff then came and stood menacingly over us. It looked like trouble. Then Mike rose to his feet and sang in a beautiful tenor voice an Irish song of revolution. The opposition looked aghast and retreated to their various holes. I never knew what that song was about. Nor have I ever forgotten it.

“I was sorry someone spoke ill of Jim Blish. He was learned and amazingly tough. I loved him. He died trying to figure out Coleridge's philosophy.

“You're doing a good job with *Prolapse*, though I'm never particularly interested in the past unless there is a slant to it. Of course in Brunner's case there was a decided slant. Why don't we talk about Sam Youd (John Christopher), a better writer than most of us put together, highly intelligent, marvellously amusing, still alive?”

As I said to you, Brian, I'd love to do something on Sam Youd but he's been out of fannish circulation for so long that where do we start? But sure enough, the very next day Harry came through on the Brunner case and with his story about Karen Anderson.... I couldn't find her picture anywhere – except one in her famous 'She-Devil' outfit at Loncon II, but here's the old buccaneer himself at Interaction, 1995.

Harry Harrison
Brighton.



Photo; PW 2005

Dear Pete,

“And so the Brunner legend grows...

“But I'm afraid that Mike Moorcock, with his usual boyish enthusiasm, let some slight exaggeration slip into his LoC. Neither Brian nor I would ever break another writer's rice-bowl. Yes, I am sure we made less than flattering remarks to friends about John. After all he and Marjorie had circulated a vicious and untrue rumour that was particularly cruel to Brian and I. Part of history; long forgotten. But neither of us would badmouth a fellow author to a publisher. Ghu forbid! Sleep with the enemy! In any case, as many have pointed out, Brunner alienated all of his publishers without any needed assistance.

“Brian turns the clock of memory back to the 1965 post-London worldcon do in his place in Oxford. I'm sure he was right in all the details, most of which escape me in a haze of alcohol. But Brian, yes, I do recall saying good night to Karen Anderson, giving her what I thought was to be a chaste peck on the cheek in your front hall.

“It was never to be! She seized my head in a grip of surprising strength, pulled my mouth damply to hers, and executed what I believe is referred to as a French kiss. But this was more like oral assault! Not with a normal tongue, but one of those large, pickled ones the butchers display. Reeking of old alcohol and fag ends.

“With some difficulty I escaped her embrace and fled to Brian's sitting room where I crouched behind the door and scrubbed my lips with my kerchief. But the door was thrust aside! Brian and I stared, wide-eyed at each other. He was wiping his mouth fiercely with his kerchief...

“Of such stuff dreams are made.”

“... this was more like oral assault!”

Mike Moorcock
Texas & Paris



Photo: Rob Jackson

**“...seeing that
armour almost
made me cry.”**



Ken's battered
sword and shield,
made for the 1959
Cheltenham
Pilgrimage.
Ken's emblem is
shown below.

*With thanks to Larry
Bulmer & Andy
Sanjyer*



Dear Pete,

“I thought I'd try to get a short LoC off, though I am rushing to hit several deadlines before I knock off to help Linda prepare for our long Paris trip. We'll be there until at least mid-November.

“Reading David Redd's letter about John Brunner's decline, I'm not sure there were exact parallels with Bill Temple. Bill was encouraged to go freelance, I thought, because of the sale to the movies of *Four Sided Triangle*. John was encouraged to go freelance because he could sell Don Wollheim short novels for Ace doubles and then continued to sell him work when he became DAW. This provided him with a basic income, as it did several writers, including Barry Bayley. When Don was no longer able to buy work, John's basic bread-&-butter income dried up. John also wanted to be free of his journeyman SF books (some of which were actually pretty good – I still think he was a better fantasy writer than an SF writer, but he didn't) and as his ambitions grew, especially after the success of *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*, he hoped to keep making the same kind of living he'd made turning out Ace Doubles and so forth.

“As Bob Silverberg, whose career somewhat echoed John's, found, a more ambitious and better-written book didn't necessarily guarantee better sales. Indeed, as we all know from experience or observation, bad books often do considerably better. If John had been content to do hack SF novels, take on some Blish-type novelisations or whatever, he would probably have managed to continue making a living. As I said, his 'straight' novels were absolutely awful and his steamboat novel, on which he'd set high hopes, wasn't much better. Unlike Silverberg (or me for that matter) he had no 'core' obsessions which identified him. But, like Ken Bulmer, he could no doubt have continued to pay the rent if he had been perhaps a little less anxious to receive critical praise.

“Bob Silverberg finally managed to get into a groove which suited him and his readers. But John, like Bill Temple, really did feel he should be getting paid good genre rates for writing non-genre fiction. My own view always was that if I took on a genre book it should try to be as good a genre book as I could do, but I wasn't being paid to produce a literary novel. I don't think it's fair to offer the public *Planet Stories*, as it were, and deliver 'Remembrance of things Past'. I do think if John had continued to have Don Wollheim as his bread-&-butter publisher and then used that as a base on which to write his non-SF or whatever, he would have been OK. Like Bill Temple, he died a very embittered person, though for somewhat different reasons. Both men, as I said of John, were their own worst enemies – expecting to be rewarded for trying. Critics might praise you for trying, but the public doesn't reward you for it.

“I know many 'literary' writers who would give their eye-teeth to have the average sales of the average SF writer, but something came over a lot of science fiction writers in the 70s – critical success, perhaps echoing that received by the likes of Bradbury or Vonnegut, became more important to them. I sometimes wonder if people like myself and Brian hadn't, in our efforts to improve the literary ambitions of SF, done some writers a disservice. Brian, Jimmy Ballard and I were, it seemed, fairly easily able to switch from genre to social fiction but I don't think we had any lack of respect for good genre writers, understanding that good genre work was often superior to literary work. Yet the debate tended to make some writers – Ken amongst them – somewhat self-conscious and feel they should be doing something other than what they were good at.

“Ken Bulmer, partly egged on by Pam, failed to turn himself into Henry James, as it were, and settled back into working mostly for his German market. Ken got almost obsessively involved in D&D and all that fantasy stuff in his last years and was probably as happy there as anywhere. His last letter to me, not long before he died, didn't seem bitter or miserable at all. His nature was just too sweet, I think, for him to bear grudges and he remained on good terms with Les Flood, who continued to be his agent. I had enormous love AND respect for Ken. He was one of the writers whom the New Wave wasn't kind to – nobody's fault and, as you probably know, I was not trying to replace those writers, just add a dimension so that writers of literary ambition had somewhere to publish. Ted was murder to edit – terrible grammar and spelling – but I ran his fiction and would have run more of Ken's, if he'd submitted it. He was kind and encouraging to me (as was Vince Clarke) when I was young and seeing that armour [*Prolapse #7*] almost made me cry as I remembered his gentle good humour and the fun he got out of everything.

“Equally, Ted Tubb seemed pretty happy about continuing his long-running Dumarest novels. Neither of these writers (or many others) had castigated writers for not being good enough (as Blish did) and they had perfectly respectable careers. (It's true, incidentally, that nobody ever called Jim Blish anything but Jim as far as I know. I thought he was an self-loving opinionated idiot, so didn't really get to call him anything, though he went to his grave convinced that 'Joyce Churchill' had written a bad review of a book of his. Wasn't me, but he said the initials 'JC' clinched it. As I recall the review was by Diane Boardman, though it could also be Mike Harrison. Both used that pen name. Carnell started all this by picking me a bloody name out of the railway guide; James Colvin was his choice).

“John Hall's reference to fannish dress sense seems especially relevant when compared to that picture of John Brunner in his hideous check leisure suit. John's attempts at 'trendy' clothing were wincingly, squirmingly, mind-numbingly appalling. Give me sports jackets and flannels any time. You couldn't make it up. Pooter trebled. The sixties had much to answer for where the likes of JB were concerned. I remember when those New York SF writers all went to San Francisco and started wearing beads and headbands. Deeply embarrassing.

“Loved those snippets from Belfast fandom. I always admired Walt, Bob, Jim and Co. for what seemed to me to be natural gifts for comic writing. It's great that you've got all these people talking again. Making a vast addition to the Fandom Files. One day some professor in the far future will be on intimate terms with us all, especially if you're also filing the letters. Strange, innit?”

John Hall
Wiltshire.

john.sila@virgin.net



Photo; Keith
Freeman

“...the more sex
you had with
more people, the
more liberated
you were.”

*The Brunners at
Eurocon I, Trieste,
1973.
Photo; Lars-Olov
Strandberg*



Dear Peter,

”Thank you ever so much for #8. I don't think we need to pursue that argument about fifties fans and so on much further, because Andy Sawyer sagaciously puts his finger right on the biggest and most essential difference between fen of that era and those that came after – viz; the War and National Service, and you print LoCs from Bruce Burn and Joe Patrizio (who I take to be of that generation – and I apologise to them sincerely if I am mistaken about that) who are uneasy or offended by my article about John & Marjorie Brunner. Compare and contrast their reactions with almost any others you printed. Are they not from a world where all such revelation was whispered about or read about pruriently every Sunday in the *News of the World*? In the dear dead days of Love, Peace, and Understanding (!) we had a word for it: ‘uptight’. But I should make it clear that I don't blame them for it – that was the society and upbringing they had and I wouldn't claim for a moment that I could have done what they and their generation did or have endured what they had to endure.

“Aside from that I am very pleased and gratified that my piece was received so warmly, after all that agony and indecision going back so many years. There's much I could add and amplify upon (particularly in response to Mike Moorcock and indeed Chris Priest, who was very lucid considering the amnesia he has so diplomatically contracted) but you want to put out *Prolapse*, not the ‘Proceedings of the John Brunner Memorial Institute’. I ought also to say that I am very grateful to you, Peter, for ushering the thing into the light and delivering up to me more egoboo than I could possibly merit. But...

“I am not going to let Peter Nicholls off the hook. All the events I have written about took place when I was long past any tender adolescence (in fact, I have already written in Earl Kemp's *eI* about an earlier exploit with another older woman during my school days), and if I had been unable to resolve anything ‘done to’ me, I wouldn't have written anything. As I said in the piece there's much more I could have said, much more unrestrained selfishness and violence, not to mention some instances of the group sex that Mike Moorcock also alludes to.

“If the open marriage was awful, if John and Marjorie were predatory and flaky, *then so was I!* I don't want or need Peter's intellectually-bankrupt misplaced sympathy, thanks all the same. I take full responsibility for what we did in that house, and I will not suffer being patronised. I know how naive and stupid it sounds now, but in those days it was commonly believed (though obviously not by Peter) that there was something liberating about sex, and the more sex you had with more people, the more liberated you were. As the story shows, it probably led to more conflict than liberation. And that is also why my own and Peter's paths didn't cross in Ratfandom. (Mind you, as someone who claims to have been a Ratfan but seems not to be aware of how central Greg Pickersgill was to the whole enterprise, Peter cannot have crossed a great many paths, seemingly). It was my shagging Greg's girlfriend, also at Nassington Road, that led to my estrangement from Rat Central for a very long time. Perhaps your next great project for *Prolapse* should be the complete and unabridged history of Ratfandom from its beginnings in the late sixties to its *fin-de-siecle* in the eighties (when I was well out of sight). I'm sure Peter Nicholls would find it an education.

“May I also say that I think the references to ‘kissing ashtrays’, both by Peter and others, are delivered from the Olympian heights of our present smoke-free age without much thought. Certainly, Marjorie smoked a lot, but look at the photo you printed on page 17 of #7 – see anyone without a fag? I too smelt like an ashtray, no doubt, albeit a mentholated one. Most of my contemporaries did as well, I expect – we didn't notice it in ourselves any more than we did in others. Again, it was the times – people should try and be a bit more charitable.”

[At this point I suggested to John that maybe he was being a bit hard on Peter Nicholls].

“I don't think I am being too unkind to Peter. His comments seemed to me to have issued forth when some Automatic Political Correctness Alarm was tripped. He may well be concerned for my welfare, but he is not my therapist and he would have done better to express his concern more generally. The Brunner's and I were not alone in our decadent promiscuity (if that's what it was). There was damage, but I wasn't a victim. (Something else I left out – the regular social scene at the waiting room of the STD clinic). So he's wrong about that, he's demonstrably ignorant about Ratfandom, which apparently was his corner of fandom(!) and in consequence I view his tale about his relationship with Jenni Couzen with a little scepticism. You'll note that in his account she has been transformed into some sort of super-liberal angel.

I didn't meet her more than once or twice and couldn't even remember her name until someone else did, but all the same, I think she was more in tune with ‘Life With The Brunners’ than Peter would be prepared to believe, though I don't have a shred of evidence for that.”

*[Robert Lichtman did some googling and sent a link which, as he comments, has ‘John B. in foreground, Marjorie on the right, and a *very* attractive slender black woman nearby who might well be ‘Della, the lovely South African nurse’ John refers to in his article in #7.’ (<http://tinyurl.com/2drhv7>)]*

John replied, “She is a bit too slender, but my brain is probably working on what she looked like in the eighties when I saw her last. The dates and even Marjorie's appalling eye-wear fit, so I reckon it is her. Della (who had one or two other names as well) was from Nigeria as I recall, or possibly Ghana – not SA – not in them days. So why is everybody on the street? Was there a bomb scare?”

The next letter presents another perspective on Ratfandom, John, from one of your pals on that other e-list I used to belong to, before they threw me out.

Graham Charnock,

London
graycharnox@blueyonder.co.uk



Photo; Rob Jackson

“Nice to see how many of us are still alive.”

“Pat left a scurrilous mag called *Prolapse 8* lying around. I don’t know where she finds stuff like this unless some old pervert is sending it to her through the mail. For something with such dreadful layout problems I actually found a lot of it quite readable, and it was nice to see so many old chums gathered together in one place remembering things they really should have forgotten about long ago or at least kept quiet about now. Nice to see how many of us are still alive, at least, and nice also to see there is still evidence of life on Planet Nicholls, for instance, even though his perception of Ratfandom seems a bit warped, but I suppose everybody comes at these cliquish phenomena from their own angle.

“For me Ratfandom was a core of Bros(nan), Greg and Roy and yes John Hall, because they all seemed to live pretty much in each other’s pockets. I might even be tempted to put John Hall in parentheses, because he at least seemed to have another interests, mostly sex. That’s not that the other three weren’t interested in sex but there was never any evidence that they were actually getting any. Pat and I were sort of stand-by observers and occasional celebrants, and if this particular fannish hell had ten circles we were probably with Malcolm and Peter Roberts somewhere about five, and Chris Priest somewhere out on the tenth. He was a professional for God’s Sake and I think Ratfans hated them even more than anyone from Birmingham.

“Seems a bit late to chime in with any Brunner anecdotes even though a large swathe of the current issue is still weighted towards him. And I don’t have but a couple and they are unexciting. A bunch of us Ratfans were loitering around the entrance to some con-hotel once when John sped up in his speedster, screeched to a halt, vaulted out and beamingly approached us. He didn’t know any of us from any other form of pond-life and I thus assumed because of our youth he thought we represented some kind of official welcoming party the committee had laid on for him. I don’t think we actually laughed in his face but I do think as one person we simply turned and walked away.

“I once attended a Hampstead soirée with Chris, during the Chinese-wife period, and was struck mostly by JB’s catholic (i.e. indiscriminate) collection of awfully earnest and political Folk, and what would now be called World Music. On the basis of this meeting I used to send him copies of fanzines which he always ignored until they finally became too much for him to endure and he sent me a postcard with ‘Don’t Send Any More!!!’ written in what looked like blood. Hey ho. Keep up the average work, Pete, but by the way, you are wasting your time with Pat. She doesn’t write LoCs. If like John Brunner you don’t want to hear from me again, I suggest you strongly advise her to keep any future issues locked away from my sight.”

Graham, you remind me of what the Guardian used to call the ‘Auberon Waugh Problem’, because in his Private Eye column he was so rude to people yet so entertaining that they didn’t know whether to embrace him or ignore him. This situation which was only resolved when Waugh ultimately managed to fall out with his mates at the Eye itself. Gosh, I do hope we don’t ever fall out! But now it’s time to up the game a little with some serious philosophical stuff about the Meaning of Fandom...

Andy Sawyer
Liverpool

A.P.Sawyer@liverpool.ac.uk



Photo; PW at Novacon 37

“My excuse is that I am only a ‘fake’ academic”
[but a very good sport! – PW]

Dear Peter,

“I’ve finally got round to my LoC on *Prolapse 8*, after thinking for a while about Peter Nicholls’ comment on my LoC in the last issue. I think I was talking about joining the BSFA rather than fandom, but Peter’s metaphysical explorations of whether fandom is an organisation or a state of mind mirror my own slight confusion. (Especially as I believe that the Catholic Church has abolished Limbo which according to the new pope was only ever a “hypothesis”, so I’m not sure whether that strengthens Peter’s arguments or not.) Despite his attractive sexual metaphors, I’m not sure I quite buy into his analogy – you can be a ‘fan of’ something but that’s different from being a fan. Fandom as we know it is the taking part. So can you be a fan on your own? I thought not and I still think so . . . but then I remembered someone I met a convention some years ago: it was his first con, which he’d heard about quite by chance, he knew nothing about the BSFA, about Eastercons, etc. – but he’d corresponded with a number of SF writers including, if I remember rightly, Mack Reynolds. So was he a fan before he ‘officially’ became one by attending a convention? Who knows?

“If someone has been a customer of Ken Slater for years and never gone to conventions or read fanzines, are they a fan? Very possibly yes, on the grounds that they almost certainly would have known about them so they have made a deliberate choice not to get involved, but that gets us into more theological disputes about the difference between ‘fandom in esse’ and ‘fandom in posse’ which is maybe getting too specialist, not to mention silly (‘fandom in posse’ indeed!) so I’ll turn to the 50th anniversary of St Fantony instead and remind you that in my garage are the helmets and weaponry I was given by Ken Bulmer’s son (stored in *his* garage for many years) and if they are needed for anything please let me know.

“Following on from that, Tom Shippey says that fan-history is boring, second only to academics banging on about their research, so if I say that I’ve just been to Finland to give a paper on 1950s British fandom at a conference, and I’ve been asked to write something for a book about Liverpool culture so am writing a piece on local SF writers which will mention the Liverpool SF groups (pre- and post-World War two), am I doubly boring? I think I should be told in case I make a habit of this.

“In Finland I talked about Irish Fandom – Willis & co – and why I thought ‘The Enchanted Duplicator’ and John Berry’s ‘Fables’ were interesting things to consider when talking about fannish identities. They seemed to think it was interesting anyway, because I was putting it in some sort of context – there was an Irish guy from the University of Limerick (talking about Morressey/Smiths fandom) who seemed to think the Irish connection was interesting, particularly as I was stressing that these guys were actually very good writers very consciously playing a game with other people – I ended with something someone quoted to me a couple of years ago – “We didn’t do much, but it was fun”. Always thought that was a good epitaph for fandom, if epitaph needed.

"My excuse is that I am only a 'fake' academic, unlike Tom who is a real one with more proper books that I could hope to match, so I'm allowed to do these things. There's an awful lot published about fans and fandom under the aegis of 'audience studies', a lot of which is interesting and relevant, some of which is almost certainly wrong, and very little of which suggests that any sort of fandom existed before the advent of the internet.

"More interesting stuff on John Brunner – I feel I ought to comment on Mike Moorcock's reporting of why Li Yi married John. I have never asked this question of her and the answer might well be true (the whole thing is far too complicated for me and I don't know the half of it) but as far as I'm aware Li Yi has done her best for John's memory since his death. She may well have been wrong in particular instances, especially in misunderstanding other people's motives and having an inflated opinion of John's status as a writer during the last few years of his life, but that's another matter. I think both of them were pretty badly treated by circumstance, and both found/find it hard to help themselves."

I was very interested in your paper, Andy, until I found the best bits (about 'The Enchanted Duplicator') had already appeared in Banana Wings! As for the 'University of Limerick' - pull the other one, or have we somehow strayed into the universe of a David Lodge novel?

David Redd

Pembs.

dave_redd@hotmail.com



Photo; from David, 2007

"His early death from liver damage was no surprise."

Dear Peter,

"Later than I intended, the LoC. I've actually read and re-read numerous items in this one; great stuff. You were right to worry about overdoing John Brunner, but it was all valuable, and with so much fascinating material to hand you must have had problems balancing it all. Perhaps the lettercol can now settle down and you can find room for those pieces by Dan Morgan and George Locke .

"To me, the most worthwhile part of a very varied selection, fannishly speaking, was the tribute to Eric Jones. The social history of a social fan, the sort of glimpse into the past which normally we fannish fans only see disjointedly in old conreps if at all. With lovingly chosen photos. The photos also make the BeaCon page, reprint though the text is an enormously entertaining and interesting package. It's this bringing-together which gives *Prolapse* such depth – is this the part of editing you enjoy most? You keep doing it! Like the Brunner-on-Brunner tailpiece which gives so much food for thought.

"JKHB must have stayed a fan all his life – divided man, obviously – and the point about him becoming human in late-night conversations is telling. Virtually all my lengthy talks with him were of that nature, and otherwise we didn't meet or write often enough to fall out. But Ramsey Campbell knew him over many years and doesn't seem to have fallen out either. (I can't agree that a full revival of John's fiction would appeal – far too much standard Fifties apparatus in there, used in standard ways. But as Ramsey points out, there are delights in his fantasies. If his folksy and low-key 'Dragon of Aller' (a short story in *Amazing*) had been by an unknown, I'd have watched this new writer as closely as I watched the young Paul McAuley.)

"Digression: could be that there was no falling out with Ramsey because this is one Really Nice Guy dealing with John here; I see Ramsey actually had an early story in a fanzine from Graham Hall, than whom no more difficult, etc. Again, I knew Graham too briefly for any spectacular disagreements. I must have told you how my last sight of him was his opening a beer bottle I'd given him. Very, very, quickly. With his teeth. (His early death from liver damage was no surprise.) But there went another fan/writer gone too soon; my memory says rather unbelievably that he sold to both D. C. Thomson and THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS but this isn't the sort of thing that I can check in THEN (although I did belatedly think to look up the London Clubhouse affair, and yes it's all there, as I should have remembered. Admiration for Rob grows each time I return to his masterwork).

"Sorry, back to LoC; should have said that I liked the collation on Irish fandom. And appreciated (while not entirely sharing the obsessive interest) your lead article of 50's con attendance figures. Truly Astounding, etc. Now THAT should sort out the genuine fans among the readers. Anyway, another great issue, and thanks again. Long may the print edition flourish!"

Spot-on about the pleasures of editing, David! I found those pictures of Bea Mahaffey in various little envelopes and folders in Ina's shoebox over several months and assumed they'd been taken in some London park during Coroncon until I read Walt's report in Wrhn 28 and the penny dropped! It was a really great thrill to be able to link them to the account of meeting EFR in his Cheshire garden.

Peter Mabey

Harlow

PeterMabey@aol.com



Photo; Bill Burns, 2004

Dear Peter,

"Thanks for latest issue, which brings back memories of Irish Fandom. One of my proudest fannish achievements was to advise James White that by getting a word processor he could continue to write despite his deteriorating eyesight as it would be possible to display the text in the size and font he'd be able to read. (He had been trying to cope by using a strong magnifying glass with his typewriter).

"It was at the first Blackpool Con, when we were at the Norbreck, which used to host qualifying matches for one of the snooker championships, that James was persuaded to take part in a game, even though he could hardly see as far as the end of his cue. So any fan's claim to have 'beaten Jimmy White at snooker' should be discounted!

"You don't mention that there was a Dublin fan who took part occasionally – his name was Ian McAuley. I remember being told that 'he gathers dust', as he was then investigating pollution – I don't recall whether it was for his employer or as the subject of a thesis."

Thanks, Peter, for a couple of good stories. We'll be taking a look at other members of Irish Fandom in a future issue – but perhaps I might have already mentioned that in my editorial.

George Locke

London
george_locke@
hotmail.com



Photo; PW, 2004

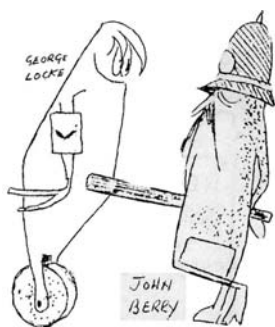
“...he had sensitive fannish feet to match his Sensitive Fannish Face.”



Above; John Berry in the mid-fifties.

Photo; in Vince Clarke album, from Rob Hansen.

Below; Atom BEMs



Dear Peter,

“Thanks for the latest *Prolapse*. Full of fascinating fannish nostalgia, as always. The pieces on Walt Willis and Irish fandom nudged some of my memory cells. I once visited Irish fandom, staying about a week. It was while I was doing my National Service, in 1960. Towards the end of the year, I was entitled to a week’s leave, and also discovered that I was entitled to a free railway warrant anywhere in the UK. Always seeking value for money, I decided to travel as far as I could, and opted for Belfast.

“Walt and Madeleine seemed quite enthusiastic but I didn’t want to impose on them. In London we had the Union Jack Club, an establishment which provided accommodation where one could spend one’s leave inexpensively – and at fourteen bob a week it needed to be cheap! I asked around and learned the address of a Union Jack Club in Belfast. Ideal! I would stay there.

“Came the day and I took the train to Heysham and the overnight boat to Belfast. I can’t remember if I was sea-sick; probably. When I arrived at Belfast docks I was greeted by the Wheels of IF – Walt Willis, his car and four wheels, one at each corner. As he drove me to the Union Jack Club, I noticed that he operated the pedals with his stockinged feet. “A lighter touch”, he explained. I forbore to mention that he had sensitive fannish feet to match his Sensitive Fannish Face.

“The Union Jack Club took a bit of finding, and when we succeeded, found that it was nothing more than a run-down pub or something; nothing like the London establishment with which it shared the name, and certainly no accommodation. Serious embarrassment, but Walt and Madeleine kindly put me up for the week, where I did my best to be as little trouble as I could. I was introduced to James White and Bob Shaw, tried my hand at hoodminton, and generally had an excellent, fannish leave.

“I hitch-hiked to Dublin for a day or two’s mooching round for old books. I had found that if I hitch-hiked round England in uniform I was far more likely to be picked up than if I wore civvies; drivers recognised that squaddies had no money. But Ireland was a different matter. Although the troubles only really kicked off a decade or more later, I was still strongly advised not to go round in uniform. So I heeded the advice and survived.

“I was also introduced to, and spent a great deal of time with, John Berry. He was a member of the apa SAPS (Spectator Amateur Press Society) and they had just distributed one of the most iconic of all one-shots, the symposium ‘Who Killed Science Fiction?’ Organised by the Kemps in Chicago, it featured contributions by many professional SF writers of the period. Circulation was very limited – to contributors and to members of SAPS (30 or 35 fans; I forget which). The collector in me faunched for a copy, and after a little arm-twisting (and maybe neck-twisting as well!) John gave me his copy.

“But our admiration for the publication got us to talking, and we came up with the idea of forming a theme-based APA. This became IPSO (International Publishers Speculative Organisation). The idea was that a specific theme would be selected for each mailing, and that members would each send their mimeographed or offset pages to the organiser, to be collated and stapled with the other contributions and sent out as a single fanzine. The major problem was that we Brits used a quarto paper, measuring 8x10”, while the Americans used a slightly large paper, measuring 8.5x11”. Obviously, a single fanzine using pages of both sizes would produce a weird-looking and most unprofessional object. So, since it was easier for British to get US-sized paper than the other way round, we elected to go for the 8.5x11” format.

“I can’t find my set of IPSO mailings (somewhere in the loft), but I have found a copy of the initial flier we sent out inviting people to climb on board. It was dated 11-11-60, and was in the form of a dialogue between John and myself chuntering generally about our ideas. We set a couple of deadlines. The first was January 2nd 1961 for acceptances and suggestions. A second leaflet (which I don’t have) detailed the subject for the first mailing. And a deadline for finished material: March 5 1961.

“All nicely organised. I was then stationed near Hindhead, in Surrey, about thirty miles outside London (easy hitchhiking distance) where I had the cushy job of Night Wardmaster at the Connaught (Military) Hospital. This enabled me to print fanzines and do all sorts of interesting things in the office while everybody else was asleep. It was a specialist hospital devoted to chest problems; the majority of the patients were Ghurkhas suffering from tuberculosis, and there was very rarely any emergency of any kind. I could do the whole IPSO collating and so on in the office at night...

“Then the roof fell in. Returning to the hospital after Christmas, the others folk on the staff serenaded me by singing a song popular at the time – ‘Nairobi, Nairobi.’ I had been posted to the Military Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. There was no way I could work on IPSO in a country which, for all I knew, might not even possess a stapler!

“Joe Patrizio and Ted Forsyth very kindly took over the reins, and with their hands on the tiller IPSO did pretty well. They put together four or five mailings, and eagerly awaited my return from the tropics at the end of my National Service, scheduled to be in March 1962.

“Unfortunately, my year abroad had created a whole new obsession in me – gliding – and when I returned to the UK I found I’d totally lost interest in IPSO. Joe and Ted had probably had enough of it as well, and I vaguely remember that Fred Patten, in Los Angeles, put together a final volume. I can’t remember what the subjects of the mailings were, save for one, Robert A. Heinlein and his work.

“You asked for a list of my fanzines. Here goes: *Smoke* (July 1959 to January 15 1961 [5 numbers] plus Autumn 1963, a single issue done for OMPA); *Eye Tracks* (Winter and Summer 1960; two numbers for OMPA); *Deadwood* ca. September 1964 and summer 1965 (two numbers for FAPA; the second one was largely about gliding, and included the text of a daily newsletter I co-produced for the World Gliding Championships at South Cerney) and *The Prose of Kilimanjaro* (April and November 1961 and summer 1962; three numbers {the first actually produced in Kenya on a flat-bed duplicator; my file copy is unstapled, so I guess I was right – that marvel of technology had not reached Nairobi}).”

David A. Hardy
Birmingham.
Dave@astroart.org



Photo: from Dave

Hi Peter,

“It was really great to see the material from Bob Shaw. Whenever I read his stuff I can't help hearing his quiet, dry Irish brogue saying the words, and he never fails to make me laugh out loud (which is no mean feat these days!). Brilliant. The piece on Psneerotics was very funny, too!

“Not so amusing: the piece on John Brunner (who was two years older than me, by the way) is more complicated, and I must admit that parts of it came as something of a surprise. I've never involved myself much in gossip and factions, but I would like to go on record as saying that my own experiences with John were almost exclusively positive. He always treated me with respect and as an equal. We were once Guests of Honour at a smallish con in London, when we had an opportunity to chat, and the John I came to know bears little resemblance to some of the descriptions in your piece (except perhaps for the 'late night' recollection by John Hall). He bought a few pieces of my art over the years. Yes, of course I knew how pompous he could be, but we all just accepted that 'that's John'. I was, though, horrified by Harry's revelations about what amounted to plagiarism, of ideas at least. . .

“However, towards the end of his life, the period when he was married to Li Yi, he used to phone me at quite regular intervals, apparently seeing me as some sort of voice of sanity (Ghod knows why!), tell me his troubles and ask for advice. I see from Ramsey's piece that I was not alone in receiving such calls, but it was clear that at that time John was a tortured soul and I like to think that I may have been of some small help. I never even saw him at the Worldcon where he died, and it came as a shock to know that he had gone from us so suddenly.”

Dave, thanks for your perspective on the Brunner inquest; it seems that you were among those lucky people to be on his 'Acceptable' list; he obviously perceived you as a fellow-professional, rather than one of those nasty fannish types! Speaking of which....

Sandra Bond

London
sandra@hostreet.
demon.co.uk

Dear Peter,

“Thanks for *Prolapse 8* and your enclosed letter. I've just stolen an hour out of my packed schedule to read first the former and then the latter, and enjoyed them both in proportion to their lengths. My packed schedule, you ask? Well, as you may recall, my long and winding road of employment is finally coming up to the junction of what I hope will be the smooth motorway of being admitted as a solicitor (watch out, Lilian Edwards!), in connection with which I start a new job a week today. I've also had to cope with moving house and then on top of *that* my father died unexpectedly a couple of weeks ago. As you'll appreciate I came close to sinking under this triple strain, but somehow I'm still afloat...

“Since I'm writing, let's whiz thru and make a few scattershot comments on what is, in general, a superbly enjoyable fmz. Sorry the previous issue is packed in a box, or else John Hall's amazing article on the Brunners would surely deserve acknowledgement. My own experience of John Brunner is sadly told in a few words only, since I was so much in awe of him (as I was every author whose works I rated) in my first years in fandom that I never dared approach him at the few cons I saw him at. I don't think that in those days I had any real idea that SF authors had any life other than writing books, dealing with agents/publishers, and occasionally relaxing by attending SF cons. I really was an amazingly naive neofan... at least until I met Joy Hibbert...

“As a reader, though, the vast majority of Brunner's books have satisfied me, and some have done more – especially the blockbusting quartet of JAGGED ORBIT, SHOCKWAVE RIDER, STAND ON ZANZIBAR and THE SHEEP LOOK UP. I don't know what on earth David Redd is thinking of when he says that this last didn't add to Brunner's reputation; it was the first of the four I encountered and it pole-axed me by its sheer bleakness and misery while yet remaining gripping to the end, which is a damned hard feat to pull off and one which more feted authors than Brunner have failed to do. Remember also that in those days, the average SF novel was 160pp and it was a very rare sight to see an SF book as fat as the four I've just named (except perhaps DUNE, I suppose). Brunner was ahead of his time in managing to sell novels at the length they demanded to be, rather than the length publishers (one presumes) dictated.

“David Redd is quite right about THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME, though, where Brunner made the bold attempt to write a long novel in which every character was an alien and where the human race didn't feature at all, only to fail totally to make the reader (well, *me* anyway) engage or sympathise with a single one of the aliens. Maybe if he'd written it in 1968 at the height of his powers things would have been different. I can still recall how bitterly disappointed I was in the book, which I bought new in paperback at a time my budget generally only ran to second-hand.

“The only other thing I recall about *Prole 7* is the occasional occlusion of picture captions by the pictures themselves, and every now and then, several letters somehow all typed on top of one another as though the platen had jammed. Quite how you managed this on a laser printer is beyond me. I remember a couple of the resulting glyphs looked so odd that I wondered nervously if they were examples of Dave Langford's famous basilisks, shapes designed to burn through the eyes and wreck the viewer's cerebral cortex, but then I recalled that being notoriously lacking in the brain department I was probably safe.

“Forward to *Prole 8*. (Hmm, this shorthand sounds very Orwellian). One wonders whether Robert Silverberg ever *did* sell that story of the psuper-psneer to John W. Campbell. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he had. Someone check the *Analog* index.

“Would it be harsh of me to cavil that if Harry Harrison really took eight years to finish MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! (a title that always makes me wince, though the book itself I recall as a good read), he's displaying an excessively hopeful nature to think that nobody else would write an SF novel featuring overpopulation in the interim? (Besides, the topic was becoming a more obvious one even in the

“...it pole-axed me by its sheer bleakness and misery..”



JB – by JB (Jim Barker) from the BSGF Newsletter, 1975 (from Steve Green).

1950s – take Silverberg's THE TIME HOPPERS). Can Harry put his hand on his heart and say he's never used an idea or a stylistic technique inspired by another author without giving due and full credit?

"A line in Mike Moorcock's letter reminds me of a gag from an old *Hancock's Half Hour* episode; "Have you got a light, Mac?" – "No, a dark overcoat." Funny to think of all those creative people carrying such a self-destructive streak within them – comedians like Hancock, Milligan and Lenny Bruce, SF writers like Brunner, Lovecraft, Howard, Keith Roberts and – well, better not mention any still living...

"One wonders what Chris Priest *does* call J.G. Ballard, then. Does he clap him on the back and say "Hello again, J.G." like Leonard Rossiter greeting John Barron in *Reginald Perrin*? Or does he just grin nervously at him from a distance, the way I always do when confronted with a fan whose name has escaped me (which happens far too often, and is one reason I'm more at home with written fanac than the social version.)

"Sam Long's point is interesting. If you type 'John Brunner' into *Wikipedia* you get Sir John Brunner, 1st Baronet, the ICI bod, and our own chap is relegated to the article title 'John Brunner (novelist)', which strikes me as rather unfair – I know who most *Wikipedia* readers will want to look up if they type in 'John Brunner' and it's not Mr ICI."

I'd better mention those mysterious printing glitches which showed up in increasing frequency as I went through the box of finished copies of issue #7. It was caused by some inexplicable malfunction of the digitised printing process, progressively affecting all the captions in bold italic as the run progressed. Now, this is supposed to be impossible... but it happened and my printer is both mystified and apologetic!

Ian Sorensen

Motherwell

ian@soren.demon.co.uk



Photo: Ian Whates

Hi Peter,

"I know you are probably tired of Brunner-dotes by now, but feel I should mention my very special relationship with him.

"In 1985 I published his article 'On the Care and Feeding of a Guest of Honour' in my zine *Conrunner 2*. It was a very popular article, and I was asked for copies of it for many years afterward. And a lot of those requests came from John himself. The inspiration to write it came from the sometimes abominable treatment he received from fans when asked to attend their convention. The piece was intended to educate con-runners on what they should do to neither overwork nor underpay a guest, and I'm sure it had some effect here in the UK and perhaps even in the States where a few copies were distributed.

"However, as Eastern Europe opened up, and John was invited to be GoH, he would ask me to send them a copy of *Conrunner 2*, just so they knew the score. Occasionally the request would come after a convention with a terse postcard saying 'please educate these people'. The article is still available on the web at <http://www.cix.co.uk/~magician/conrunner/GoHBrunner.htm>. Enjoy."

*I've seen the article before, Ian, but took another look to refresh my memory. It's essentially one long whine about how badly JB was treated by various incompetent con-committees, and I suppose he did have a point if it really was like that. But how come we never heard Bob Shaw or Brian Aldiss complaining? It strikes me as yet another example of Brunner in action, bitching, humiliating people, being a general pain in the backside... and yet still accepting invitations for more of the same. And there's an intriguing sentence where JB says, "We were lodged twenty minute's fast walk from the convention, and the Guest of Honour, his wife, and their baby, wound up standing ignored in the street on Saturday evening." **Quoi??***

Barry Bayley

Telford

bjbayley@hologram.freerve.co.uk



Photo; from Barry

Dear Peter,

"Am I the only one to remember John Brunner with nothing but fondness and admiration? I didn't see as much of him as the people writing in your ish, and he did have a reputation for a certain brittleness of character, but I look on that as barely a detail. Towards me he was always warm and friendly. It was John who greeted me and made me feel welcome when, as a frightened teenager, I first appeared in the Globe bar. It was John who encouraged me to turn a novelette into my first novel, telling me in a few expert words how to do it. He was something of a hero to me, the person I would most like to have been, fiercely intelligent, breezy, affable and self-confident, a truly skilled, inventive and hard-working SF writer who was selling to all the US mags in his teens! And, like me, a science fiction fan to the bottom of his soul. "Yes," he once reminisced, "that was in the days when if it was set in the year 2000 I read it no matter what it was about." John had the rare if not unique quality that every time he opened his mouth he seemed to say something I still remember.

"He was also a genial host at his and Marjorie's alcohol-less *soirées*. At one of those Mike and I met an American called Gary who had started a world citizenship movement and was issuing his own passports. He remarked on what a simple device an atomic bomb really is. I heard that later he got scared when, addressing a meeting, he was greeted with chants of 'Gary! Gary! Gary!' – exactly the type of crowd psychology from which he was trying to rescue the world.

"The last time I saw John, a few years before he died, he expressed his loneliness to me, the first time I had seen him look sad. We were in Lancaster to take part in a literary festival. There were three of us on the stage, facing a theatre-full of people and having to talk about how to write science fiction for the whole day. John carried the show, of course. He was sheer brilliance itself. But I was surprised at how nervous he had been early that morning. Necessary stage fright, I guess. I can't remember who the third person was – some guy I hadn't heard of before who had published his first novel, I think. I'm afraid I have a dreadful memory for people I don't know well.

"We spent that evening with some local people, John displaying his encyclopaedic knowledge of genre SF and each time turning to me with, 'That's right, isn't it, Barry?' 'Er, yes, John, I think so.' I wonder if he would have liked knowing that the last day of his life would be at an SF con?"

"He was something of a hero to me..."

“As for the writers' conference Mike describes, I remember very little about it. It was in a hotel somewhere in, I think, the Tottenham Court Road/Russell Square area. We sat round a big board table and chuntered. As Mike said, we had expected some serious talk, but it became a barely articulate ramble, a bit like people meeting for the first time and trying to think of something to say to one another. All I recall is someone, perhaps Phillifent or Kippax, saying what a helpful editor Campbell was. An interesting exercise in the cause of advancing British science fiction, though. I don't recall the year of the Writers' Conference, but 1961 sounds about right.”

Like I've said before, Barry, JB seems to have been more pleasant to those he regarded as fellow-professionals, especially youngsters trying to get started, and I'm glad your memories of John Brunner are so positive. As for the Writers' Conference, this is something Dan Morgan has mentioned in his long-delayed article and which I know David Pringle has been researching of late. We'll look forward to more about this in a future issue. But who was that mystery third person at Lancaster? Could it have been....

Brian Stableford

Reading

bstableford@supanet



Sketch by Dave
Hicks, 2002

Dear Peter,

“Thanks for the copy of *Prolapse 8*, which arrived by the same post as an alumni magazine from York University, where I was a student in the golden days when you recruited me to write reviews for *Zenith/Speculation*. The combination provided a powerful double reminder of the fact that, although the present is a very foreign country where they do things very differently, the homely past is not yet entirely consigned to the mists of legend.

“Reading the magazine is, of course, rather like entering a conversation half way through, and – given that I was almost as reclusive back in the 1960s as I am now – I was never actually involved in the matters discussed anyway. I was, however, distantly aware of the existence of fandom, just as I was distantly aware of all the other sixties phenomena that one is not supposed to remember if one was actually there, so it all wakes strange nostalgic echoes.

“I had no idea that anything like *Prolapse* still existed. Because I needed to clear some space in my over-crammed garage, to make room for more stuff to be moved out of my over-crammed house, I took the opportunity when I was invited to address a BSFA meeting a couple of months back (as this year's token dinosaur) to offer my fanzine collection – including an archive of BSFA publications going back to 1962 – free to anyone who could be bothered to collect it. There was not the slightest flicker of interest, but Dave Langford eventually managed to locate someone with a car who was willing to collect the material (10 boxes, and a dozen plastic bags-full) on behalf of a Danish collector. Mercifully, I shall not live long enough for *Prolapse 8* to provide the bottom layer of another 45-year stratum of sedimentary ballast.”

Good to hear from you anyway, Brian. I'd like to think that it's not so much that people aren't interested in old fanzines as they're wary at the prospect of taking on board a huge load for which most of us don't have space. There can be few as dedicated as Greg and Catherine, for instance, who live their life in the gaps between the shelves and boxes (though Mark & Claire are catching up fast); then there's Steve Green, who took all of Norman Shorrocks' collection....

And now for something completely different; last time you'll remember Claire tried to give us a quick summary of Lilian Edwards' theory about fan-history. Frustratingly, Lilian herself sent this LoC which arrived just one day after the issue had gone to the printer. But it's good stuff, so let's give her a belated opportunity to explain the theory in her own words, with examples...

Lilian Edwards

Southampton

L.Edwards@soton.ac.uk



Photo; Ian
Sorensen

Dear Peter,

“What piqued me was this from Mark Plummer in *Prolapse #6*: ‘I don't know if you remember but *Convoy* had said that they intended the TAFF delegate to be fan GOH at this year's Eastercon and I thought at the time that it was unusual, and indeed uncharacteristically fannish for this day and age. I can only think of one other recent convention which made the TAFF delegate their fan GOH and that was the *Albacon* attended by Avedon.’

“The hilarity of this is the implication that *Albacon* was making welcoming, nay genuflecting, gestures towards fannish fandom and fan funds in particular by picking the TAFF winner as their GoH. In fact nothing could be further from the truth. *Albacon II* was run by the then-very vibrant Friends of Kilgore Trout (FOKT) fan group in Glasgow, a group distinguished at the time by their enthusiasm for media fandom and con-running, and dislike for fannish fans, English fans and English fandom (I don't think they'd encountered foreign fandom at the time, bar Roef Goudriann and Scandiwegians, but they probably wouldn't have liked it either). This made the group, shall we say, rather isolated.

“When they became so good at con-running that they decided to run an Eastercon, they discovered to their horror that this almost certainly involved inviting a *verdamt!* English fanzine fan to be a Fan GoH (there were no eligible Scots, as the only Scots doing fanzines at the time were the Sandy Brown/Jimmy Robertson lot whom FOKT was also more or less collectively on the outs with – each group regarding the other as basically wankers, although they shared the same pub on a Thursday night, the hallowed Wintergills. This was long, long, LONG ago, remember, before Ian Sorensen recanted his position on fanzines, red wine and going abroad for holidays all being effete stuff for southern softies.

“So faced with the Ultimate Horror of celebrating the existence of an English fanzine fan, the *Albacon* committee took the easy way out and picked instead whoever won the TAFF race. This then blew up in their face when it turned out to be Avedon Carol who pissed them off more than even an English fan-person. But that's another story (albeit a very funny one).

“The moral here is that this illustrates the problem with the Hansen style of historiography, that is, assemble a list of historical facts in a row. A reasonable observer given only the facts of this little episode

“Hansen's history
is vanilla
and 2D...”

would draw the conclusion Mark clearly did, that *Albacon's* choice of Fan GoH showed fannish allegiance, when actually it showed the exact opposite. 'Facts', however detailed, are invariably partial, incomplete and partisan; you need to know about power, about prejudice and about relationships. Hansen's history is vanilla and 2D, which is probably also why it isn't very interesting.

"Incidentally this seems as good a time as any to put down in print what I've been meaning to say (literally rather than orally) for years, but haven't been able to actually write down, as I never was very good at LoCs and am unlikely to write another this millennium. So here it is. I am fairly well known, I think, as someone who isn't much bothered about fan-history. But when people get to the stage where they're writing about anecdotes that happened in *my* time, in *my* UK-fanzine-fandom – from 1982 on, more or less, so we're pretty much there.. *then* I'll be interested. Because fan-history is just another word for gossip 'cept it sounds so much more profound when you give it the H word. (Or is it the F Word? Hush there, Gordon.)

"No wonder Ted and Greg and you like fan-history so much – it's usually about you!! Or at worst, your mates. And when they narrate my doings with Nick Lowe and Ian Sorensen and Simon Ounsley and the Great D, then, lo, I too will lay down my laptop and read. I suppose what I dislike so much about current trends in fan-history is the required reverence, the ancestor worship, the assumption that Because It Happened in the Fifties It's Important. It isn't; it's gossip, just like the gossip on *LJ* and *facebook* that the fan-history tribe tend to disdain, and all gossip is fascinating to (and only to) those referred to, and irrelevant to those who weren't part of that social sphere either geographically or temporally."

Well, I think it all depends on how well the fan-history is told, Lilian. I firmly believe that the story of our sub-culture can be inherently fascinating in itself, not least for the perspective it brings to our own experiences. As for material 'from 1982 on', it will never appear unless I can persuade you to write it, or D., or Ian, or Chuck, maybe? Though it's not such an interesting period as the 1950s, is it....? Not like the Supermancon, which was the first convention for Tony Glynn. I sent him #8 and he was quick to reciprocate with a report on the con, some sketches, and this letter. Tony did two issues of Squeak back in 1963, and although he's been out of touch with fandom for a long time – I think his last appearance was at Mancon in 1976 – it's clear that it's still in his blood!

Tony Glynn
Manchester



What do you mean, 'Bloody Provincial'?

Dear Peter,

"How delightful it was to find memories and pictures of dear Bea Mahaffey in *Prolapse 8*. I was not on the scene when she visited Europe and my very fond memories date from later in her life.

"When gallivanting in the US in 1969, I met her at a small week-end con arranged in Columbus, Ohio, by the Ohio fan group. The week-end finished with a party at the home of Bill Conner in Springfield at which I enjoyed a long gab session with Bea. Her editing days were then behind her and she was in public relations in Cincinnati. She was an attractive and charming personality and a delight to know. She spoke of her memories of London and her Irish trip which obviously meant a great deal to her because her family background was Irish. After I returned to England I corresponded with Bea in a desultory way and I later wished I knew her better.

"My last contact with her, if it can be called that, was at *Torcon* in Toronto in 1973. With the Ohio group once again, I was at the dinner they arranged among themselves to round off their attendance at the con. The ever amiable Bob Tucker, an Illinois man but an honorary Ohio fan, was of the company. In the fifties, Tucker playfully gave Bea a mention in his novel *THE LONG LOUD SILENCE* with the central character wandering through a devastated town and noting a shattered sign reading, if I remember aright; 'Mother Mahaffey's Caramel Cookies'.

"Bea was not at the con for she was seriously ill at home but she was present in the hearts of the Ohioans and we all signed a card sending love and wishing her well. Not long afterwards when back in England, I heard of her death. Of course James White was smitten by her during her trip to our shores. Who wouldn't be? My own association with the lovely Bea Mahaffey was all too slight and all too brief but she will ever sparkle in my memory."

Thanks, Tony. I didn't get a lot of comment on our Irish Fandom feature last time, but Ramsey Campbell kindly sent these memories of Bob Shaw, which originally appeared in the online series of his column Ramsey Campbell, Probably, and is reprinted in his collection of the same name.

Ramsey Campbell
Merseyside
CRamseyJen@aol.com

Dear Peter,

"Bob Shaw was a friend of mine and a writer of considerable talent. If those aren't reasons enough for me to speak of him in *Necrofile*, I can add that I encouraged him to contribute two horror stories to anthologies of mine – 'Love Me Tender' in *NEW TERRORS* and 'Cutting Down' in *FINE FRIGHTS*. I'll return to them in due course, but here are my memories of him and his delightful wife Sadie, as near to chronological order as I can cobble together.

"Jenny and I first met the Shaws at Two Rivers' in Weybridge on the Thames. This was Dave and Ruth Kyle's house while they were living in Britain, and a splendid pair of hosts they were. In the very early seventies they put up with most of the Liverpool Science Fiction Group, not to mention our hangovers, for an entire weekend. Other guests drifted in from various parts of the country, and I still remember the awe I experienced on hearing that Bob Shaw was imminent. I'd read and much admired his science fiction novel *THE PALACE OF ETERNITY*, a visionary book that also features aliens quite loathsome enough for Lovecraft, and his short story 'Light of Other Days', which I'd convinced myself had gained itself a Nebula award – I obviously felt it should have. Bob being Bob, he'd hardly arrived before proposing an exodus to the nearest pub. Jenny and I rode in his and Sadie's car, which struck me as

“...he congratulated me on my Scottish brogue.”

being as immense as I would have expected from a writer far more famous and significant than me. In the pub I'm sure any conversation I made was deferential and worth forgetting, as I have done.

“Years passed, and Bob and I exchanged greetings at various science fiction conventions, usually in the bar. Bob's salutation would almost always be a low-voiced pun or quip in his inimitable Belfast accent (so inimitable that when early in our friendship I rang him up with an attempt to mimic it he congratulated me on my Scottish brogue). During this period he and Sadie and their children moved to the Lake District – to Ulverston, Stan Laurel's birthplace. It's a small town which they were soon to leave, apparently because its size kept Bob too close to the temptations of his drinking buddies and the pub. The Shaws ended up in Warrington, half an hour's drive from Merseyside, and for the rest of their lives we saw a good deal more of them.

“By then I'd coaxed ‘Love Me Tender’ out of Bob, my instincts having told me that he could write horror. Later that year (1979) he published DAGGER OF THE MIND, which sports some gruesome flayed apparitions and the nightmarishly static clientele of a boarding-house invaded by an extraterrestrial influence. Given the delays inherent in publishing, I assume that book was already written rather than owing any of its horror to my approach. Bob's two short tales for me are science fiction too, but resemble Robert Bloch (whom he admired) or EC comics (which I don't know that he read) in their macabre, punning titles and their insistence that whichever character suffered the payoff of the tale should have done something to deserve it.

“Once he told me that he felt horror fiction should be this kind of moral tale. I don't know whether our friendship led him to spice any of his later work with horror: I'm thinking especially of the last lines of the prologue of FIRE PATTERN (a novel he wrote in some haste to ensure he produced the first science fiction rationale of spontaneous human combustion). As for his fondness for puns, sometimes it could lead one to find them where they hadn't been intended: he was quite piqued to learn that Jenny had assumed he'd called a book THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS as a jokey reference to THE RAGGED-ARSED PHILANTHROPISTS (which we understand to be the suppressed title of Robert Tressell's socialist novel). At times he seemed to regret being so appreciated for entertaining science fiction fandom with his humour that he'd received two Hugo Awards for fan writing – I know he wished he could have won one for his fiction, as he deserved.

“I suspect the subject of the morality of horror fiction came up during one of our discussions in a pub, quite possibly Stanley's Cask, just a short walk (or, at Bob's insistence, a drive) from my house. With its bare floorboards it wasn't the kind of pub Sadie cared for, though she liked pubs well enough, and so when the Shaws stayed overnight with us rather than drive drunkenly home it was where the men adjourned to the next morning. Little was said there that couldn't have been said elsewhere, though Bob did once muse aloud that since Sadie never left an odour after using the toilet he wondered whether she could be an android. We often took the opportunity to talk about writing, and Bob admitted that he envied my having a wife who read my work. Once he asked me what I would do if I sold some film rights for so much that I would never again have to depend on my writing for income. I said I'd try to take more time over my prose – Bob said he would give up writing altogether.

“All the same, we weren't so different. One reason I'm doing my best to present him objectively is that I see a good deal of myself in him, and I'll suggest that many if not all of my readers who are also writers may. If we can find a way of avoiding our current project while persuading ourselves that we're writing, many of us will. Even writing this column is an excuse for stopping work for the day on an especially difficult chapter of THE PACT OF THE FATHERS. Gentlemanly always, Bob would write a thank-you letter to Jenny after a stay at our house, but I do wonder if as well as showing courtesy this helped him feel he was writing. (My own wariness of this trap is why I'm such an unsatisfactory correspondent to friends, and the reason why I refuse to let e-mail take up my time.)

“Eventually it became apparent that Bob's career as a writer was at least as shaky as mine, then and now. His novel GROUND ZERO MAN had been sniffed at by his publishers on the grounds that it wasn't a science fiction novel, which he had a contract to write, and had only been accepted for a lower advance. THE FUGITIVE WORLDS, the third book of his ‘Overland’ trilogy, was rejected by the publisher of the first two volumes because it supposedly differed too much from them. A feminist editor made him rewrite a good deal of KILLER PLANET, a science fiction novel for youngsters, to make the young girl in it a more positive model for female readers. (Bob was fond of quoting the editor's marginal note on the scene in which the boy hero pilots a spacecraft to a dangerous landing with the girl as his passenger. “What is she doing now?” the editor wanted to know, to which Bob's answer was old-fashioned and terse.)

“He may have told me some of this one summer day at a picnic table in the back garden as we saw off a three-litre wine box together (the kind of drinking only women would do in a Kingsley Amis novel, and I wish those of my readers who don't know which one the pleasure of finding out). Still, what's a writer to do? Carry on writing, of course, and he seemed to be doing that successfully until early 1991, when Sadie was unexpectedly hospitalised. The next day she died of liver failure.

“Bob blamed himself. At the funeral he had to be supported along the aisle of the church, and I doubted that he would survive long. In fact he survived for almost five years, but mostly that was all he did. He produced a small amount of new work, including a guide to writing science fiction, for which I believe he sold the copyright outright (an indication of how desperate he was), and the first of a planned series of sequels to his 1977 comic science fiction novel, WHO GOES HERE? This was WARREN PEACE, and Jenny's and my copy bears the inscription “Hoping that the jokes herein are not too familiar”.

“Sadly, the problem is that they are not only too few but separated by wedges of the worst and most ponderous writing Bob ever published. Indeed, John Clute's *Interzone* review of the book is a memorably painful one, which can't quite conceal its determination to be as kind as possible under all the



Bob at *Intersection*, 1995. Photo: Arthur Cruttenden

circumstances. Bob's working method may not have been helpful – he would revise each chapter of a novel as it was finished before starting the first draft of the next – but what writer can presume to tell another how to write? At times I thought of suggesting to him that instead of struggling to cheer himself up he should attempt a memoir of Sadie, but I never got around to intruding. I still don't know if I should have, though I would have tried if the fine example of Brian Aldiss's *WHEN THE FEAST IS FINISHED* had existed. Telling the immediate or recent truth can certainly be a way of overcoming writer's block, in my experience.

"Other problems may have made it harder for him to work. In order to avoid bankruptcy he had to sell his and Sadie's last house and rent a smaller one. He contracted bowel cancer and underwent a colostomy operation, though this did lead to a glimpse of the old Bob: having discovered that the colostomy bag was the perfect place to secrete cannabis for importation, he declared that he looked forward to being asked by a Customs officer what was in the bag. "Just some shit," he would have enjoyed responding. I appreciated the gag, but I must admit I didn't subsequently share a joint with him.

"In his last year he married Nancy Tucker, a fan he'd known while Sadie was alive, and moved to America. I know Nancy took a good deal of care of him. Nevertheless many of us felt that when he died in early 1996 in Warrington, having flown there for a brief visit, he had returned to say goodbye to his old haunts in the knowledge that he was dying. His funeral was held there, at the same church as Sadie's, after which his good friend Henry Newton arranged a wake. It was the kind of fun Bob would have wanted it to be. Much was drunk and many stories told of him by friends. A display of his work reminded us of his achievements as a writer, but the tales reminded us of Bob the man. I see I've flinched from printing any of his puns, so let me end with the one I read out at the wake. It's from the copy of *ORBITSVILLE* he signed to me: "to Ramsey Campbell, the critic who has shown me the most Mersey." I hope any groans that greet this will be affectionate. They certainly were at the wake."

Harry Bell

Gateshead

grimwab@yahoo.com



Photo; Bill Burns,
Corflu 2007



Hi Peter --

"Well done! You should appreciate that being a 'fannish social glue-master' (Kevin Williams) tends to use up most of my available fannish energies, but your varied programme of provocation finally prompts a response. The most effective of your ploys was to not send me *Prolapse* #7. I'd had a chance to skim it at Kev's but when I got home – there it wasn't. A bit of a low blow, given that for many years I was the guardian and saviour of The John Hall Article about The Brunners. Without me and my filing system, there'd have been no *Prolapse* 7.

"Reading the issues you *have* sent me has been quite fascinating, yet ultimately frustrating. My memory simply won't bring to the surface anything useful to add to what's already been said. I now begin to realise that if I didn't write it down at the time, it's gone. For that reason, I treasure the fanzines I published, the other fanzines I still have which might make reference to me in conreps and the like, and my sometimes frightening diaries from 1979 to 1997. I blame the drink. Or was it that funny lemonade Linda Krawecka gave me once?

"Even the *Tynecon* '74 issue came at me out of the blur. I know you hoped it would dredge up vastly entertaining memories from me, but it didn't. The only proper recollection I have of that event was of my 'rescue' of Roy Kettle from the roof of the Royal Station Hotel.

"I'd been looking for Roy for a while one night and thought I'd seen him wandering off down a corridor in what seemed like the wrong direction. At the end of the corridor was a fire door and I realised it was slightly ajar. Looking through I saw to my dismay that it led out onto a metal gantry running out over the glass skylights of the hotel roof. Roy Kettle was on it.

"I'm not sure which of us had drunk more so late at night, although my money's on Roy. Nevertheless, I do know I must have had enough to overcome my usual tendency to vertigo and walked out onto the gantry to try to persuade Roy to come back inside.

"Do you remember Roy's little pantomime act of falling down, falling off chairs, just falling? I know he did it with aplomb, although the drink no doubt made it easier. Imagine then my horror as he began to go into the slipping/falling routine on the edge of the metal gantry. There was only a slim rail to hold onto and falling between it and the footplate would have sent him straight through the skylights.

"Don't worry!' he kept saying, waving what remained of his pint of lager. 'Don't worry, I'm all right!'

"And, of course, he *was* all right, but only because he finally gave in to my pleas to come back in. If he hadn't, maybe he wouldn't have gone on to save the nation at great personal cost and win the OBE. But that's a story for someone else to tell. Something to do with cleaning the toilets at King's Cross, I believe."

*Nice story, Harry! And sorry about the minor foul-up with #7. Now, let's end with another correspondent from *Speculation* days, who still keeps up with fandom despite a fair bit of success in other fields!*

Greg Benford

San Diego

XBenford@aol.com

Peter,

"Delicious issue. Tom Shippey sets a high tone with: 'Josephine Saxton had a go at snubbing me at a *Novacon* many years ago as well. I forget what she said, but I know you remember what I said, which did indeed tremble on the very verge of discourtesy. No, my idea of a trufan is someone who is genuinely devoted to science fiction.'

"First, we must hear the Saxon story. I quite agree, also with Peter Nicholls, that many pros like me feel themselves fans first and pros second. (Actually I think of myself as a scientist first; the categories sit well together.) Perhaps the litmus test is which web site one opens first, on returning to your computer after days: *Locus* (pro) or *efanzines* (fan). The *efanzines* material is better written. The Irish fandom material, and Brunner comments – fascinating. To me, 14 year-old fan in occupied Germany, the Wheels of IF were monuments. Still are."

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

John Berry, who sent his 'Agent Provocative', a 115-page bound volume of the adventures of 'Goon Bleary'. I worried that we hadn't mentioned him last time – an omission soon to be remedied – but he advised me, "do not fret – I did not join Irish Fandom until 1954". John is 81 and has health problems, but still seems in fine form. As is **David Bratman**, who says, "What mystifies me about Rob Hansen's comment on how well he slotted into fandom as a neo is where that feeling among neos has gone. At least a decade ago they began becoming resentful of the fact that they have to do the slotting in, instead of fandom moulding itself to them." Alas, David, it was ever thus! While **Jim Cawthorn** commented, "I hadn't known Barry Bayley played the recorder but I remember him playing the piano by the light of a nearby street-lamp when we were house-sitting in Portland Road in 1966 (the piano was indoors)." **Keith Freeman** was anxious, because if no-one is writing con-reports in fanzines, "Does mean that in a few years time fandom will have no history?" It's a good point, Keith, with the ephemeral nature of e-mail let alone *LiveJournal* and so on. In the same tone **Chris Garcia** wrote, "Great write-up on Eric Jones. It seems that recording, not only of sound and voice, but of events through photos and writing and letters, was much more important back in his day than it is now." **Bruce Gillespie** said generously, "*Prolapse* is Fabulous Stuff; what you were intended to publish all along. I haven't been able to comment, because you've been telling me a lot of British fan history to which I've had little access until now." Also from the Antipodes is **Kim Huett**, who speculates about the BSFA's change of direction in 1966 (abandoning its role as con-organiser). Kim hasn't yet studied a certain book which spells it out in detail, so his theories are a little wide of the mark. Meanwhile, **Terry Jeeves** "liked the sundry anecdotes and memories from what I reckon is fandom's golden age. I recall hunting *ASF* in Belfast in 1941 when attending Queens University on a radio course. As for getting U.S. issues of *ASF*, I had a lovely experience in Sheffield when my hunt unearthed all six instalments of 'Galactic Patrol' for the total cost of 1/6d." Ah, those were the days, Terry! **Steve Jeffery** also looked back, (not quite so far) recalling his own entry to fandom, "At that time, the late eighties, I didn't really have any coherent sense of fandom. There seemed to be lots of stuff going on but little of it seemed connected in any meaningful way." It's an interesting piece, Steve, and I'm sorry not to have used it this time. **Don Malcolm** sent a letter in beautiful copper-plate, with lots of memories, "Ted Tubb, treading the corridors in, I think, the Ingram Hotel, about 2 a.m. ringing a bell and shouting, 'Bring out your Dead'. The management was not amused." And **Ian Maule** told me a bit of post-*Seacon*'79 fanzine history I'd missed, "*Paranoid* was a scurrilous little fanzine which was released at Surrey Limpwrist meetings and went on with an increasingly infrequent publishing schedule up to issue 21." Sounds like it might be interesting Ian – can we do anything with a few excerpts?

Murray Moore makes a good point; "you have always had the benefit of a large population in a small area (much larger population than Canada's in an area the size of southern Ontario). Your South and North might seem to be distant from each other, the more so the further back in time, but you were all in the same time-zone and an active fan would know a large percentage of the other active fans. The result is the rich fan history which you are having so much fun sharing and which I and many others are enjoying reading." And another Canadian, **Lloyd Penney**, asks, "I'm interested in knowing...where DID BoSh live in Canada? 1957 is a little before my time, two years to be exact, but I never did hear about his stay here." I think it was in Calgary, Lloyd. Bob probably wrote about it in *Hyphen*. **Joe Patrizio** writes, "I very much enjoyed the IF articles, but can't add anything as I never met any of them. However, one of the first things I did after entering fandom was to borrow all back issue *Hyphens*. It may have been in one of these (but, I think, more probably a LoC) that Walt had a sentence of about a dozen nested parenthetical clauses; it made sense, of course, if you were sober, had had a good night's sleep and concentrated hard. Wonderful stuff." While **David Pringle** wants to know, "Just how many times did J.G. Ballard visit that weird ménage of the Brunners in Hampstead, circa 1970-1971? What did he get up to there?"

John Purcell "liked the Eric Jones article. Very nicely done. The pictures do a wonderful job of displaying the affection that people had for him." Then **Greg Pickersgill** lavished some ego-boo, "Bloody good fanzine! Must go and read it again. And again. It's endlessly fascinating and surprising. A hell of a lot of content. *Prolapse* has assumed a classic status, quite effortlessly." Well, not quite effortlessly, Greg! **Bob Silverberg** wrote, "I had pretty much forgotten Psneerotics. A very fine magazine. Alas, I went on to read some of the Brunner tales, which seemed to me to be things best left unknown. Poor John – what a creepy life he led, and what a sad finish!" Our very own Travelling Jiant, **Ken Slater**, sent various bits of 'rubbitch' including trip-reports on his visits to cons in Warsaw and the Saar, and **Lisa Tuttle** said she "would happily read Bob Shaw or Walt Willis on the subject of lost keys, persistent door-knocking, or anything else." **Ian Whates** admitted defeat, "I intended to have a quick flick through it, but found that to be impossible... Various bits and pieces kept leaping out and trapping my eyes with the persistence of Velcro." **Bridget Wilkinson** commented, "What you seem to be collecting is a good impression of the way that everybody's view of the history of a particular event differs, be it the origin of the BSFA or anything else." Finally, **Ian Williams** adds a final twist to the Brunner story, "What springs to my mind about him these days was his genuine commitment to his left-wing ideals (perhaps because I've become more radically left as I've grown older) and to Europe. If he was still alive he would have loved our thriving, poly-cultural Britain." Yes, wouldn't he just! Correct me if I'm wrong, Ian, but with his Grand-Tourer sports car and all that, I think JB was more of a champagne socialist.

*I know it's difficult for an overseas reader to make any meaningful comment on British fan-history, so you don't have to beat yourself up to do a LoC unless something takes your particular interest; I'm happy if you continue to enjoy *Prolapse*!*

WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS ISSUE? Because:-

- You are a fannish demi-god and it comes with the job.
- I'm grateful for your help with *Prolapse*.
- If you look carefully you'll find your name somewhere inside!
- This is a sample issue, please respond if you want more.
- Alas, the ejector-seat button will be pressed unless you Do Something RSN.

The Caverns of the Deroes await those who fall off the perch (and their screams are terrible to behold) but you can avoid this horrible fate simply by letting me know you care. I produce just 100 paper copies, which is a wonderful way of concentrating my mind (and yours) as to who should be on the mailing list. You don't need to LoC every issue but the *Prolapse* Project really does want your support in adding to our collective knowledge of British fandom's long history. Or I can e-mail the pdf version on publication (ideal for overseas friends), and the issue will go onto the *efanzines* site some four weeks later.