

Another journey into
the history of British
science fiction fandom.

RELAPSE

Number 19:
Spring 2011

“Fascinating as usual, maybe because it recalls those times when we all were younger and so was the world.” – Jim Gunn, e-mail comment.



‘Well Mrs Dew, I hear you and that nice Mr Gillings made history last night!’

Where it all began – see Rob Hansen’s article. *With the usual apologies to ‘Giles’*

INSIDE: ‘Eighty Years of British Fandom’ by Rob Hansen; ‘My Dad, Bob’ by Ian Shaw; ‘The Right Thing to Say’ by Tom Shippey; ‘Life above the Fish Shop’ by Ian Millsted; SPECIAL CATCH-UP LETTERCOLUMN



RELAPSE

It's been a long time coming but here we are again, undaunted, with further stories about the people & places that have shaped British science fiction and its attendant fandom. As ever, response is everything and I hope you'll continue to send your anecdotes to me, Peter Weston, at 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS; or by e-mail to pr.weston@btinternet.com. This is the printed edition for the favoured few who contribute or express interest, but I'll gladly send the pdf (with full colour!) on request and four weeks after publication it will go onto the *eFanzines* website where previous issues can be found.

"Still looking forward to the next *Relapse* which I'm sure you'll hand-craft with your usual brilliance and dedication, hopefully with a massive letter-column." – David Redd, e-mail, months ago!

It wasn't until I'd set up the cover picture this time that I realised it could be misinterpreted; possibly you might think I was hinting that something improper happened on the evening of 27th October, 1930 between Wally Gillings and his obliging host, whose name does indeed appear to have been a Mrs Dew. Not a bit of it! My intention was only to poke mild fun at the way in which we consider the event to be the founding moment of British fandom, as **Rob Hansen** relates in this issue, while to anyone at the time it would only have been a gathering of slightly-gormless young men with their trashy magazines.

But still, mighty acorns grow from tiny oak trees and all that, and with Phil Harbottle's help Rob has been able to trace the repercussions of that original First Contact right the way up to where the trail fizzles out in 1979, leaving several unanswered questions along the way. Where is the Gillings family now? – by my reckoning the younger son would probably only be in his fifties, so is he still sitting on a major Treasure Trove? Turn to Page 5 to find out what I'm talking about!

A few excuses are in order...

...for the lateness of this issue. It should have appeared in early January and my schedule for the rest of the year is now in complete disorder. Particular apologies to Bruce Burn who sent the penultimate instalment of his 'Wandering Ghu' memoirs over twelve months ago, just in time for it to get side-tracked by the last three 'theme' issues on the early years of British fandom. From now onwards we're back to a more varied mixture of material and Bruce's story will continue next time, I promise!

So what happened? My youngest daughter Susan moved house to the Milton Keynes area and soon afterwards had a new baby (another grandson for me), and inevitably we've been caught-up in the upheavals this has brought. Then Christmas happened, of course, but the biggest distraction of the last six months has been my trading activity in locks & handles for old cars; in the autumn I did three consecutive shows, each of which required a fair bit of preparation, and I've also discovered the mind-sapping delights of eBay where I've been busily buying and selling most nights. Inevitably something had to give!

However, I've tried to keep up with SF affairs and I'm going to mention some of the snippets which caught my attention in the last few months. First we have an unlikely story from my old pal **Tom Shippey**, who recently told me he was now writing SF reviews for the *Wall Street Journal*, of all places. "How come?" I asked, to which he replied below:

"I really don't know what set the *WSJ* off. I had written three pieces for them, over quite a long period, all on modern translations of medieval poetry. Then one of the editors e-mailed me, said he'd seen my Oxford UP collections of SF and fantasy stories, was I still interested in this? I said yes, and they said they wanted a regular column. One thing they said that persuaded me it could be a good idea was that they wanted to get across some idea of the genre's history, so they were interested in retrospectives, and pieces comparing a new book with its predecessors. I thought, 'well, I can do *that* all right.'

"So far it's been pretty busy, but I haven't been able to plan things much. I'm collecting catalogues and lists, but SF is much outweighed in them by vampire-and-werewolf stories, and February seems to be a thin time for publications anyway. *WSJ* sent me two new ones by Orson Scott Card, both fantasies, both starting a new series, and that review came out in January. Then they wanted a retrospective on Robert E. Howard – Ballantine are reprinting a lot of his stuff, but the book they sent me wasn't even fantasy, it was quasi-historical. So I did a kind of overall piece on Howard's astonishing following – Lancer and Ace and TOR brought out more than 60 volumes of Howard fill-ins and Howard imitations, must have sold somewhere... That came out not long ago, early February? It went down well with the Howard fans who celebrate his memory down in Cross Plains, Texas. I've just sent in a piece on the NESFA reprint, ADMIRALTY, volume 4 of their collected short fiction of Poul Anderson, but suggested they hold it till I can get something in on new books.

"Trouble is, no new books! I got the latest Gene Wolfe, but it's very disappointing. *New York Review of Books* is reprinting the 'Ice' trilogy by Vladimir Sorokin but I only have the first volume. And I've got a book called ROBOCALYPSE by Daniel H. Wilson, which is going to be a major movie, or so they say, but I haven't read it yet. The idea of 'War with the Robots' is of course a venerable one, so I can say that if nought else.

"There's quite a lot in the pipeline, and it helps that sometimes books come out in the UK before they do in the US, so I can get a lead on things – *WSJ* only cares about US publication, naturally. I wish they'd send me a copy of the paper when I have something in it! But that's journalism, it's the next issue what counts, yesterday's is in the bin. I'd have to google myself to find out when a piece appeared.

"In the next few months I hope to do pieces on steam-punk; urban fantasy; alternate histories. All of these sub-genres look quite well represented in future lists. But some proper hard SF would be very welcome, even as singleton books. See my rather gloomy piece on 'SF Visions and Critics' delivered at *Boskone* this time last year, and readily google-able via 'Boskone Shippey' – but you were there, so you remember the general idea. Do you remember the woman in the audience who said, in response, 'Oh no, science is really making a difference, if you apply for a job now you have to do your resume quite differently.' True, but one was perhaps hoping for something a bit more world-changing."

Tom and I certainly had a good time at *Boskone*; I find it a congenial sort of convention, not too big (generally around 500) with a good book-room and a strong programme pretty closely-focussed on science fiction without too much fantasy and media nonsense. Unfortunately I didn't go this February because of a shortage of both time and money, which is a pity because shortly afterwards I heard that in my absence I'd been appointed a 'Fellow of NESFA', a considerable honour for which I'm very grateful. The New England Science Fiction Association has been good to me over the years and I must really try harder and get over there again in 2012; at the rate I'm going it will be the only convention on my calendar.

End of the John Brunner story

Our quest to discover the real JB began back in #7, June 2007 with John Hall's account of his two-year lodgement with the Brunners in the early seventies. The thread continued up to #15 & 16, in which tireless researcher **Ian Millsted** traced the family tree, wrote about various ghosts in the closet and left a few questions pending. Now in a recent message he has apparently reached the end of the line; "Nothing more to report, I'm afraid except that it seems both of his sisters are dead. Though there's a little snippet in that Hugo Brunner tells me... 'The use of the Kilian name derives from a book commissioned by Sir John T. Brunner and published in 1915, entitled 'Records of the Brunner Family of Canton Zurich'. This book, which was familiar to my father and mother and no doubt would have been known to the sci-fi author's parents too, includes one or two Kilian Brunners.' ... not exactly earth shattering stuff but I thought you might like to know."

However, **Sam Lundwall** has sent me the photograph below from the 1995 *Intersection* worldcon, with the following comments:

"Back in the sixties I was a professional photographer and what I did then, when taking quick portraits on the run, was to take three pictures. One at a distance, then a second at three-four meters, then a close-up. After which I might or might not do proper portraits, depending on the sort of reception I'd get. That night rather late I passed through the main hall of the con, a place where it was never dark, and saw John Brunner sitting alone at a table, rather drunk, muttering to himself. I did the first and second on him; then he turned and looked at me, and he looked ghastly. I swear he was dying right there and then. I couldn't make myself take that third picture. We said hello, he went back to muttering to himself, I went up to the SFWA suite and had drinks. After a while he came up there with his charming wife and someone else, and went into an inner room.

"Shortly afterwards they left, he went up to his room and had his stroke. So it goes. I'll never forget that face of his. A doctor I know told me a stroke doesn't come just when it strikes, it usually starts hours or even days earlier. In effect, John Brunner was dying there and then. It would, I guess, have been interesting to have a close-up portrait of that dying face; my photo teacher Christer Strömholm would have given me a million Brownie points. But I am glad I didn't take it."



Poor old Brunner; from our perspective we can look back on his 35 years of professional writing and consider what he actually achieved – which sad to say was not all that much, really. He peaked with his four hefty door-stop novels of the early seventies, of which *THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER* has gained him the most glory for its much-cited references to the 'web' and computer 'worms'. After that it was pretty much downhill all the way.

However... in reading through my recently-acquired collection of *New Worlds* I came across a Brunner story ('Two by Two' in #47) which intrigued me. It's really not bad; more than that, it foreshadows a much-better known story which won the Hugo twenty years later. Brunner's tale concerns the first man to land on the Moon, who experiences steadily-worsening radio interference from the sun. He takes spectrogram readings before it finally sets behind the lunar horizon and a few hours later goes outside to take a look at the Earth in the sky;

'The shining shape of the planet was dazzling because of the brightness lent by air and water; now that the sun was down it stood out in true relation to the brightness of the full moon. Arkwright had been intellectually aware of its brilliance, but seeing it was altogether different again.

'He gazed up at it for a long time.

'And then suddenly, as if a switch had been pulled, a light turned on, the illuminated part of the disc became blindingly – incredibly – bright.

'The glare made him cry out and throw up his hand in front of his eyes; a purple after-image burned like a scar on his retinae. It was only when he had blinked uncomprehendingly at it through the dark visor that he realised what might – what *must* – have happened.'

On reading this I couldn't miss the parallels with Larry Niven's 'Inconstant Moon' where the Sun explodes in just the same fashion. Of course Niven had it the other way round – his story is set in California and it is the full moon which suddenly lights up when the sun flares – but it's the same idea, with the protagonist surviving because the body of the planet is between him and the explosion, leaving the question of how to start again on a devastated world. Niven is optimistic; one hemisphere is saved. Brunner is brutally realistic – the Earth is dead. His ending borrows entirely from Alfred Bester's 'Adam and No Eve' and Arkwright uses his own body to seed the sterile seas to begin a new cycle of life.

I thought it was pretty good, anyway. At his best John Brunner had some great ideas and told them well.

And at the foot of the last page there's a little announcement about 'A new Space-Age weekly' – the *Rocket* comic, 'designed for all ages from 9 to 90', with John Carnell involved in an advisory capacity. Interesting coincidence in view of David Redd's comments in the Melting Pot this time!

Michael Moorcock, Junior Hell-raiser

Nothing escapes the attention of our super-sleuth Sandra Bond; in a recent posting on the secret e-list she wrote:-

“It is, of course, not news that Mike Moorcock (as he was known in his extreme youth) was initially active in other fandoms tangential to ours, namely ‘Tarzan’ fandom and ‘Old Boys’ Book’ fandom – this last meaning Billy Bunter, the *Magnet*, and associated boys’ papers of yore – before gravitating to what we would call Fandom Proper, making his mark, inventing Elric and Jerry Cornelius, becoming famous and living happily ever after (apart from one foot).

“Recently I discovered that some enthusiast has been scanning and placing on-line a lot of 1940s and 1950s issues of *Collector’s Digest*, which was a long-running fanzine dedicated to the OBB world. It makes fascinating reading, revealing as it does a post-war world of hobbyists quite unlike our own and yet somehow akin to it, stuffier than fandom ever was.

“But the reason I bring it up here is that more than one familiar name pops out of the pages. There’s not infrequent mention, for instance, of Ron Deacon, who was a member of London SF fandom (if not a very eminent one) in the 1950s, perhaps most notable for believing in no end of pseudoscientific claptrap (there’s a wonderfully mind-boggling article of his in one issue of *Operation Fantast* where he talks about the stars twinkling because of the jelly-like substance that their light travels through to reach Earth, or some such) and for pursuing Bea Mahaffey for a date almost to the point of harassment when she came to London for the *Coroncon*.

“It’s Moorcock, though, who provides the real interest. In 1955 the magazine’s editor Herbert Leckenby visited London and Moorcock evidently met him, for Leckenby writes in issue 106, ‘Hard luck about that officious ticket collector at Victoria, Mike. He was so busy showing his authority to you that he never got my ticket. I’m keeping it as a souvenir.’ Moorcock is described by Leckenby as ‘an enthusiastic member of the younger generation...’

“By issue 114 in 1956 Moorcock is editing an ‘enterprising little magazine, *Book Collector’s News*. But the really intriguing (to me anyway) moment comes in issue 117 for September 1956 where we find:

“‘SPECIAL NOTICE: Will all readers please note that an article on Charles Hamilton published by Mike Moorcock in his *Book Collectors’ News* for September 1956 is *without the knowledge of the (London) Old Boys’ Book Club*. It should also be noted that Mike Moorcock’s resignation from the Club will be requested at the next meeting.’ – Leonard Packman, Co-Founder of the Old Boys’ Book Club.

“I confess I’m intrigued as to what Moorcock could possibly have written about Charles Hamilton (the real name of Frank Richards, creator of Billy Bunter) that led him to be lined up in a hollow square of collectors and have his buttons snipped off. Is it, indeed, possible that being turfed out of the OBBC is what led Moorcock to concentrate his energy on science fiction fandom and eventually led him to the career with which we’re all familiar?”

Computer genius **Bill Burns** chipped in; “There’s a little bit about it on Mike’s site, *Moorcock’s Miscellany*: <http://www.multiverse.org/fora/showthread.php?t=2840> (most of the way down, continued on a second page). It has quite a bit of relevant stuff, including a scan of the following issue of Mike’s *BCN* responding to his expulsion from the club. (He said that the ‘petty threats of a certain member of the OBBC have given me the biggest belly-laugh for ages). However, there appears to be no scan online of the offending issue.”

Well, only one way to find out, so I asked **Mike Moorcock** himself what it was all about, and he replied:

“Blimey. I’d forgotten about most of this but I do know I was drummed out of the OBBC. Partly, I had defended the new-style *Sexton Blake Library* against the moans of the old guard and I probably made some jokes about Hamilton. Nothing particularly nasty – nothing as bad as might have appeared in SF fanzines. I did refer to Herbert as ‘Hotlips’ at one point but that was just joshing in bad taste. Mostly I was reacting to a lot of stuffy old blokes determined to live in the past when I was all for change, even though I liked the stuff and still do.

“Ah, I can still hear the sickening sounds as my OBBC Eton collar was snapped in two and my stripes ripped from my little jacket! I bore Len Packman no ill-will, nor any of the other old boys but I was already moving on. Ironically, my ‘cheeky’ interview with the editor of *Tarzan* got me offered the job by everyone else there who hadn’t liked him and my defence of Bill Baker’s *SBL* meant Bill offered me an editorial job at AP (IPC). In both cases there had been radical changes made either by me (*Tarzan*) or by Bill and I saw circulations rise, so I’d already seen that changes in a magazine met with initial outrage and then a rise in readers, which is what happened at *New Worlds*. Of course, all that experience meant I got the job at *New Worlds*. The rest is the history of a naturally-quarrelsome nature.”

Porno Fascist SF Bookseller

Here’s a fascinating observation from the person known to us as **MJE**:

“I was channel surfing yesterday evening, and happened upon Jean-Luc Godard’s *Sympathy For The Devil* on Sky Arts, a film I’ve never watched on account of it being pretentious dross, but which I decided to check out now

“About an hour in there is a long scene in which a character – identified by IMDB as ‘Porno Fascist Bookseller’ – reads from some turgid tract in a setting which London fans of a certain vintage will recognize as a branch of Plus Books. As the camera panned back and forth across the stock, you can clearly see the Plus Books stamps, which seem to identify it as the Norwood branch. (I know it wasn’t Hendon, King’s Cross or South Wimbledon, as those are all branches I frequented and would have recognised.) As part of this scene, a couple of oldish men come in and select books which are presumably intended to be seen as porn, but which clearly come from that familiar Plus Books SF display. All in all, the setting produced acute nostalgia, and if I saw a DVD on sale for a low price I’d probably buy it to study those five minutes or so at my leisure. The rest of the film is as bad as I knew it would be.”

I wondered how that came about, and whether the ubiquitous Alan Bale (of Premier Book Centres) might have been involved. However, as MJE reminded me, “Alan ran Premier Book Centres in Chiswick High Road, which was a pretty exact clone of a Plus Books shop (with the added attraction of a set of *Weird Tales* under one of the counters). I think Premier was a one-shop chain, despite the plural in the name. Plus Books was run by Robert Arthur Ley, better known as Arthur Sellings, who died in 1968, the year *Sympathy* was released. I don’t remember ever seeing a photo of him, and did wonder whether he might have been one of the book buyers.”

And with that enlightening story I can finally put this issue to bed. Hope you like it!

(29th March 2011)

It was early October when Rob Hansen told me about the forthcoming anniversary of British fandom, and of course I decided I must be there. So I booked a cheap ticket with Chiltern Trains and set out with high hopes early on the 27th, only to find the car park at Solihull station was full. A notice said, 'Ask the attendant for alternative parking arrangements', which I did, to be told there weren't any. I drove around the local roads with increasing desperation but found them liberally covered in yellow lines and in the end I missed my train. My ticket wasn't valid for the next one so I had to give up. It was a great disappointment and I won't be using Solihull station again, Steve! – pw

Eighty Years of British Fandom

The story of Walter Gillings
and the Ilford
Science Literary Circle

By Rob Hansen

Sandra, Caroline
Mullan & Rob celebrate
outside No.32
Photo from Rob



Wednesday 27th October, Ilford.

As Sandra Bond, Brian Ameringen, Caroline Mullan and I set off on our trek the day was bright, cold and, most importantly of all, dry. Had this been the day before we would have got soaked. The coincidence of Brian and Caroline living a mere two streets away from our destination on Thorold Road meant our journey was a short one, and yet for almost sixty years the part it played in the birth of British fandom has been all but forgotten.

In 1987, plans for the Worldcon – called *Conspiracy '87* and held that year in Brighton, England – were already well under way when I was tasked with writing a publication for sale in the fan room. This was to be a brief history of British fandom and would appear under the title 'The Story So Far'. There wasn't a lot of lead-time so I mostly fell back on such fan-historical articles and books as were readily available. As a consequence, all it had to say about our very first fan group was:

'...The Ilford Science Literary Circle, a group begun by Walter H. Gillings of Leyton and L.A. Kippin of Ilford (Leyton and Ilford being districts of London) in October 1931. Unfortunately the group didn't last very long and fell apart when it attempted to become a national organisation.'

As inadequate as it was, putting together the 'The Story So Far' sparked in me a serious interest in fan-history, and after the convention I decided to do some major research and to expand it into something worthwhile. My colleague in this endeavour was Vince Clarke, a great man without whose knowledge, hard work and enthusiasm – not to mention his extensive collection of British fanzines – the much more comprehensive history of UK fandom that emerged would not exist. The obvious place to start the expansion of that first attempt at

fan-history was at the beginning, and that beginning was the Ilford Science Literary Circle.

Though he had outlined his earliest days as a fan in a number of convention speeches Walter Gillings didn't commit the story to print until the mid-1950s when he wrote a series for J. Michael Rosenblum's fanzine *New Futurian* titled 'The Clamorous Dreamers', which was later reworked as 'The Impatient Dreamers', for the Phil Harbottle-edited prozine *Vision of Tomorrow*. This was the primary source for all subsequent references to the Ilford Science Literary Circle, including those secondary sources I had consulted for 'The Story So Far'. Reading it for the first time, the full story became clear.

It was a letter in the June 1930 *Wonder Stories* from Len A. Kippin of Ilford that led to the 18 year-old Gillings first meeting with another fan. He wrote to Kippin, who responded promptly to Gillings' overtures by calling on him at his home in Leyton. Being primarily an amateur radio buff Kippin was less earnest about SF, and certainly a lot less driven, than Gillings, but during his journeys as a commercial traveller he had picked up many of the magazines and acquired a taste for them. Once the two had met it was inevitable they would try to form a local SF club, and so they did.

Gillings was then a trainee reporter on *The Ilford Recorder*, and with the sanction of an indulgent chief he inserted a 'Letter to the Editor' he had written himself announcing the formation of the Ilford Science Literary Circle. A number of reports on its activities also later appeared in that section of the newspaper covering local groups and clubs. This then was my starting point.

A phone call to the offices of the *Recorder* revealed there was a microfiche archive of old issues at Ilford Public Library. Since this is only a short bus ride from my home, I headed over there to see what I could find. According to Gillings his group had started in 1931 but to my surprise and disappointment the October 1931 issues contained no mention

of the group or their activities and neither did those for subsequent months. I wondered if Gillings could have got the year wrong and turned instead to the October 1930 issues. Bingo! There in the 3rd October 1930 edition of *The Ilford Recorder* was the letter he had referred to, as well as reports on their earliest meetings.

Gillings said the group had lasted less than a year, so I spent another couple of hours moving forward through the issues and making copies of every account of the group's meetings. (These are all now online).

For years, thanks to Gillings' faulty memory, we believed British fandom had got its start in 1931, but now I knew better. I not only had a date for the first meeting of our first fan group – 27th October 1930 – but also an address, 32 Thorold Road. Nor was that all. Gillings' account had mentioned five others were present besides him, Len Kippin, and Kippin's wife. From the newspaper I was able to glean the name of another – J.W. Beck – and also those of the people whose house it was. In 'The Clamorous Dreamers', Gillings had stated they were:

'...a middle-aged couple who without quite realising what it was all about were willing to lend their front parlour so long as the group enlivened their evenings'.

Since libraries also contain copies of old electoral registers it took no more than a couple of minutes to look up the one for 1930 and discover that the obliging couple were George and Mary Dew. It had been only a few hours work to uncover stuff about our first fan group that had been forgotten for almost sixty years. Of all the research I did for THEN, as my history of the first fifty years of British fandom came to be called, this was the most satisfying.

According to Gillings, the Ilford Science Literary Circle came to an end in mid-1931:

'...mainly for lack of enough members interested in more than parlour chit-chat, and partly because we could find no other way of discouraging an elderly lady who had mistaken us for a Spiritualist circle.'

**TO
ENGLISH
READERS.**

Have you a genuine interest in Science Fiction?
A new movement has been formed in Ilford Essex,
with the object of furthering this type of literature
in Great Britain.

The Ilford Science Literary Circle appeals
to all in sympathy with this object to communicate,
for further particulars to the Secretary,

Mr. W. H. Gillings,
123, Grove Green Road,
Leytonstone, E.11.

THANK YOU.

Rob says, "This is the slip that Gillings inserted into books, making it, I suppose, the first-ever publication by British fans." (Copy from *Vision of Tomorrow*)



Wally Gillings, in his early twenties, about 1934. By this time he was already married. Photo from Ted Carnell's album.

What happened to Len Kippin and the other members after the demise of the ISLC has not been recorded, but we certainly know what happened to Walter Gillings. At first he worked tirelessly but without much success to get a national SF organisation started. When such a group did come into being it did so largely without his involvement.

Gillings showed little interest in the Science Fiction League sponsored by *Wonder Stories* but others did. One of the five British chapters of the SFL, the Leeds Chapter, organised the world's first SF convention in 1937 and it was here that the Science Fiction Association was born. That same year Gillings launched what he later described as:-

'...a modest but professional bi-monthly journal, *SCIENTIFUNCTION – the British Fantasy Review*, giving news of such SF books as were then forthcoming and interviews with the few British writers prominent in the field. Subscribers were few but contents set a high standard; its most notable achievement was the first published profile of Olaf Stapledon. After seven issues it was merged in a new and bigger magazine, *Tomorrow*, produced by Leeds fans on behalf of the SFA; but proved too ambitious and failed after three issues.'

Nevertheless, this proved a successful calling card and Gillings was editor of *Tales of Wonder* from June 1937 to Spring 1942 when wartime paper shortages killed it. Gillings also lost his day job with *The Ilford Recorder* when, in mid-1940, he learned that being a pacifist during wartime is not without cost:

'The local Press is not quite the same thing as the national; though even the locals are now imbued with the war spirit. It was the fact that we had tried to keep our heads on the *Recorder*, where I did nothing but reflect various local aspects of the war, without prejudice, which led to the paper's policy being criticised by local authority, and started the ball rolling for my dismissal. Had I not been sacked (as a gesture to local big-wig critics) and been expected to change my attitude to suit a more warlike policy, I would most certainly have resigned. As it was, they didn't give me a chance.'

His request for Conscientious Objector status was turned down by two tribunals and Gillings was forced to enter the services in order to prevent his wife and child from starving. He was temperamentally and psychologically unsuited to Army life, however, and by late-1943 he was out having served only two years in uniform.

After the war, Gillings launched a new SF magazine – *Fantasy* – for Link House Publications, with him as editor, but the immediate post-war period was to prove an inhospitable one for new magazines. *Fantasy* saw only three issues before folding in August 1947, and the Ted Carnell-edited *New Worlds* went to the wall in October of that same year after only three of its own. Here's Gillings (writing in the third person):

'The magazine was suspended after only three issues at four-month intervals (6,000 copies each issue) with no prospect of more frequent appearance. In between times, G. was associated with former contributor Benson Herbert in a new venture, Utopian Publications, resulting in a series of booklets reprinting SF and weird tales by American writers, and two issues of a magazine titled *Strange Tales* – which also proved abortive due to distribution troubles.

'On leaving Link House Publications, Gillings joined Hutchinson's the book publishers, as director of studies for the ABC Correspondence School For Writers, which he was obliged to suspend before producing *Crime Book Magazine*, a giveaway publicising the thrillers of the Hutchinson companies. After editing three issues he left the firm to join the Press Association, the Fleet Street news agency, where he stayed for five years, becoming News Editor of the Special Reporting Service.'

Knowing that *Fantasy* was doomed, Gillings had started up *Fantasy Review* in March 1947, a professionally-printed fanzine (regarded as more of a semi-prozine by fans of the day) carrying reviews and SF news items. This would see eighteen issues (the final three under the title *Science-Fantasy Review*), before being incorporated as a news-chat section in the first two issues of *Science Fantasy* when Gillings was given editorship of that prozine in the summer of 1950. Unfortunately for him he was dropped as editor after those two issues. As Vince Clarke later observed:

"There was some muttering in the ranks due to *Science Fantasy* being aimed at the average fan-in-the-street – by that time mature fans had had wartime *ASFs*. Apparently, this caused some dissatisfaction and Wally was eased-out of the editorial job, mostly by Frank Cooper who was providing business know-how and holding the purse strings."

At the time *Tales of Wonder* came out, Gillings stated that it would contain simple stories to ease people into science fiction rather than the more challenging fare to which those reading the U.S. pro-mags were accustomed. Even at the time, I'm sure a lot of British fans disagreed with his 'baby steps' approach. After the war it would have been intolerable. Ted Carnell took over as editor with the third issue and immediately dropped the news-chat section, so removing all trace of Gillings from the magazine.

With his professional ambitions dashed, Gillings started to drift away from the SF community. He had hardly missed a convention since the first in 1937 but he wasn't at either the 1952 or 1953 national conventions. He did go along to *Medcon*, a small local con held in late 1953, but that was pretty much his swan-song. He didn't even attend the 1957 Worldcon in London, though he did meet up in town with TAFF-winner Bob Madle.

We do know what he did in the following years, thanks mainly to what appears to be his CV. This was found in the Vince Clarke collection and, despite being in the third person appears to have been written by Gillings himself, beginning as it does with his name, address, and

academic qualifications. (The third-person section quoted above is from this same source.) From this, we can pick up the story:

'In 1954 he left Fleet Street to return to the *Ilford Recorder*, of which he became editor. Inevitably, the children's page featured a serial concerning 'The Boy in the Moon' and a series about space-flight, 'Spaceman's Log,' which he authored under his pen-name, Thomas Sheridan.

'Leaving the paper in 1960, he started his own press agency, working with his journalist son Ronald. For two years he taught practical journalism to newspaper trainees at Balham and Tooting College of Commerce and, also with his son, produced a taped 'talking newspaper' for the local blind. Attempts to develop this project, nationally failed for lack of finance, but qualified him for the editorship of *Amateur Tape Recording* which he held for a year before joining *Public Service*, monthly journal of the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO), of which he also became editor in 1966.

'In 1969, during another period of freelancing - and after 18 years of disassociation from SF circles ('gafiation') --- G. was tempted to return to the field in which his early efforts had by then borne much fruit. Those who remembered him (especially Clarke) were quick to encourage *Cosmos*, an updated but nostalgic revival of *Fantasy Review*, which had not seen three issues before it ran into production troubles. Frustrated by printers, G. contrived a novel form of presentation by initiating 'Cosmos Tape Magazine & Library'. But, though the Library attracted some subscribers, the Magazine did not develop beyond an original feature on Hugo Gernsback (for which a limited demand came, mostly from American colleges and libraries) and a Science Fiction Quiz.

'With the appearance at this time of *Vision of Tomorrow*, edited by Philip Harbottle, G. was moved to complete the story of British SF's development which he started in 1954 in J. Michael Rosenblum's fanzine *The New Futurian* (Rosenblum was one of the original Leeds fans), 'The Impatient Dreamers', *Vision*, (Aug 1969-Sep 1970) also embodied contributions by John Carnell and William F. Temple, recalling the early days of British fandom. Harbottle, an admirer of John Russell Fearn (who edited the *Vargo Statten British Science Fiction Magazine* in the 1950s) had plans for a companion magazine with G. as associate editor, but these did not mature, though they continued to work in association under the heading of the Cosmos Literary Agency.'

In the early 1970s, Gillings contributed articles to the SF poster magazine *Science Fiction Monthly* under both his own name and his Thomas Sheridan pseudonym, and he showed up at the Globe when Isaac Asimov visited in 1974, but his involvement with SF and its community would never again be what it had been. In 1979 he died, aged sixty-seven.

Here in 2010 I had known for ages that British fandom's eightieth birthday was coming, which is why I arranged the little ceremony on that Wednesday 27th October.

Arriving in front of 32 Thorold Road, I took the glasses and bottle of sparkling Californian wine – I don't like champagne – from my back-pack and we toasted British fandom's birthday (I later learned Mark Plummer had offered a similar toast at the BSFA meeting that same evening). The house looked kind of shabby but to the four of us raising our glasses its importance was clear. This was the birthplace of British fandom, the place where Walter Gillings, our first fan, had started the whole thing off. So here's to you, British fandom, eighty years old but not looking a day over sixty. I wonder if I'll still be here for the centenary?

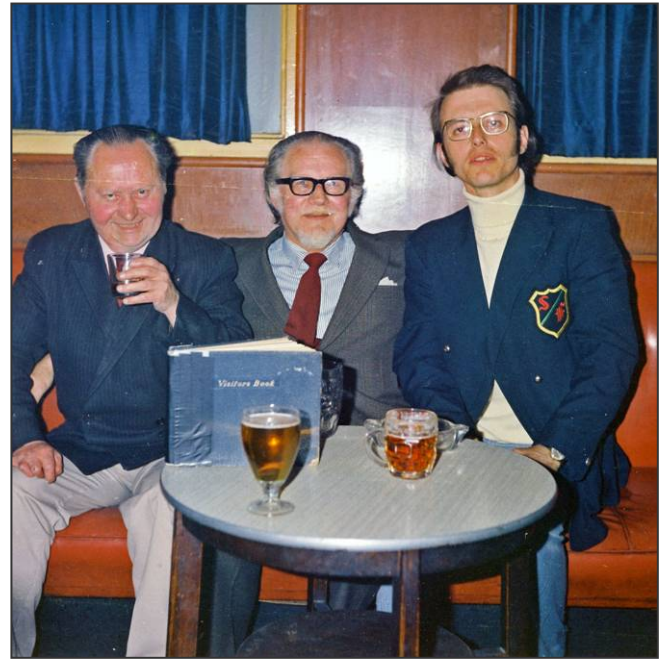
- Rob Hansen, December 2010

I only met Wally Gillings once and found him extremely irritating, especially since he had pinched all the advertising revenue from the London publishers. We didn't really establish any sort of rapport; I think he thought I was a Johnny-come-lately (which of course at the time I was) and I wasn't aware of his earlier achievements. However, it's never too late to make amends.....[pw]

My friend, Wally Gillings

By Phil Harbottle

Frank Arnold, Wally Gillings & Gerry Webb in the Globe, 1973. Photo origin unknown.



Peter has asked me if I could write something about my late friend Wally Gillings from the personal angle. Elsewhere I have written about his many professional achievements, as a science fiction magazine editor, commentator, publisher and proselytizer.

But what was the man himself really like – and why did he do what he did? To understand what made Wally tick, you have to appreciate, as I came to do, that over and above everything else he was a professional journalist and reporter. Printers' ink was in his DNA.

In the Autumn of 1968 I was actively soliciting stories for my own magazine *Vision of Tomorrow*, then in the planning stage (it would eventually be published in July 1969) and was in close contact with Ted Carnell, in his capacity as the leading specialist literary agent. It was Ted who gave me the welcome news that – by sheer coincidence – Wally Gillings was also planning to launch his own (non-fiction) magazine, *Cosmos Science Fantasy Review*, a reincarnation of his legendary semi-prozine *Science Fantasy Review*. This had come to an end in 1951, at which point Wally, too, had all but vanished (or so it had been perceived) from the science fiction field, and from SF fandom.

Wally too was soliciting material, Ted told me, and he had just sent him an article describing how he had launched his own new venture, NEW WRITINGS IN SF. Ted suggested that Wally would be interested in the genesis of *Vision of Tomorrow*, and gave me his telephone number.

So with some apprehension and trepidation I telephoned him the next evening. This was because I had already written to Wally in 1965 (having been given his address by Bill Temple) during my researches into British SF history only for him to have ignored my letters and enclosures. Would he similarly rebuff this new contact?

My fears were misplaced. It was immediately apparent to both of us that we were kindred spirits. That first call was to last nearly an hour, and only ended because I was not using my own phone, but telephoning from work. It was the first of many, many long telephone conversations we were to exchange in the next few years, and led to a prolific correspondence and several meetings between us.

During that first call I learned why Wally had not replied my questions in 1965, but he was happy to do so now. I listened, fascinated, as he told me the inside story of how British science fiction had flickered into life before and during the war, and the inside story of why and how it had been extinguished, and how his own life had been affected irrevocably. His revelations were exciting – and tragic, and I had the impression that I was interviewing *him*. But what I didn't realise was that Wally was a consummate professional journalist, and all the time he was also interviewing *me*. I only realised this when the first issue of *Cosmos* came out the following year, with a full page article 'Dead Author Inspires New SF Venture'.

Today, alas, Gillings remains something of a mysterious and controversial figure to those modern SF commentators who did not know him. His immense contributions to the field have never been properly recognised in print (except by Mike Ashley and me) and when viewed today, as through the wrong end of a telescope, they are recorded almost as dismissive footnotes in British SF history and of little or no importance.

Only those who have conceived and edited an SF magazine, only to have it killed by circumstances outside your control, know the devastating depression that is caused by its unnecessary demise. After the cancellation of *Vision of Tomorrow* Wally was unstinting with his help and advice; he had himself experienced these reversals several times and knew what I was going through. His sympathetic counsel was invaluable to me, and together we set up the Cosmos Literary Agency. Unfortunately Wally died suddenly in 1979, leaving me to continue the agency alone. But it gave me the platform to carve out a fulfilling new career. It is one I owe entirely to Wally's generosity and mentoring.

In its early days it was only a part-time occupation for both of us. I resumed my interrupted career in Local Government, while Wally, after retiring from editing his local newspaper *The Ilford Recorder*, found work with the Post Office. On a couple of occasions I accepted Wally's invitation to visit him and stay the weekend at his home in Wanstead Park Road in Ilford, Essex.

Here I met his devoted wife Madge, and his younger son Tony. Madge was a very attractive, brown-haired lady, quietly spoken and intensely loyal and supportive of Wally. She had a thorough knowledge of science fiction and its personalities, and had no resentment that he'd spent so much of his life on it. The only thing she resented was the disgraceful way in which the SF establishment had treated her husband. Tony was a youngish, dark-haired teenager, smiling and personable, in appearance not unlike Professor Brian Cox. He too was knowledgeable about SF and fiercely loyal to his father, whom he thought had had a very raw deal.

They made me welcome, and I was privileged to be given access to Wally's massive collection of books and magazines. His extensive loft was filled with complete runs of every SF pulp magazine, and he also had complete runs of all the specialist American hardcover publishers that had flourished in the post-war years—Arkham House, Fantasy Press, Gnome, etc. Many of the books were presentation copies, many autographed and inscribed to him. Even more startling was the fact that Wally had meticulously kept on file **every single letter** he had ever received from authors and editors in his long professional SF career, together with carbons of his own replies.

He had known, and corresponded with everybody who was anybody in science fiction. It was a truly fabulous collection – Hugo Gernsback, John Campbell, August Derlerth, Robert Bloch, Sam Moskowitz, Lloyd Esbach, Bill Temple, John Wyndham. Arthur Clarke, Olaf Stapleton, Eric Frank Russell (many of whose wartime letters were beautifully handwritten), Clark Ashton Smith, Will Jenkins (Murray Leinster) Jack Williamson, and Ray Bradbury.

Wally proudly showed me an effusive letter from a young Ray Bradbury, thanking Wally for giving him his first-ever UK reprinting ('The Tombstone' in *Strange Tale*). It was endless and momentous list of the shapers of modern science fiction. I was especially interested in his huge file of letters to and from John Russell Fearn over two decades, and Wally generously allowed me to borrow and copy these.

Another fascinating item was Wally's editor's notebook, in which he had kept a notation of the date and details of every MSS he had ever received, together with a very brief note on its rejection or acceptance. I regret that I did not have time or opportunity to take notes of the surprising and illustrious names who had unsuccessfully submitted material, especially from 1944 to 1947, when Gillings was actively buying material for the Temple Bar *Fantasy* (planned long before the Pendulum *New Worlds*).

Fearn had given Gillings first look at all his wartime material, and whilst there were several acceptances, most had been rejected as "Too steep!" Fearn had then sold all the stories to *Startling* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* in the US at twice Wally's payment rates. I do remember two other famous names suffering rejections – Ted Tubb and James White – several years *before* they eventually debuted in *New Worlds*.

One of the fascinating file of letters that I recall was to the young Peter Hamilton, editor of *Nebula*, in which Wally had bombarded Peter with devastating constructive criticism. Peter's reaction had been similar to that of his namesake!

Wally also had original MSS and galley proofs by world-renowned authors. As Wally shared these treasures with me, he told me the reason for his earlier withdrawal from SF fandom and publishing. Those few commentators who have bothered to take any notice of Gillings have conjectured – quite correctly – that this was most probably

engendered by his bitterness at losing the editorship of *Science Fantasy*, which had passed to *New Worlds* editor John Carnell, after just two issues. Both magazines were then being published by Nova Publications, a consortium of British fans and authors, of which the principal movers had originally been Carnell and Gillings (whose wife Madge had coined the name 'Nova').

I recall another critic suggesting that Gillings had been "sacked" as editor because of his 'conservative' editorial approach, an idea suggested because the two Gillings issues had been made up of "old fashioned" stories. Indeed, nearly all of the stories had been written between 1944 and 1947 and were the left-over inventory from his previous magazine *Fantasy* (1946-47). But Gillings' use of this material had been dictated by the need to keep down the costs of the new venture, and had he continued he would have been able to secure brand-new material by contemporary top names, especially the leading American writers, all of whom had reason to be grateful to him.

But that loss of editorship was *not* of itself the only, or indeed main factor, for Gillings' bitterness. It was the *timing* and *circumstances* in which the dirty deed – which had initially been instigated by one of Nova's directors Frank Cooper at a shareholders' meeting – had been done. Wally told me the full and harrowing story in confidence. In providing information for one of Mike Ashley's studies I referred to it only as "a domestic tragedy". That will have to suffice here too, because even today I feel that confidence needs to be respected.

The Walter Gillings archive was absolutely fabulous – truly breathtaking. It was worth scores of thousands of pounds – but its value to SF scholarship was priceless. It should – and could – have been passed to the nation, via the SF Foundation. It wasn't – it has disappeared, almost certainly destroyed.

I have no idea what became of it. When Wally died suddenly I naturally wrote to his son and widow, but my letter was never answered. Reluctantly, I took the decision that all joint projects we had been working on had to be cancelled. The one exception was a superb article on Algernon Blackwood for which Wally had asked me to find a publisher. This had been a leftover from his series in the ill-starred New English Library magazine *Science Fiction Monthly*. I sold this to John Robert Colombo in Canada who was delighted to snap it up for his book on Blackwood, and he sent me a cheque. I sent on the payment (made payable to Tony Gillings) with a follow-up letter to my earlier one – but again, I never received a reply. I was upset, and never even checked my bank account to see if the cheque had ever been cleared.

It is a great puzzle to me that the SF Foundation did not secure the Gillings archive. Maybe they tried, only to be rebuffed, as I was? But they did not try hard enough. They should have been able to secure it because Gillings was in fact working for them in the Foundation's first incarnation, giving a night class on science fiction in the North East London Polytechnic. On one of my visits I accompanied him as he travelled to his lecture, and it was while we were in an Underground station that I remember coming unexpectedly upon Ted Tubb *selling kitchen knives* to passers by! Ted was giving a fabulous performance in his inimitable "Dusty Dribble" persona. If nothing else, it revealed to me just why Earl Dumarest was so proficient with a knife!

Now both Wally and Ted are gone, and I am left only with memories. But what great memories they are!

Copyright © 2011 Phil Harbottle



No-one in our little microcosm was as well-loved as Bob Shaw. He was a gentle, diffident man of endless wit and good humour and from the moment he found fandom in 1950 he wrote about his life experiences, usually somewhat fictionalised but always emphasising the funny side of human nature. But what was he *really* like? Back in issue #15 fellow author Don Malcolm recalled a few anecdotes about Bob, and as his son Ian writes, “this brought back a lot of memories, which spawned the idea of my offering to share some of those memories with Peter and his readers.” These tales go to confirm Bob’s genuine wit and sense of humour. [pw]
Photo from Ian

My Dad, Bob

By Ian Shaw

**Bob, Walt & James, in a rare view of the fan-room at Oblique House, early 1950s.
Photo by Vince Clarke.**



To open, I had thought of copying some blurb from the dust jacket of a Bob Shaw novel, but instead decided to open with a very personal statement of how I saw my father.

As a 13-year-old I felt very insecure knowing I could never do in life the sort of things he did. His skills were endless and no task appeared to faze him – from building brick walls, an orangery, to knocking down the wall between our living room and dining room, installing an RSJ and finishing the building project to a very high standard (a Saturday job with a labourer helper), to double glazing our home, hand-making wooden frames for every window aperture and then adding the new glass (all done alone, with no instruction).

He did fabulous oil paintings in the Cubist style, of aeroplanes in flight and war scenes of Russian soldiers and civilians battling against Hitler’s Sixth Army through Stalingrad basements. He made full-sized stained glass windows (with a strong science fiction theme), designed and built our kitchens, drank copious amounts of alcohol (and only once in his life became drunk in my company, and that was because at the time he was riddled with cancer).

He could swim a hundred lengths of the swimming baths, he brought up three children while trying his best to provide a nice life for us all by writing for a living, and oh, did I mention he was a great storyteller and wrote a couple of novels too?

My dad, Bob Shaw, was a great and generous father who I loved so much, indeed, so much that even today he enters my thoughts many times daily.

Right, enough of this serious stuff, I hope you enjoy my article; it is as true as my memory dictates.

As a little boy growing up in Belfast he was luckier than some. His mother did piece-work in a factory and his father was a police constable and part-time gamekeeper for a local land owner. Bob did not see much of his father, as he spent little time at home. When he was not working, he drank in a police club, his eight or so hunting dogs living in kennels in the large back garden. When Bob started work at sixteen his mother took the majority of his earnings from him and he would occasionally come home in the evening to a meal consisting of a fried apple.

During World War Two the Luftwaffe liked to pay regular visits to Belfast’s shipyard which was a short distance from where Bob lived. At one point their house was completely demolished by a bomb. Fortunately the adults were out at work and Bob had already been evacuated to a town in the countryside called Muckamore, in County Antrim. At the end of the road of his new home was a U.S. Army base where the GIs received their final training and instructions before entering the European conflict.

Although Bob was already a big fan of American movies and all things American (he idolised Robert Mitchum and in later life Charles Bronson), moving to the country was a dream come true. Here, at the end of the street was a camp housing thousands of Mitchum lookalikes. With pride in his voice and (what might sound a trifle homo erotic) Bob told me about these tall, tough-looking well-built young Americans who sat around camp fires at night smoking cigars, pipes, playing guitars and singing cowboy songs. Bob was regularly given sweets, chocolate and his childhood prize-possession was a harmonica given by a GI which I remember was still knocking about in the 70s.

Young Sadie,
Bob, and
George
Charters,
probably
around 1953.

Photo by Eric
Bentcliffe



After their session Geordie and Bob would arrive back home where Granda always had a Cadburys Dairy Milk bar in his pocket for each of his grandchildren and he would stand waverling, singing “We’ll Meet Again” when it was time to go. Sadie’s mother kept a spotless house, had brought up her children well and was a much loved Nanny.

When Sadie left school she was given the very unusual offer of being trained as a secretary. I say unusual, because girls from Sandy Row nearly always worked in factories. Sadie was delighted beyond all belief, but sadly her religious mother disallowed it saying she had ideas above her station, and instead insisted on her working in a local sewing factory.

Bob almost married someone else! He had courted Sadie for some time but the relationship came to an end. Bob took up with another young lady who lived closer to his own home. Things were going along quite well until one wet Friday evening Bob boarded a bus to go towards the city centre to see her at her parent’s home. When he approached her stop Bob prepared to stand up. The bus was full but Bob realised he was trapped. The buckle of his raincoat had become lodged down the back of the seat and by the time he managed to free himself the bus was well on down the road.

Dad told me that when he finally got off the bus he stood in the heavy rain and thought, rather than walking back to his girlfriends, instead he would walk the shorter distance and try to make things up with Sadie. I remember being shocked on hearing this but I know it’s true because Sadie was in the same room at the time and she wouldn’t have allowed him to say it if it were not true.

On arrival at Canada’s north-east coast Bob and Sadie took the train to Calgary. This was a three-day journey with heavily pregnant Sadie being ill the whole way. She was unable to eat. She told me the only thing that saved her was a black conductor who brought her jugs of ice-cold water with slices of lemon. Claire was born in Calgary Hospital a few weeks later. As there was no National Health Service in Canada, they were dumbfounded to be charged hundreds of dollars by the hospital.

Once in Canada, Sadie was introduced to ladies who would go out to lunch. Her friends would collect her in a Lincoln Continental and they would disappear for the afternoon, shopping in huge malls that must have seemed a million miles away from Kensington Street.

Bob worked as a draughtsman by day and a taxi driver in the evening, the plan being to save enough money over a three year period before returning to Northern Ireland to put down a good deposit on a house. I remember seeing photographs in my parents’ album of him wearing a peaked taxi-driver crush cap, gabardine shirt and three-pleat peg pants, leaning against his yellow Packard cab.

From the age of twelve I have been a nut on 1950s Americana. The Packard was the model with the huge tail fins that was a favourite with the car customisers of the time, who copied the tail-fin rear light configuration. I was really disappointed to hear that my Dad’s daily driver while in Canada was an imported British made Morris!

Once Elvis made the big time signing to RCA in 1957, I lost interest in everything he ever did from that day on, but I loved his earlier recordings on Sun Records. Bob told me stories of how when Elvis first appeared on television in Canada he was seen as a novelty act who everybody laughed at, and how he and Sadie used to watch the Ricky Nelson show every week. As a teenage devotee of rockabilly music I was very much impressed that my parents were there at the time, living the American dream.

Bob told me a story of how he ingratiated himself with his new Canadian boss. Bob, Sadie and baby Claire were sitting enjoying the sunshine in their front garden on a Saturday morning when they saw a huge V8-motored car leapfrogging along their street. It came to a halt outside their house and out leapt Bob’s boss, pleading with him to take a look under the bonnet. Although Bob knew little of cars, he agreed.

Car engines in those days were much simpler in design and layout and Bob couldn’t fail to notice that a spark-plug lead had come adrift. He motioned for Sadie to take the man indoors which she did, plying him with real coffee and her home-made chocolate cake. Bob rolled up his sleeves, popped the spark-plug back into place and continued to cover his hands and forearms in grease and oil ensuring his finger nails were embedded in dirt.

Forty minutes later due to the intense summer heat, Bob’s brow was covered in sweat when he went indoors, handed over the keys and said, “Give her a try now”. The engine roared into life, a much relieved and very happy man smiled up from the open window, thanking Bob profusely for saving the day and from what would surely have been an expensive garage bill! As the car rumbled off, I can imagine Bob giving Sadie a wry smile, knowing that from here on he could do little wrong.

Three or four years later, Bob and Sadie returned. Kensington Street turned out in force to celebrate, and Sadie’s parents laid on a spread for all to enjoy. Bob enjoyed the welcome but started to think about his own parents and feel guilty, so took a bus across town. He walked down the drive-way of a smart semi-detached house in Loopland Drive and opened the back door. As it swung open, his eyes met those of his mother. She was standing frying her evening meal, and with a resigned sigh said, “I see you’re back then?”

I am not sure of the date when Bob started working as a journalist for *The Belfast Telegraph* (the last journalist they ever employed who was not a graduate) but he was determined to earn a living by writing. Things did not go too well (though not through a lack of writing skills), for some time later they gave him the option of either being let go, or taking a position in the Sports department. Bob was never interested in sport, although he did take up archery as a young man and ended up representing Ireland! Not many people know that one.



**Young Bob –
a crack-shot
with the bow
& arrow!
Photo from
Ian, early
fifties.**

But sports reporting was something altogether different and Bob felt completely out of his depth, however with three small children (I have an older and a younger sister) and a mortgage to pay, at the end of the day it was a job.

Things didn't start too brightly until by pure fluke, one wet and windswept Saturday morning Bob found himself standing beside two old boys watching a hockey match. He stood close to them to try and shield himself from the rain, and in the cold he held his lit pipe against the side of his nose to help keep warm. The two men were talking constantly. "Moore is a fabulous centre-forward" or some such observation. Bob took out his notebook and started scribbling down everything they said. Once home, he very cleverly cobbled it into an article supposedly written by someone who evidently loved the game. This became his pattern, to sidle up to others who obviously loved sport and who couldn't help but give their own commentary.

Success! After a couple of months of this, Bob started to learn the rules of each game he attended, but continued to write down the words of others. Cricket, football, rugby, athletics and hockey, again, as with most things in life that Bob tackled, he was a winner, but to his own amazement he went on to win the 'Sports Reporter of the Year' award as well as being asked to write the popular 'Chichester' column.

After three years at the *Telegraph* Bob secured a new job in the design office with the Shorts Aircraft Company, later moving to a public relations post. Bob loved aviation and could enter into this job any without reservations.

Shorts' big-seller at the time was a medium-sized transport plane called the 'Skyvan', along with a guided missile called 'Blowpipe'. (Bob painted a fabulous large oil painting of a Skyvan in flight – what I would pay to have that now!). Shorts claim to fame was if one of the two Skyvan engines failed (a propeller on each wing), a fully-laden plane would be able to return to land safely. After influencing many sales to foreign companies and governments Bob did some detective work of his own and discovered this had all been rubbish!

However, a new version of the aircraft was being launched (pun not intended), and to allow journalists a place to sit they had rigged one out with seats. Bob was put in charge of inviting fifteen journalists from across Europe to

come along and experience a flight. The day arrived and Bob was in full flow, guiding the visitors around the factory before setting off on the flight. The plan was to fly down to the Mountains of Mourne, have a little flight over what Bob said, really was just a collection of hills, before returning to Shorts own airfield.

Back in the day (the Irish troubles were in full flow), the IRA would sometimes phone in a warning to the police or to a newspaper alerting them to where an explosive device had been planted, to allow a little time for the area to be evacuated. To rule out those who might try to play a prank, the bombers would give a recognised codeword that their bosses had issued to the security forces at the beginning of each month.

The pilot sent for Bob when the plane was twenty minutes into the journey. Once in the cockpit the pilot did all of the talking. He told Bob the control tower had radioed to say a coded warning had been received, saying there was a bomb on board. The pilot said he did not want any panic and that he was going to turn back. Horrified at the thought of being blown out of the sky, Bob nevertheless quickly regained his composure and asked the pilot, "What are you going to say to our guests"? In an instant the pilot flared up shouting, "They are your fucking guests, you're fucking public relations, so fuck off and fucking well fucking tell them some fucking thing".

Bob told me he had never hated anyone so much than at that precise moment, but impressed at how many expletives he had managed to fit into one sentence, went back through the door and in seconds was facing the journalists. Clearing his throat, Bob apologised, explaining that the restaurant (Shorts canteen) manager had been on the radio with some bad news. The free three-course meal they were expecting on their return (with free bar) could only be had if they turned back immediately, as the restaurant was closing early that day.

To continue with the flight would mean forfeiting the meal (and alcohol). With his breath held, Bob hoped this would swing it, but it didn't. There was a difference of opinion so Bob put it to the vote and thankfully, there were more hungry and thirsty present than not. The plane swung around and Bob's quick thinking won the day. No bomb was ever found and despite this little incident, the 'Skyvan' went on to be a big seller.

Bob would write science fiction stories in the evenings and on weekends. We drove to an auction house in central Belfast together one Saturday morning where he bought a beautiful second-hand desk. A plan was hatched where Bob was going to give up his day job to try and write full time, while Sadie went out to work. She joined the shoe department of a Belfast city-centre store which in today's market would be the equal, if not grander than John Lewis. I once saw a photograph of thirty or so shoe department ladies in two-piece fitted navy blue suits, smiling for the camera with Sadie in the middle. I always thought a young Sadie strongly resembled the actress Jean Simmons, and never more so than in this photograph.

At the time, my younger sister (eighteen months younger) and I attended a primary school which was a few minutes away from our home in Cheltenham Park, south Belfast. Every lunch-time we came home to enjoy an Ulster fry, consisting of potato bread, soda farls, sausage, bacon and egg (in the kitchen Bob designed and built).

But on Sadie's first day at work we sat at our places and Bob set small plates in front of us. On each plate was a lonely-looking mini pork-pie with a glass of best bitter to wash it down with. I think Dad thought the addition

of beer would lead to us accepting the lunch he provided. He was probably concentrating on his work and remembered at the last moment that we were soon to arrive for lunch. We were horrified. We needed more than a pork-pie and we agreed the beer tasted awful. Within three weeks Bob was back at Shorts and Sadie back in front of the cooker, but please do not blame us kids!

One of Sadie's sisters married a footballer who had played for the Arsenal for a number of years in the Fifties before going on to own, or manage Belfast city-centre night clubs and pubs through the '60s and '70's. For some unknown reason he very kindly invited Bob to join with him and two others, gambling on horses where the result had been rigged. Bob had always been an honest chap but the talk was he would win a lot of money if he threw in his lot.

So once a week Bob would give some cash to my Uncle Norman and he would receive a much thicker envelope back a few days later. Bob liked this and started giving Norman larger sums. To his amazement, all horses he backed won! The weeks went by and Bob started to become accustomed to this easy money. By the end of the third month, surprise had worn off and Bob felt he was onto a real winner, until Norman phoned him one morning asking if he could collect the latest winnings from the bookies shop across town. This was inconvenient, but Bob agreed to go.

On arrival, he produced his betting slip at the counter and a very pleasant man invited him into the rear office, as large sums were not handed out openly over the counter. Bob appreciated this concern for his safety. Once there, he was asked to sit down while somebody went to the safe in another room. Ten minutes later, five men entered the room and proceeded to pin him up against the wall and nail guns were pressed up against his knees.

(These are normally found on building sites and used to fire nails through or into steel, concrete or brick. If you press the tip against the target and depress the trigger, out comes the nail at an astonishingly fast speed. When the nail passes through steel, it becomes so hot the nail becomes molten as it welds the nail/fixing into place. The Irish paramilitary groups would use them on each other, but without inserting a nail. This would lead to the tool smashing when fired, and the piston would propel itself against the target just in the way a nail would. Knee-capping was a regular thing heard about on the six o'clock news and it was normally carried out with a powder-actuated nail gun).

Bob was given the money, eventually, but warned to never enter any bookies shop owned by that chain ever again. You know it is true what they say; you cannot choose your family! I recently read that at this time (1972), 500 people were murdered in Northern Ireland!

This was not the only incident where Bob was threatened. On three occasions he was called to do Jury Service. The first two times Bob was asked to stand down. In those days, the accused was allowed to stand before the jury and choose one person who would be dismissed. You were never told why, but as it was explained to Bob by a court official, it was probably due to his looking like a policeman.

The third time he was not so lucky. The case centred on a man and woman who belonged to an illegal paramilitary organisation. On passing a police station they had thrown a hand grenade into the foyer, causing structural damage to the building but fortunately not harming anyone seriously. During the trial two men visited our home one evening and Bob was told to find the couple innocent of all charges, otherwise our home would be bombed with us in it.

The whole jury must have been nobbled in this way as the couple were found not guilty.

A little later the Shaw family moved to Ulverston, a beautiful, small market town in south Cumbria, and the birth place of Stan Laurel. We lived in a small dormer-style semi- on a modern estate for three years, which Sadie absolutely hated. Bob called our road, Alcatraz Avenue, because everyone was trying to escape from it. Bob worked for Vickers ship and nuclear submarine builders in a senior Public Relations role.

Although working for Vickers, Bob had already had a number of novels published. Once, on returning from an Australian science fiction convention he unpacked a boomerang. A real boomerang! Aged ten, my eyes lit up. Bob said he had been given it by a native Australian and it was a genuine hunting model, not some piece of crap bought from a tourist's shop, but used to hunt kangaroos. We couldn't wait to try it out, so the following Sunday morning Bob drove us both in the family Mark One Ford Escort to Berkrieg Common, an area of common land covered with limestone pavement and heather.

Now remember, Bob was not the athletic type but he had been shown the proper stance and posture. With legs apart, Bob leaned way back, his free arm pointing upwards and whoosh! Off it went. It was a spectacular launch and it careered off into the sky perfectly. Our hearts were racing as we had waited several days to try it out, and here we were with the intention of spending a couple of hours, father and son, playing with a real boomerang. If I were to describe the boomerang, each "arm" was the length of a man's forearm; each arm was five inches wide at the widest point perhaps a centimetre thick at its thickest part. My hands were too small to even attempt to throw it.

It disappeared up into the bright sky. We looked at each other full of joy. This was going to be even better than our trips out to the country armed with a telescopic sight-equipped air rifle and Webley pistol. We looked back up at the sky thinking we should see it return any second. It didn't. We looked at each other again with questioning looks before returning our gaze to the sky. Fifteen seconds passed and nothing. Again, I looked up at Bob and he looked down at me, then back up to the sky. Another fifteen seconds passed. With dampened spirits, we again looked dejectedly at one another. What a waste of time, the boomerang was useless.

Bob was annoyed. He looked at me and shrugged his shoulders as if saying sorry and said, "Come on Ian, let's go home". Before moving away, we cast a last glance toward the sky. Another fifteen or twenty seconds passed and the boomerang reappeared. Again, our hearts raced, but at the same time we were wondering where the hell had it been? We were pleased, but suddenly we realised it was travelling very, very fast and headed straight for us.

Christ! We didn't think it would bloody well work this well! Bob looked down at me, and I up at him and then back to the boomerang. We both felt as if we couldn't move. It was as if our feet were stuck fast to the ground. Dad, shouted, "Run for your life". As we both leapt in opposite directions, the boomerang hit the ground exactly where we had been standing seconds before.

Being ten years old, I didn't know how to react at what I saw next. It was clear, one of us, or even both of us could have easily been killed. Bob changed his stance to one where his feet were wide apart, the colour drained from his face and he turned white before going a shade of mushy grey. He started trembling and then to shake. I became frightened and went over and held his hand while he tried to



...The job I was going to, Publicity Officer for the whole Vickers shipbuilding group, was probably the most senior of my career, and no matter how tired I was I knew I had to make a good start. I knew there was resentment in the firm at an aviation man being brought in from the outside to handle a shipbuilding appointment, and it was vital that I should show up looking... what was it?.. alert, intelligent and enthusiastic. The 1973 Bristol convention and the nightmarish 8-hour marathon drive had almost wiped me out, but five or six hours of deep sleep lay ahead, and that should be enough to put the old body to rights for the next day.

I got to my hotel in Barrow at about one in the morning, asked to be called at 6.30, went straight to bed and commanded myself to sleep. It was really weird how — with all my experience — I managed to make a mistake like that. When I'm going to sleep I have to pretend I'm going to do something else, like lie there and read some of the science fiction works of Captain S. P. Meek, and the next thing I know it is morning. But when I tell myself I have to sleep, when I try to capture it like a prize of war, a cold and uncompromising wakefulness descends over me. And on that first night in Barrow I didn't even manage to doze for as much as ten seconds — which meant that when I got up for breakfast on the following morning I had had something like six hours' sleep in five days. My surroundings were distant and unreal; it was hard to formulate even the simplest sentence, and it seemed to take about ten seconds for nerve signals to get from my brain to my hands. That's the condition I was in when I set out for the office, pale of face and red of eye, determined to appear alert, intelligent and enthusiastic.

Somehow I got through the first thirty minutes of introductions to spruce ex-naval officers and keen-eyed department heads — then I was roped in on my first job. Now, there are quite a few jobs I could have coped with that morning. I could have typed-up a press release, or laid out a page or two for a house magazine. I could even have undertaken a tour of the shipyards — but the thing I was called upon to do was to sit in on the editing of some video tapes. These tapes had been shot by a camera mounted on a midget submarine which was "flying" along an oil pipeline in the murky depths of the North Sea, and there is no way I can convey to you just how boring they are to watch. By comparison, they make *Look at Life* seem a cross between *Star Wars* and *The Exorcist*. They have been known to put rooms full of hard-headed oil-company executives into instantaneous hypnotic trances.

And I - blearily muttering, "alert, intelligent and what-was-it?" — was taken into a small, dark, warm, stuffy room, put into a comfortable chair and told to watch a tiny flickering image. I was fast asleep within thirty seconds.

The editing session went on all morning. At times I would struggle into consciousness, look around me with total incomprehension at the groups of dimly-seen figures who were whispering and nodding in my direction, then I would float away again. I was told afterwards that people who weren't even connected with the department got wind of what had happened and came in to see the live-wire aviation journalist who had been drafted in to shake the Barrow lot out of their sleepy ways. Apparently I became a legend throughout the company before lunch break on my first day. (from *Maya* #15, October 1977).

control the shaking. He was clearly frightened to the core. I suppose I was not affected in the same way as I knew nothing of death, then.

We eventually sat down on the limestone pavement. Bob started to cry, well, he wasn't making any sound but tears were running down his face. He made me promise never to tell my Mum what had happened. We later drove to a pub overlooking Bardsea beach, looking out to Morecambe Bay. Bob had two pints of bitter and chain-smoked cigarettes (something I had never seen him do before) as we sat together, without saying anything to each other for what seemed like a very long time.

But, boys being boys, two weeks later we returned. Bob had a plan. When he threw the boomerang we would move thirty yards away, and thus be safe. The plan worked. The first eight throws, the exact same thing happened. The boomerang disappeared but eventually returned, landing on the spot from where it was thrown.

Until the ninth time — this time it did not return. We hunted for it for the best part of an hour, and once we found it we headed off to the car to return home, still unsure of what had happened. The common was a pretty desolate place and we hadn't seen any others around. As we arrived at our car there was another man standing there with his son. The man asked if we had seen his radio-controlled aeroplane. Bob said we hadn't, but with all the heather around it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

The other man eyed us suspiciously. He was clearly both annoyed and very worried. He said we wouldn't have trouble seeing this one as the wingspan was six foot six, it was painted bright red with a body length of five foot. Both Bob and I were suddenly very aware of this bloody great boomerang in his hand. We felt the other guy was certainly sure to twig, but he didn't!

We don't know what happened to his plane, but Bob floored the accelerator on the way home — full pedal to the metal as our 1100cc Escort reached speeds it had never seen before. We laughed all the way back, with Bob, again, making me promise I wouldn't say a word back at home.

We escaped from Alcatraz three years after moving to England. We moved to Bradyll Terrace, still in Ulverston. This was the house many of you may remember fondly as Bob and Sadie entertained here a lot over the next six years. It was 1976, and a Saturday morning programme on Radio Two began a new competition where you could write in telling of somebody's brave or heroic act. If your story was read out, the nominee received a box of chocolates and a bottle of champagne. Bob thought it a bad idea as he felt it was wide open for abuse, but Sadie said there would be safeguards in place to stop any fraudulent activity. Bob disagreed and to prove it, said he would make up the most unbelievable story possible and send it in.

It went like this.....Bob invented the persona of an elderly widow woman who lived with her cat, Tiddles. One day, Tiddles climbed the tall pear tree at the rear of her garden but ended up stuck and too frightened to try and get back down. While she was calling up to the cat, the man who lived at the rear of her property, a man called 'Bob Shaw' was out in his garden. 'Bob' was a widower who was a retired, highly decorated fighter pilot who had seen action in Korea, partially crippled due to being shot down by an enemy MiG jet fighter and now living a quiet life occasionally doing voluntary work in the local library. 'Bob' overheard the lady calling out and came to the fence to see if he could help.

'Bob' got his ladders out and struggled around to her garden. One ladder was not enough, so he had to use the

extension ladder. Although walking any distance was painful for 'Bob' he kept going higher and higher until there was no ladder left to climb. As he went higher the cat went out onto ever smaller branches. 'Bob' couldn't reach the cat without leaving the ladder behind, so this is exactly what he did. With the quick swing of his well-developed left arm, 'Bob' held the cat tightly to his chest and slowly climbed back down to safety.

Back on safe ground, 'Bob' returned Tiddles to the owner. The lady rushed into the house with her saved companion, but quickly returned with her purse to give 'Bob' a 'thank you' present, but by that time 'Bob' was heading out through her front gates, ladders over his shoulder. She said 'Bob' just turned his head in her direction and gave her a silent salute, so she would like to nominate him for his bravery in saving her only family member.

Bob (the real Bob) posted it to the BBC and promptly forgot all about it. Two months later, Bob and Sadie were in The Globe public house enjoying lunch and a few Scoops with their friends, as was the custom every Saturday lunch-time.

I was at home alone (14 years old). The phone rang and when I answered it I could hear a man laughing so much he couldn't speak. He kept trying but the words wouldn't come out. To me, laughter is a very infectious thing and I just listened smiling away to myself. Eventually he was forced to hang up. He rang again two minutes later, but the same thing happened. He was laughing so much he was crying. Eventually, before hanging up on his third attempt, he managed to say, "Ian, it's your Uncle Gerry" before the phone went dead. I liked Uncle Gerry, he is Bob's elder brother and at the time was a Senior Lecturer at a London University and the first of the Shaw brothers to leave Ireland behind.

Minutes later, Gerry rang back a little more composed. He actually sounded as if he were in pain from all of the laughter. I sensed he wanted to laugh but he managed to hold it back, but he did manage to say, "I've just heard a story on Radio Two and Bobby must be responsible" then, bingo – the laughter started and again, he had to disengage.

Bob and Sadie returned home shortly after 3pm. I waited until I was alone with Bob before telling him Gerry had phoned. This was a rare occurrence and Bob's face lit up, until I told him that I thought he may have won a Radio Two prize. Bob's face turned pale and quickly looked over his shoulder to see if Sadie had been within earshot. She wasn't. The coast was clear and Bob sneaked off up the stairs to his office to ring Gerry. He returned fifteen minutes later after much laughter had been heard from above. Bob tried to explain to Sadie what had happened and why he had sent in the story. Sadie was having none of it! She felt filled with shame and thought that everyone who had heard it and who knew Bob would think he had done it because he could not afford to buy his own alcohol. She was livid!

He had indeed won the competition. Sadie pleaded with him to ring the BBC and explain the whole story. When Bob said he was too embarrassed to do so, she tried to make him agree to give both prizes to charity. I remember their arrival. The box was huge. I can't remember if it had one or two layers but the box was about three foot wide and three foot long. Equally, the champagne wasn't the regular-sized bottle, but considerably larger. Strangely, I cannot remember either of them being opened and consumed, but I know if they were Sadie certainly did not join in.

When I was seventeen, Sadie was furious with Bob for bringing a long-haired male friend home after a Saturday session at the pub. During the session someone had made a gay remark toward the long-haired gentleman. While he later sat in our living room drinking single malts, Sadie berated Bob in the kitchen for "bringing Ulverston's most notorious homosexual home with him, which wasn't fair, as Bob had a teenage son still living at home".

Nobody loved Sadie Shaw, or Sarah as she had become to her English friends, as much as me (and Dad), but after another incident like the one above, I once asked her, if, when she was a schoolgirl, did her teachers spend a lot of time shouting at her. She answered, "Yes". Although I tease, I worshipped the ground my mother walked on.

Bob loved music; he always listened to Terry Wogan on Radio Two whilst writing novels. Occasionally he would write into the show and Terry would comment on Bob's clever wit and letter writing, as he read out snippets over the air. Bob loved this recognition. On the TV programme 'Mastermind', Bob was telephoned on three occasions by friends asking if he had just heard the question read out about him. Sadly he never did, but always watched the show, being able to answer many of the questions from participant's specialist knowledge subjects.

While listening to Wogan, Bob discovered Chris Rea, whom he took as being an American. Years later, he was astounded to discover Chris was a Geordie living only a couple of hundred miles away. Hoagy Carmichael was also a great favourite, as was Les Paul and Mary Ford. It wasn't Les' multi-track guitar playing that rocked his boat, but rather Mary's voice and smooth harmonies.

Bob owned two of their albums, thinking these were the total output of their recording career together. Around 1976, Capitol started re-issuing their stuff and I took great delight in buying these new re-pressings, three volumes in all, just to see his face light up at the eagerness of listening, to what was to him, totally new material.

In the late 60s Bob had decided to educate himself in classical music. Every Friday evening he would cycle home from work, whizzing into the driveway on a ladies' step-through, 3-speed Triumph 20 bicycle, complete with shopping bag on the back, wearing a Trilby hat and chocolate-brown raincoat, with an LP in a Woolworth's plastic bag clutched under his arm. Friday evenings, the whole family sat silently together enjoying the music. He built up quite a large collection, but back in the day, the marketing people who designed the record sleeves would have a banner style logo saying, 'Mozart's Greatest Hits', or 'Chopin's Greatest Hits'. This incensed Bob, who felt the term 'Greatest Hits' belonged to teeny-bopper bands and certainly not great composers. In the end, he went out and bought a black marker pen, and then blacked-out the 'Greatest Hits' script on each sleeve.

On the back cover of the 50s magazines which Bob read you could usually find Charles Atlas selling chest expanders, a piece of apparatus where you pull two rubber cords apart with the intention of building greater chest and arm muscles. Bob was obsessed with stories of eight-stone weaklings who go on to become strong, masculine figures who bad guys dare not mess with. Every few years he would invest in one of these things, or even some weights, but two weeks later the interest would drop off. Bob did however have a great physical strength. He likened his legs to that of a Roman soldier as they were extremely muscular, with huge calves and thighs. Bob told me he maintained these by never sitting down on a toilet seat, and indeed claimed to have never had done so!



Bob with his trusty pipe, about the time of the cat story. Photo from Ian.

He showed his strength one time in the late sixties when we three children wanted a dog. Bob was against the idea as he felt he would be left to walk the animal. He neither liked nor disliked animals as long as he did not have to bother with them, but in the end we bought a large, soft dog which Bob named 'Bramble' because it looked so wild.

One morning before he set off for work, we went on a dog walk around the block. As we came onto a main road there was a line of ladies in their 50's awaiting the bus into the city centre. A large Alsatian on the other side of the road saw our dog, crouched down and waited for the traffic to ease, its eyes glued on Bramble. Spotting its chance it started out across the road, with back lowered, head pointing forwards, lips curled back and making a snarling sound.

In the middle of the road, it speeded up and took a running dive straight for Bramble. What happened next amazed me and I can remember it perfectly clearly. As if the Alsatian were travelling in slow motion, Bob, holding Bramble's lead in one hand and my hand by the other, turned to one side and just before the, I should say, large Alsatian landed on Bramble, Bob let out one very fast powerful kick. His foot made contact with the dog's thick-set neck, the dog did a backwards somersault and landed on its back, out in the middle of the road.

Landing badly, it slowly stood up and careered off in the opposite direction, turning its head around to check it wasn't being pursued. It was amazing. Bob appeared totally unfazed until he heard the women in the bus queue criticising him and saying he should be reported to the authorities! That was the end of the walk, and I believe we gave Bramble away shortly afterwards.

It is a little more difficult in knowing what to do when an offending animal belongs to a friend. Bob had been staying with a younger couple, possibly after a science fiction convention. After a good night's sleep, Bob went down for breakfast, and while waiting he lit up his pipe. For those unaccustomed to pipe smoking, a good slow-burning bowl of tobacco can last up to an hour. Halfway through that hour you would have millions of tiny, slow burning embers – if you set the pipe down for ten minutes it wouldn't go out, but would continue to burn slowly.

Being called to the breakfast table, Bob watched in horror as the family cat jumped onto the table and first of all drank milk from the woman's cereal dish while she was still eating, before moving onto the man's dish. Not satisfied with that, the cat moved tentatively towards Bob's Rice Krispies. Bob really didn't know what to do for fear of rebuking his hosts, but knew he was not going to let the cat anywhere near his food.

As the cat came near, it stretched its neck forwards and prepared to drink. Just at that moment the door-bell rang and the woman sprang up to go answer it. Then straightaway the phone rang and the man also left the room. Bob's pipe had been sitting on the table. It was the variety that had a curved stem attached to the mouthpiece. Bob picked the pipe up by the mouthpiece and balanced it between his thumb and forefinger. He started a very gentle swinging motion up and down and very lightly tapped the bottom of the pipe's bowl on the top of the cat's head.

The cat froze. A cloud of minute red hot embers engulfed the cat's head. Unforeseen by Bob, the cat then inhaled some of the pipe's fallout, let out a squeal and launched itself off the table, hitting the wall half-way up. Rather than then falling to the floor, it ran around the room's four walls, completing three full circuits before falling to the floor, lying on its back with all four legs stuck straight up in the air like something out of a Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers comic. The couple ran back into the room on hearing the commotion, looked sternly at Bob and asked what had happened. He said, "I'm sorry, but I think your cat has had a fit". He never was invited back again.

Finally, I just wanted to mention a gentleman called Eric Chappell, the man responsible for writing many of Britain's best comedy series, titles including 'The Squirrel's and 'Only when I Laugh'. Bob had everything on video of Eric's that he could get his hands on, and indeed wrote a fan letter to him. Eric was kind enough to respond and the two became friends through their letters. Bob openly asked for advice on how he could start writing for television and Eric was extremely generous with his time and gave Bob a lot of advice.

Bob watched his 'Only When I Laugh' tapes regularly, often watching several episodes in each sitting and always late at night. This was after Sadie had died, and was certainly one of the few things that would ever give Bob reason to enjoy a loud belly laugh. Years later, when Bob was in hospital battling cancer, I was able to tape another series of the show that had never been aired in Cumbria. I think it was put out by Yorkshire Television, but I never mentioned it on my daily visits to the hospital. On Bob's return home he couldn't believe it; Eric's screen-writing was perhaps the best welcome home present he could have received. It was such an amazing tonic for him, and if you ever read this Mr Chappell, thank-you so very much!

So from Robert Mitchum, Hoagy Carmichael and Mary Ford to Eric Chappell, these were Bob's real heroes. And I've just remembered that Bob was once totally thrilled when he was doing a science fiction book-signing with other authors in front of hundreds of people, and Arthur C. Clarke stood patiently in Bob's queue to have his copy of a Shaw novel signed. Arthur did not join any other queues. This was a very special personal milestone for Bob, from a man who he respected greatly.

Perhaps the next time you're enjoying a little snifter, raise your glass and think of Bob and Sadie, I know I certainly will. //

- Ian Shaw, 2010



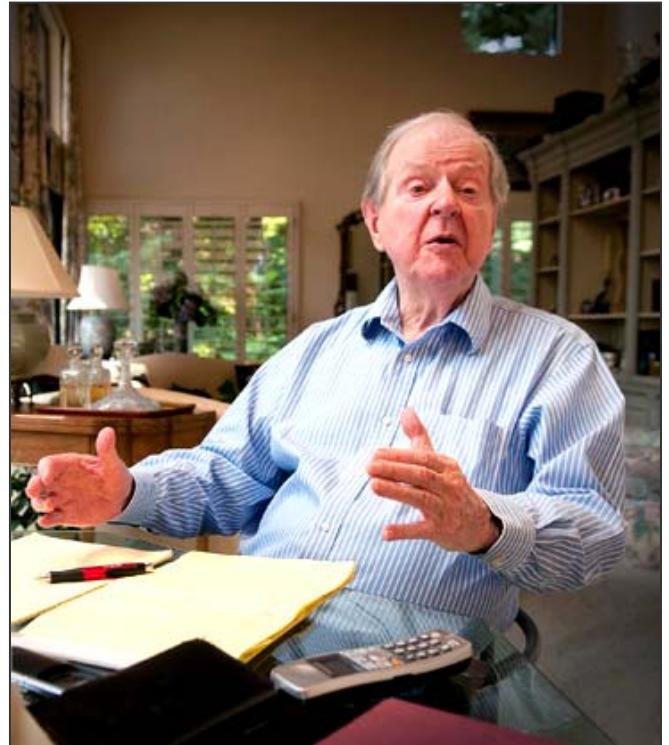
Tom Shippey is a Professor of English Literature but he is also a genuine, lifelong advocate of the merits of science fiction, a rare combination. So, it would appear, is the noted academic Robert Conquest, who has clearly been a bigger friend than we ever knew. In this outspoken article – one of the finest I've seen from him – Tom compares Conquest and his opinions with those of the “effing PhDs” and along the way explains why he thinks classic SF really was pretty good. [pw]
Tom Shippey, his picture

“The right thing to say”

Robert Conquest, James Schmitz, and intellectual self-indulgence

By Tom Shippey

Robert Conquest at
home, Autumn
2011. Photo by
L.A. Cicero from
Stanford
University's *The
Book Haven*.



I was very impressed to hear that Our Noble Editor had received a message, indeed a message and another phone-call as well, from Robert Conquest, now 93 and living in California. If I'd still been in the USA, and Conquest had contacted me, I think I'd have been raised two grades in the academic hierarchy immediately. He was regarded (in the private Catholic university where I was teaching) with immense respect. At one time I said something like “Robert Conquest told me once...” and the gasps of shock and awe this remark produced – which I wasn't expecting and didn't intend – were even greater than anything produced by saying “Tolkien once told me...”

The reason is obvious if you look at his Wikipedia entry. Conquest started off as the characteristic public-schoolboy-turned-communist (he went to Winchester), along with a whole gallery of silly ****ers like the appalling Philip Toynbee, father of head-*Guardianista* Polly. But for Conquest as for many European intellectuals, communism was “the god that failed” (title of a famous set of confessions by ex-communists, published 1949). War and post-war experience changed Conquest's mind 180 degrees, and he went on to write at least two major exposés, *THE GREAT TERROR* (1968, revised and expanded 1990) and *THE HARVEST OF SORROW* (1986), about the Stalinist purges and the Great Ukrainian Famine respectively.

These were bitterly resented at the time, and ran very much against the current of left-wing intellectual orthodoxy, which was still making excuses for Stalin, or at least for Lenin (Conquest wrote a book about Lenin too). But Conquest stuck to his guns, and became a violent critic not just of Russian failures, but of what he saw as

generations of Western self-delusion, for which see Wikipedia. The collapse of the USSR seemed to prove him right. So, going back to the USA nowadays, Conquest became more than a cult-figure, a cult-hero among conservative Americans.

Not that I knew any of this until recently. As far as I was concerned, Conquest was a ‘trufan’, and when Our Noble Editor and I were young, long ago, he was one of the very few academically-OK writers, along with Edmund Crispin and Kingsley Amis and (sort-of) C.S. Lewis, to be genuinely interested in science fiction.

This latter part of his career gets – guess what? – very little attention from Wikipedia, but Conquest wrote an SF novel, *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE* (1955, revised 1970), had two stories published in *Analog* in October and November 1965, brought out five *SPECTRUM* SF anthologies in collaboration with Amis 1961-66, and wrote several pieces about SF including an aggressive defence of the genre as a whole – and yes, you can defend aggressively, it's the best way, and typical of Conquest.

What he sent to O.N.E. is the agg. def. + two reviews, of Amis's *NEW MAPS OF HELL* and Aldiss's *BILLION YEAR SPREE*, and these are what O.N.E. has asked me to comment on. They were collected with other pieces in a book called *THE ABOMINATIONS OF MOAB* (1979), and I'll call them *Moab 1, 2, 3*. (The “abominations of Moab”, by the way, were the false gods overturned by King Solomon in the Second Book of Kings – like “the god that failed”, I guess, only more of them).

Going back to my unexpected social success in the USA, the only thing I can actually now remember Conquest

saying to me was this. It must have been in the 1970s, it was in a bookshop somewhere, and it may have been the day Kingsley Amis was given the Campbell Award for his alternate-world novel *THE ALTERATION* – or could it have been during Worldcon 1979? – but anyway, I mentioned the name of James M. Schmitz, and Conquest said thoughtfully, “Yes, I wouldn’t mind reading another by Jim Schmitz.”

Unfortunately he was out of luck, because Schmitz’s last story came out in 1974 (there were some later adaptations and re-titlings), but it was the right thing to say to Conquest. In *Moab 3* he mentions Schmitz, along with Larry Niven and Jack Vance, as authors who don’t get enough notice in Brian’s SF history. You might say “can’t cover all the bases”. But Conquest thought those bases were significant. Why?



Well – and this is why mentioning Schmitz was just the right thing for a professional academic to say to Conquest – the main drive of his lifetime work, which got even stronger after the attacks on *THE GREAT TERROR*, was distrust of professional intellectuals in the humanities: philosophers, historians, literary critics. He thought too many of them were clever fools clinging to a discredited ideology. To quote a bit from Wikipedia, he asked why, given two narratives about the Terror, “did an intellectual stratum overwhelmingly choose to believe the false one?”

“None of this can be accounted for in intellectual terms. To accept information about a matter on which totally contradictory evidence exists, and in which investigation of major disputes on the matter is prevented, is not a rational act.”

And another aspect of the “clever fools” theory, in Conquest’s mind, was snobbish literary dismissal of SF, slightly modified by a pretended open-mindedness which accepted a few marginal SF authors – Conquest picks out Ray Bradbury in *Moab 1* – as fitting the preferred pattern. So praising someone whom you had almost certainly read in *Analog* identified you as a ‘trufan’, and not one of those people whom Conquest writes off in *Moab 3* as “effing PhDs” and in *Moab 2* as an “introspective academic elite”. *Moab 1* concludes by saying that because SF has not been “academicised”, it’s still read for fun, not out of duty, and if you were reading Schmitz you were doing just that and not groveling for academic brownie points.

This contrarian attitude is what links the three pieces from *Moab*. The first one argues that literary critics especially have got tunnel vision. They are fixated on what Conquest calls “the novel of character”. Though he doesn’t say this, genuflecting to that theory is what made Sturgeon come out with his famous definition of SF; “A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content.” Well, OK, though there are SF stories without any human beings in them, if one wants to quibble.

But Conquest’s point is that there are other problems besides “human” ones, and other interests besides

the introspection of the “novel of character”, and one of those interests, fed by SF, is “objective curiosity”. Novels are supposed to be about people, but so many people are really *boring* (have you ever read Henry James’s classic *PORTRAIT OF A LADY*? Enough said). Things, by contrast, especially new things, especially new things which get people to do things different ways, or might get people (etc.) – now those are *really* interesting. Conquest sees literary academics as habitually introverted. But SF is extrovert. That’s why the two don’t get along.

Following on from the above, Conquest’s two reviews of Amis and Aldiss take two different directions accordingly. He sees Amis (of course, a pal and a collaborator) as the rare academic who is also a ‘trufan’ and ready to reach out to SF on its own terms. He sees Aldiss as an old pro in the SF field – and he gives him every credit for this – who is now trying to come to an accommodation with the dominant literary model: plugging “inner space”, trying to “incorporate the psychological novel into SF”, and thus overrating Dick, Ballard, and the New Wave generally over, well, Niven, Vance, Schmitz and Anderson.

They’re both reaching out, but Amis is reaching the right way and Aldiss the wrong way. Conquest sees something ominous in the latter outreach, connecting it with “Bloomsbury smugness,” the old Fabian Society, the highly intellectual self-indulgence which he thought characterised so much of Western thought (in politics and the humanities) during his lifetime.

I think Conquest was wrong about this as regards Brian, who has delivered several major putdowns of just the kind of thing Conquest was complaining about, like one remark I remember he made to Darko Suvin. (They were visiting Palermo on some World SF jaunt, and as they walked round they came to an area of derelict factories and unused warehouses, and Darko said something like, “Ah, here we see the terminal decline of capitalism”.

Brian replied, “Darko, have you seen Leningrad recently?” Or he may have said “St Petersburg”, I don’t know when it got renamed and Brian probably didn’t care. Anyway, details doubtful, general point pretty accurate. I also recall Brian writing a surprisingly pro-US story in the Vietnam era, but can’t remember what it was. His Far East military service meant that you couldn’t rely on him to stick to the liberal peacenik line on some issues.)

But anyway, SF, Conquest thought – and trufans must swell with pride at getting such a compliment from a cult-hero – was a lonely streak of sanity running through a fairly silly literary scene, just as, in Amis’s *ALTERATION*, what Amis calls “TR”, for “Time Romance”, is a lingering vestige of testosterone in a culturally-castrated world (literally castrated in the case of the hero).

Was Conquest right? It could be said that since 1979 SF has come out of the closet – though Our Noble Editor has often said that “it should get back in the gutter where it belongs”. Some have asked the question, “is SF dying (as a result)?” – google “di filippo science fiction dying”. One thing that rather corroborates Conquest’s jaundiced view of literary academics is the silent collapse of enrolments in the humanities in US universities, down to about 35% of what might have been predicted when Conquest was writing his *Moab* pieces.

The potential students have responded to the many New Waves of post-Structuralism and post-colonialism and New Historicism and such-like stuff by mooching off to do, not science or engineering, for which they might be forgiven, but Business Studies, Communications Studies, Education, whatever.

Offer a course on SF, however – *real* SF, not Bradbury and Lem and Pamela Zoline, and taught by someone really interested, not some “effing Phd” building a career – and they’ll fight to get in the door.

I conclude with some remarks about Conquest’s SF, and then about Jim Schmitz. Our Noble Editor has commented on Conquest’s novel, *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE*, in the last issue, without, I notice, giving any kind of a plot summary.

I won’t give one either. It seemed to me there was too much going on in it: automated factories, space colonies, mesonics, the photon drive, communist losers setting up bases in the asteroids, libertarian watchdogs contesting the habit of psychological control by governments, too many people, too much chat. In the background was a major war which hadn’t quite gone nuclear, but in which labour camps – see *THE GREAT TERROR* and *HARVEST OF SORROW* – had been bigger killers than atomics.

Two of Conquest’s themes, however, pop up in a more focused way in his two *Analog* shorts. In one, ‘A Long Way To Go’, Nov. 1965, someone is sent forward to the future, where our problems have all been solved – but a new set has come to take their place. Conquest was a firm believer in the unpredictability of the future and its boundless opportunities: quote from novel, “Science can only see about thirty years ahead, even vaguely.”

One of the poems he sent us, ‘Far and Away’ (published in 2009, when Conquest was more than 90!) expresses the same idea. It picks up a phrase carelessly used by Philip Larkin (another pal), “Remote as mangoes on the Moon”, and in successive stanzas set a century apart imagines mangoes on the Moon, tamarinds on Titan, egg-nogs under Epsilon Eridani. The future will be stranger than you think, Philip! And – remember the end of Pohl’s ‘Day Million’? – how weird do you think *you* would be to the past, or will be to the future?

Meanwhile, in the other story, ‘The Veteran’ (Oct. 1965) a future pacifist civilisation, threatened by attack from warlike space-travelling aliens, hauls a man up from our time, the War Centuries, to show them what to do. But the guy they get is, as luck would have it, a devout pacifist. Still – and this is the point of the story – being someone from the War Centuries, he has more idea of what to do and what not to do than anyone else, and rapidly becomes a victorious Solar Marshal.

Strangely enough, I actually remembered this story for forty-plus years, though I couldn’t have told you who had written it. One of those things that just stick. I wonder if it also stuck with Larry Niven? The basic scenario – pacifists meet warmongers in space and learn to lick them – is pretty much that of the first Man-Kzin story, ‘The Warriors’, which came the following year, 1966, but in the February *If*, a bare five months later, so probably this was just coincidence. Anyway, Conquest’s was a memorable story, at least. I haven’t seen the *Spectrum* collections. Does anyone remember them, or have them still?*

As for Schmitz, his entry in the Clute/Nicholls *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF* credits him for being PC in two respects, using female characters as leads in a non-chauvinist way, and also using ecology in famous stories like ‘Grandpa’ and ‘Balanced Ecology’. But I can see why he has never appealed to the “effing PhDs”. His future society is a libertarian one – essentially capitalist, but with a strong ethos of minimum government, explained, e.g., at the end of *THE DEMON BREED*. Pretty much like a lot of Poul Anderson stories, another long-time author from the 1940s who kept going even longer than Schmitz but has never acquired an academic following.



Frighteningly effective cover by John Schoenherr for the Schmitz story in this issue!

Schmitz was good at something else, though, and that was monsters, “things hunting men”, to borrow the title of the David Drake anthology. The “spook” of ‘Goblin Night’ (*Analog* April 1965), the “Hlat” of ‘Lion Loose’ (Oct. 1961), the “elementals” of the shadowy planet in *WITCHES OF KARRES* (1966), the “tarn” in *THE DEMON BREED* (*Analog* Sept. – Oct. 1968) – lots of them, thoroughly differentiated and not one of them bug-eyed.

I don’t know what this has to do with being a libertarian, but maybe Schmitz, like other SF writers (Conquest mentions Wyndham in this respect) had a strong idea that the universe was a dangerous place, not capable of being kept in order by state bureaucracies and centralised government. Anyway, monsters: that’s what I give him credit for. I think Conquest would have too. Much more fun than Henry James, even if no-one’s ever written a PhD about him

– Tom Shippey, 2010

** Oh yes! When I was visiting Greg Pickersgill in January we pulled out the *SPECTRUM* books (SFBC editions, naturally) and marvelled at the excellence of their contents. These are the stories in the third volume, for instance, Killdozer!; The Voices of Time; Call Me Joe; Dreams Are Sacred; Exploration Team; Fondly Fahrenheit; The Sentinel; & ‘We Would See a Sign’ by someone called Mark Rose.

Everyone reading *Relapse* will be familiar with that lot, apart from the last one which is an oddity because no previous publication was quoted, which seemed strange in a reprint anthology, and we couldn’t find it in the NESFA Index, either. Greg, however, looked in the *SF ENCYCLOPEDIA* and all was revealed – to quote; ‘US academic and writer, whose assistance in preparing *NEW MAPS OF HELL* was acknowledged by Kingsley Amis. An apocalyptic short story...in *SPECTRUM* 3 did not lead to a fiction career.’ So, it was included as a bit of a favour, then... Tsk, Kingsley! (Although Mr Rose then went on to write a book about SF which John Clute praises as ‘some of the most elegantly literate practical criticism of selected texts the genre has yet seen’).

In passing, Greg would like me to add a note of praise for the super little Wayland Young story, the one-page ‘The Choice’ which concludes the fourth book, and I agree, it is very clever indeed. [pw]



In this issue so far we've seen the earliest beginnings of organised fandom in the UK, while previous numbers have looked at early groups in major cities such as Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester. But as ace-researcher Ian Millsted notes below, once a few SF fans get together a group can get started almost anywhere, no matter how small the locality; witness the Stourbridge Circle, the Erdington SF Club, and many others. The Clacton group didn't last long but it made quite an impression, as Ian discovers. [pw]

Forgotten fan groups #1: The Clacton science fiction group, 1957-58

Above the fish shop by Ian Millsted

'Editorial Conference',
with Geoff Stone, Colin
Crisp, Barry Hall,
Brian Bickers & Bryan
Welham. Photo from
East Essex Gazette,
13 December 1957.



Probably more fan groups have been forgotten than there are well-known ones. Local groups are likely to be remembered if they produced fanzines or ran cons; those that just do their own thing – rarely impacting on the national scene – are not likely to be remembered long after the last meeting. Many groups are probably already quite forgotten, including some that existed until quite recently. In any case the geography of local groups is random. We might have expected fan groups to develop in cities the size of London, Leeds and Liverpool. But why Cheltenham? And in particular, why Clacton?

Of course, we know why Cheltenham. The group is quite well documented and the reason is down to, as we might expect, the active involvement of a few energetic individuals. That is also likely to be true of the Clacton group but who were the movers and shapers?

My own interest in this started out as part of another project. I was born and brought up in Essex and was vaguely curious about the Clacton group when I first saw it mentioned in an earlier issue of *Relapse*. What I expected to be a matter of finding out a few basic details for one A5 page for my own project turned into a deeper interest in this group of people who met and produced their fanzine nearly a decade before I was born. The 'footprint' that left behind in the science fiction world is small but interesting.

The prime movers of the Clacton group were Bryan Welham and Barry Hall. Welham seems to have been an SF reader from around the age of twelve, while Hall was a more recent fan. They and the rest of the group were all bright Sixth Form students at the same school and they were clearly already a group of friends that only really became an SF group

because two of them thought it might be fun. The origins of the group are explained by Barry Hall in the first issue of the club's fanzine *Perihelion*;

"The ball started rolling when I met up with an easy-going character by the name of Welham who was a maniac for collecting science fiction and Jimmy Dorsey records. My first meeting with him was late one Saturday night in the Brag room round at a friend's house. Walking into the thick atmosphere I saw a greasy-looking character with bristly broom hair hastily stuff a dirty copy of *New Worlds* into his pocket."

In the summer of 1957 Welham and Hall both worked at the same summer job and the idea of producing a fanzine came out of the conversations over stacking hot dishes into racks. Hall again:

"Welham happened to write to Keith Wright, one of the editors of *Arcturus*, for a copy of that zine and also casually mentioned that he was looking for a duplicator. Immediately he got a letter back from Pete Rigby, saying that he had got an 'Emphas' for sale. We bought it ... Paper came from John Ashcroft ... plus stylo, ink, etc.

"We enlisted some help from some other members of our fraternity. C.J. Krish (Colin Crisp) who doesn't take any interest in SF but will do anything once just for the hell of it. Then there is (Brian) Bickers, the original neofan himself. He is mostly interested in aircraft but we managed to get him onto SF somehow, (Geoffrey) Stone (Splon), the most cynical low-flying buzzard I ever met, especially when it comes to sex."

Another member of their group was Dave Dance, who did some cartoons for the fanzine.



‘The mighty presses roll and another copy of *Perihelion* is ready’ – that was the caption on this picture from the newspaper. Colin Crisp turns the handle of the ‘Emphas’ machine.

The production of the fanzine took place in a room above the fish shop owned by Welham’s father, a fact they proudly declared in the first issue, which is dated October 1957 but came out a month or two later. At that point Welham and Hall seem to have been readers of most of the magazines around at the time. Welham specifically names *New Worlds*, *Science-Fantasy* and *Nebula* as well as *BRE Astounding* and *Galaxy* and laments the loss of *Authentic*. He had some contacts with other fans, presumably picked up from addresses in the pro magazines, including Alan Dodd, as well as the Arcturus editors.

That first issue of *Perihelion* was distributed in two very different ways. While many were sent out to those fans with whom Welham and Hall had contact, as well as review copies to *Nebula* and other magazines, at least half the print run went out via the school. Having negotiated to use the school duplicator (a more reliable machine than the Emphas) the fanzine was approved by the school’s Headmaster and the boys were allowed to sell copies around the school.

Not only was it successful with other students, necessitating an extra print run, but the local press got wind of it and a reporter was dispatched to investigate. The 13th December 1957 edition of the *East Essex Gazette* dedicated most of page 19 to “High School Boys publish Clacton’s own science-fiction paper”. Again the fish shop is proudly featured;

“There in a tiny room, about eight feet by six, above the kippers and bloaters, the editor of this fanzine, Bryan Welham, County High sixth-former, has his editorial office and his printing press. There is the headquarters of Clacton fandom.”

The article is accompanied by three photos showing fanzine production, in full flow, presumably staged for the newspaper. However by the time the article came out the first issue of *Perihelion* had sold out and the second was not yet completed.

As well as their own fanzine some of the group wrote letters to the pro magazines which give some insight into their tastes. The March 1958 *New Worlds* contains a letter from Bryan Welham which is pretty forthright in criticising the standard of stories. “Your science fiction stories are becoming boring in nature and monotonous by their constant similarity” he writes. Welham comments on the lack of human emotional

development and a general lack of women as people, although he does praise some of Ted Tubb’s stories.

The youthful self-confidence suggested in the letter is in keeping with the style of *Perihelion*. I think the complaint about the content of *New Worlds* is also significant in working out what later happened to the group. Given that at this point Welham, aged about seventeen, seems to have been a regular reader of all available SF magazines, are we seeing someone who is already becoming jaded; possibly feeling they are outgrowing much of the genre?

The second issue of *Perihelion* was written, and presumably published, prior to the 1958 Eastercon in Kettering, with a print run of 152. Contained within is an article, ‘Fandom at Large’, which suggests Welham’s general view of SF fandom.

“To me Fandom is an interest, a very big interest, but I cannot accept that it is in any manner a way of life ... and I wouldn’t like to sink all my resources into fandom alone.”

He also comments favorably on the plans to launch a national SF society, being of the view that this should be aimed at the general SF-reader as well as fans.

Both Bryan Welham and Barry Hall attended *Cytricon IV* in early April 1958 having announced the trip in the fanzine before getting parental permission. In fact they were the first to arrive. Barry Hall wrote a con report for the next issue of *Perihelion* from which the following is extracted:

“Ron (Bennett) was our first contact with extra-Clactonian fen. Ron introduced us to Dave Newman ... who must get his energy either by direct link with a power station or a bheer barrel.

“One minute there was hardly anybody about, the next we were surrounded by a veritable flood ... Archie Mercer, John Roles, Sid Birchby, Eddie Jones, Terry Jeeves and dozens of others, including Eric Jones and Bob Richardson, who came enmeshed by masses of electronic apparatus. Someone suggested a game of Brag ... this was when we first met Chuck Harris and Ted Tubb.

“We left a wonderful experience behind us, and took some wonderful memories home with us.”

Hall also noted that Eric Jones made audio recordings of parts of the weekend and Norman Shorrocks took some cine film. Despite the positive experience shown in the report however, so far as I know Barry Hall never attended another con and Bryan Welham only one more. It seems possible that disillusionment with the SF world was already setting in at this point.

More of their letters were printed in the magazines that spring, of a broadly critical nature. In *Nebula* 29 (April 58) Welham complains about the covers and bland letters column (while praising Eric Frank Russell and E. C. Tubb). In *New Worlds* 73 (July 58) Barry Hall is more positive, particularly about recent stories by Russell, Wyndham and Aldiss, as well as asking for a fan column within the letters section.

However a letter from Welham in the same issue is more negative about the Wyndham story and, again, about the lack of bite in the letters column. Meanwhile their fanzine was being commented on, by Walt Willis in his ‘Fanorama’ column in *Nebula*: “A new fanzine produced by a new fan group with headquarters over a fish shop. There may be no hum like plaice, but the only smell off this magazine is of hard work. It’s beautifully produced.”

The new contacts made at Kettering are evident in the third issue of *Perihelion*, with much less material by Welham and Hall and nothing at all from the rest of the Clacton group apart from a few cartoons by Dave Dance. Instead there are contributions from John Berry, Sid Birchby, Laurence Sandfield and Bob Shaw as well as a cover from Eddie Jones. The print run was 110. The actual publication of the issue was delayed until July because of final school exams. In his editorial, Welham gives some indication of what might have followed next:

“With the passing of these exams it means that all of us, providing that we are successful with them, will be leaving school this summer into something called the big wide world

“As well as this, we are nearly all going different ways. Brian Bickers and Bill Riley are going to college; Barry Hall is aiming to be a meteorologist; Dave Dance is going into the Customs & Excise business; Colin (Krish) Crisp is going to be a pharmacist; Geoff Stone is going to either De Havilland’s or college and I’m hoping that I’ll be on a scholarship engineering course at the De Havilland Engine Co., ending in being a rocket engineer. You wait ... we will have a British Sputnik up yet.”

Welham also reports a recent meeting with the elusive Alan Dodd when the latter phoned to make contact on an afternoon visit to Clacton.

In September Welham and Hall took a trip down to London, ending up at the Globe meeting. Their main contacts there seem to have been Vince Clarke and Sandy Sanderson.

The fourth and final issue of *Perihelion* came out in October 1958. Alongside articles by Ron Bennett (first part of his TAFF report) and Vince Clarke and a reprint piece from Arthur C. Clarke, Hall and Welham both contribute editorials that give an insight into the way things ended there. Although there is a stated aim to continue *Perihelion* it is indicated by Barry Hall that the fanzine is likely to be continued by Welham and himself alone.

Bryan Welham seems to have become a grumpy young man by this point. In his editorial, after making clear his views on the anti-H-bomb movement (which we might safely say were the opposite of *Relapse*’s old favourite John Brunner) he turns to SF fandom:

“When we entered fandom last year it was to my great interest when I used to receive a fanzine, but nowadays that wonderlust has almost vanished. To put it across very, very bluntly, I think the present lack of new blood entering fandom is not because of the material in fanzines being too esoteric but because it is rather juvenile and unintelligent. Not all fanzines, that is, but an alarmingly large number contain a lot of material which can be termed absolute crud. It’s quite a while now since I read a good piece of humour which was really funny. The fanzines of yesterday read so much more interestingly and intelligently than the material of today. No wonder gafia is on the increase. There’s nothing in present day fandom to keep anybody in, really. Nothing at all. Give them something worthy and I’d bet fandom would be brimful of wonderful talent.

“We both had quite a job this issue managing to get enough material. We managed to get together what we think is a pretty good issue. In doing this we have cleaned out our archives of suitable material for future issues which leaves us in rather a bad state. The next issue won’t be out until after Christmas.”



Sunday walkabout at Kettering, 1958; a smiling Bryan Welham at rear with Barry Hall, right. Ina Shorrocks & Eddie Jones are wearing their new St Fantony blazers, with Archie Mercer in between them and Bob Richardson with camera. Photo from Joy Clarke album, via Bill Burns, but almost certainly taken by Eric Bentcliffe.

No further issues were published. Bryan Welham started at De Havillands in October 1958. Brian Bickers went to Imperial College London the same month, and at the time of the last issue Barry Hall was awaiting the result of an interview for meteorologist training. Bryan Welham attended the 1959 *Brumcon* after which nothing more seems to have been heard from any of them.

In the space of little over a year they seem to have gone from being starry-eyed fans of all things SF and fannish to world-weary critics of the whole scene. I do wonder, though, if they kept on reading in the genre? Given that by the mid-60’s science fiction moved in the direction they had called for, it would be a pity if they missed it. Similarly, it seems a pity they did not stay to see the ‘new blood’ appear in the fan- and fanzine-world at the same time. Had they hung around a little longer they might have run into that Weston guy from Birmingham, and others!

The group members must all have been born around 1940 to be leaving sixth form in 1958, so the likelihood is that they are still around. There are no relatives still living at the addresses from which they once produced *Perihelion*. My attempts to find any of them have been unsuccessful but maybe someone reading this will have better luck. They may, of course, not want to have anything to do with their former pastime – not unlikely, given the fairly clear break they seem to have made from SF fandom fifty years ago. If they do chance upon this, especially once this issue goes on e-fanzines, I hope it raises a smile or two.

- Ian Millsted, 2010

With thanks to Greg Pickersgill for help above and beyond, and Pat Bodin of Clacton Library.

RUTH KYLE, 1930-2011 – An Obituary by Bill Burns

When 25-year-old Ruth Landis, a minister's daughter and science fiction reader from New Jersey, showed up at *Clevention* in 1955, little did she know what the next 55 years would bring.

According to Dave Kyle, writing in *Mimosa* #10 (July 1991), Ruth had read about the Cleveland Worldcon in *Astounding Science Fiction*, and, like so many fans, decided she wanted to meet some of the authors and editors behind the stories. It didn't take long before she was spotted sitting alone in the con-suite by TAFF delegate Ken Bulmer and his wife Pamela. Dave had met Ken and Pam in England earlier that year, and, kind souls that they were, the Bulmers immediately mentioned the presence of that rarity at a 1950s convention, an unattached pretty girl, to eligible bachelor Lieutenant Colonel David A. Kyle, U.S.A.F. (retired).

Dave himself has told the story in great detail, so suffice it to say that after a number of misfortunes and misunderstandings, including Isaac Asimov's spurring Ruth off to a party while Dave's back was turned, the couple finally got together again.

In 1956 Ruth moved to New York City from Princeton, New Jersey, where she had been working, and fell in with the-then very active SF crowd in Manhattan. Although Dave was involved in running the family radio station, WPDM, in upstate New York's far-off Potsdam, he kept a flat in Manhattan and was a regular attendee at SF group meetings there. He and Ruth re-connected, their romance blossomed, and Ruth was co-opted as Secretary of the 1956 Worldcon in New York, which Dave was chairing.

Dave also had plans for the following year, when the Worldcon was to be held outside the USA for the first time, in London. He organised a fan charter flight to England (with Ruth doing much of the administration of the project while Dave was away in Potsdam), and they decided to make it their honeymoon trip – along with 50-odd fans and Dave's parents! They were married in Manhattan on August 31st, 1957, and two days later the group left New York on the 16-hour flight that began its very successful 18-day trip to London.

There followed a number of return visits to Britain. Dave and Ruth were welcomed into the relatively small fannish community of the time and became good friends with many fans. Ruth developed an aversion to air travel, so Dave was a more frequent visitor, often hitching rides on military aircraft. But ocean liners still regularly made the Atlantic run, and Ruth didn't at all mind that mode of transport, so they maintained a regular presence in the UK.

During the 1960s the Kyles had a son, Arthur (AC) and a daughter, Kerry, who soon became favourites of visiting fans. Dave and Ruth's hospitality at 'Skylee', their home in Potsdam, was renowned. In 1967 I was a 19-year-old student, and when I mentioned to Dave at Eastercon that I was planning a summer-long tour of America by Greyhound bus, he immediately said "Call me collect when you arrive in New York, and I'll arrange for you to visit fans wherever you go".



At *Loncon I*, 1957, Ruth & Dave with Norman & Ina Shorrock. Below; wearing colanders and kitchen foil for the Fancy Dress. Photos by Peter West, from Norman Shorrock's album



He did just that, and in the middle of the 10,000-mile bus trip I arrived in Potsdam, where I was made most welcome. I stayed for several days, during which I made a lightning visit to the World's Fair in Montreal. This involved catching the bus at 4am one day, and being deposited by the bus coming in the other direction at 4am the next day, but Ruth didn't blink an eyelid, making sure I got up in time for the bus at that early hour, while Dave drove me to the bus station and picked me up the next day.

In the late 1960s the family moved to England, renting a house on the River Thames in the London suburb of Weybridge.

Keith Freeman has fond memories of the many social events that the Kyles hosted: "Their parties became legend - with Ruth spending an inordinate amount of time slaving over a hot stove... breakfast (dollar pancakes and a contest to see who could eat the most), lunch and dinner - a never-failing supply of delicious food. And yet even with this Ruth joined in all the fun and games and was a fantastic hostess." gave

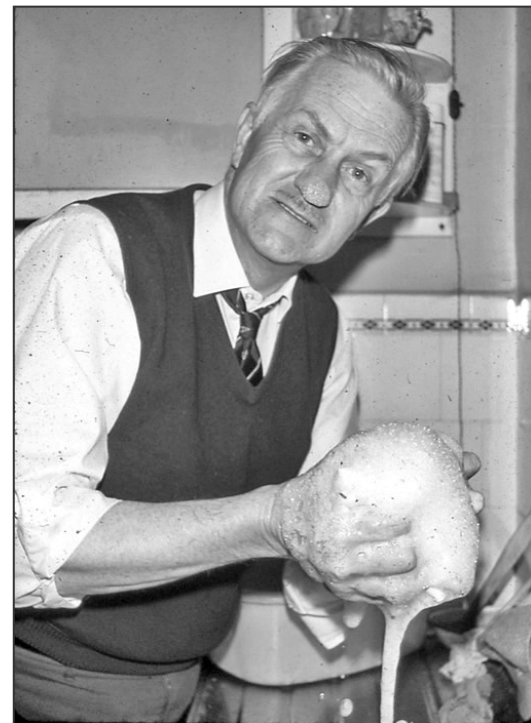
Not long after, the Kyles bought a rather run-down property nearby. The house and grounds needed a lot of work - but what a location, with the house situated on the south bank of the Thames, and a tributary running along one side of the garden. The first parties at "Two Rivers" were often day-long working events, with fans pitching in to help get the house and garden in shape, and the visitor's book was eventually filled with the names of British and American fans.

Keith recalls that Christmas was a special occasion for Ruth: "The turkey (usually the largest her butcher had) would go in on Christmas Eve and one would wake with the whole house filled with the aroma of roast turkey, with AC and Kerry rushing around to see if they could find an adult awake enough to let them get at their presents. The weary tones would come from Ruth, 'Go back to sleep, we were up until all hours getting the bird ready and watching a lousy film on the TV that David wanted to see...'"

The Kyles kept up the house in Potsdam; when they moved back to America in the 1970s they also bought a home in Florida, and the hospitality continued in both places. As front man for the couple, Dave sometimes made arrangements for visitors and forgot to mention the details to Ruth. But even when unexpected guests consequently showed up, Ruth remained the gracious hostess and always made them feel welcome.

Although their trips to Britain became less frequent, Dave and Ruth remained regulars at American Worldcons. Ruth showed an artistic talent with her craft of making elaborately decorated fantasy eggs, which she displayed and sold at conventions. Even as her health started to deteriorate in later life, she would run around the convention center using an electric scooter, but sadly she eventually became housebound, leaving Dave to attend conventions on his own.

After Ruth died in January 2011, Ted White recalled that he too had first encountered her over 55 years before: "I met her more or less the same time Dave did (although I was a generation younger than Dave), at the 1955 Worldcon in Cleveland. Ruth was a very attractive woman; she looked glamorous to my youthful eye. I liked Ruth and enjoyed her company. She had a warm, friendly personality and always treated me well...which I suspect everyone who knew her could also say."



In 1960 Dave & Ruth visited the Shorrockes in Liverpool, where Ina quickly gave Dave some jobs to do. Below, out on the town! Photos by Norman Shorrock.



My own lasting memory of Ruth perhaps gives an insight how she always thought the best of everyone she knew - especially her husband. Dave always was (and still is) a great tease, and his deadpan delivery of even the most far-fetched tale would fool Ruth every time. For decades, when Ruth realised she'd fallen yet again for one of his put-ons, her only response would be an exasperated, "Oh, David!" I can still hear her voice, and see the smile that followed the look she gave him, and that's how I'll remember her.

- Bill Burns, March 2011.

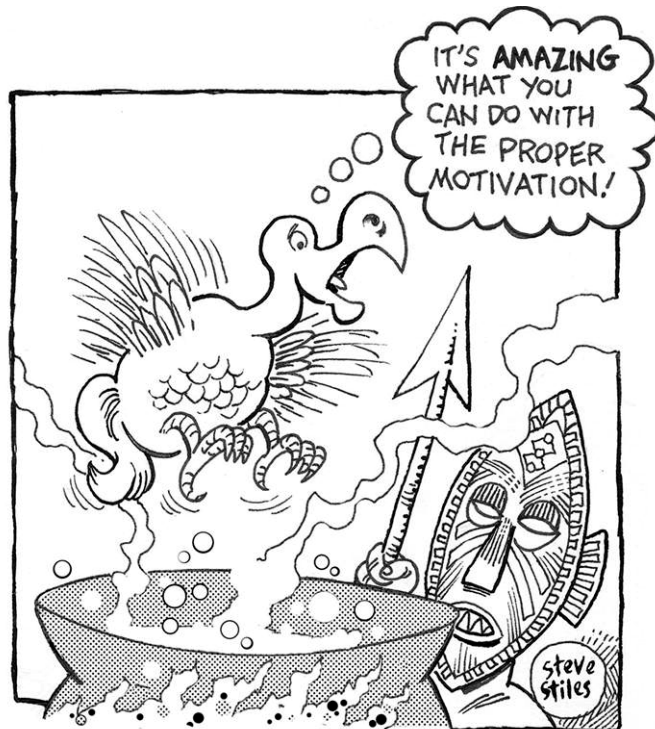
[I remember Ruth at Tynecon in 1974 when I was stumbling through a proposal to bid for a British worldcon. She called out, "Peter, Britain's fine in '79" which from then on became our slogan and we never looked back! - pw]

The Melting Pot

Maybe there's a message here about left-over relics from a bygone age?

Steve Stiles dreamed-up this idea in the bar at the Seattle *Corflu* – somehow, dodos seemed to be in the air that night... Irresistible editorial interjections in *italics* and *[brackets]* in the usual way.

Fan-artists, do please let me have your interpretations of the theme!



“You outdid yourself with the last issue. More and more glorious things about your glorious past. I loved the old photos, book cover scans, and all the other related trash you dug up just to please me.” – Earl Kemp, e-mail.

[Last Autumn I was making a serious attempt to identify the remaining ‘unknowns’ in my photographs of the 1957 London worldcon for Rob Hansen’s website project. Someone suggested that one of them might be James Gunn, and there did, indeed, seem to be a resemblance. So I wrote to Jim, then sent him a couple of issues of Relapse, and the following correspondence developed ...]

James E. Gunn

jgunn@ku.edu



Jim Gunn, current photo from Wikipedia

Peter,

Sorry, I wasn't there in 1957. The only time I was in London was after the founding meeting of Harry Harrison's 'World SF' in Ireland in 1978, I think. I did attend a gathering of the London SF club, whatever it was called.

The early pictures of Arthur and Brian *[in #16]* were remarkable -- both seemed so much unlike the men I knew later on, Arthur in his bespectacled teenaged awkwardness and Brian a remarkably handsome young man. I'm surprised Brian didn't remember more about *SF Horizons*, which I recalled as literary attempts to raise the level of SF discourse. The information about John Brunner's family was all new to me. I met John first at the Worldcon in Berkeley in 1958. He was a dashing figure with ear-rings on each ear and a beautiful young woman on each arm. I ran into him a few times later, particularly in New York in 1976, when he and I had a champagne breakfast with Chip Delany. John was going on to have lunch with Alvin Toffler, with whom he got acquainted during the writing of *THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER*. I had the feeling that John got a bit more sedate and perhaps a bit sadder each time I met him, concluding with an SFRA meeting in North Dakota just before his death.

Michael Moorcock's reminiscences about *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* were valuable commentary about a period many of us in this country got conflicting reports about, mostly from Judy Merrill and Brian, and the U.S. reaction from Lester del Rey and Isaac Asimov. I finally met Michael at the unlikely spot of Texas A&M last spring, at the celebration of an exhibit of its excellent SF holdings.

Old pictures *[in #17]* are fascinating, like a time machine. Strange to see that image from Ted Carnell's book with my signature under Alfie Bester's and Heinlein's, two of my heroes, because I have no memory of it -- must have been at the Worldcon of 1956 and I must have met Carnell there.

The issue is fascinating as usual, maybe because it recalls those times when we all were younger and so was the world. Reading about British fandom has an odd flavour both because many of the people and events described are unfamiliar and in the case of the people I knew, almost all authors, I often had a different impression than that reflected in the memories of those who knew them on a more personal basis. Or perhaps my contacts were conditioned by the fact that I was an author and an American and our contacts were always under the best conditions.

Except with John Brunner. He might have had a different view when he was a writer in residence here. His flight was delayed for eight hours in London because of the bomb threat and my wife and I waited for that long in the old Kansas City downtown airport. I had borrowed a car from the University-- a Plymouth Fury -- and in the dark I had forgotten where I parked it and even what it looked like, and we searched the parking lot for half an hour before we found it, and then it needed a jump start!

As if that unpromising beginning were not enough, we took John to a party given by someone Jane was acquainted with and had to search for the place, in the second floor of an old house. John was a good sport about it all and stayed at the party after we went home about midnight.

My memory of his week-long stay was that he focused on line editing in his meetings with individual students, which probably was the first time any of them had experienced anything like that. In fact, all of our British guests have been remarkable congenial. Our most recent was China Mieville, who gave the Richard W. Gunn (endowed by my brother) Memorial Lecture here last year and enjoyed sharing experiences with some of our local Marxists and late nights with students.

But we had quite a number visit us here at the University of Kansas; Arthur Clarke as a speaker during our Centennial celebration in 1966 (he had just come from London with pictures and stories of 2001), John Brunner and Brian Aldiss as writers in residence, and many others as winners of the Campbell or Sturgeon awards (see Center for the Study of Science Fiction at www.ku.edu/~sfcenter).

Rob Hansen Peter,

rob@fiawol.
demon.co.uk

I note you've got an extensive piece on Peter Phillips. Here are a couple of nice little portraits of him from the material I'm assembling on the 1957 Worldcon. First up is James White who, earlier, had been 'shot' in a Goon v. Antigoon skit:

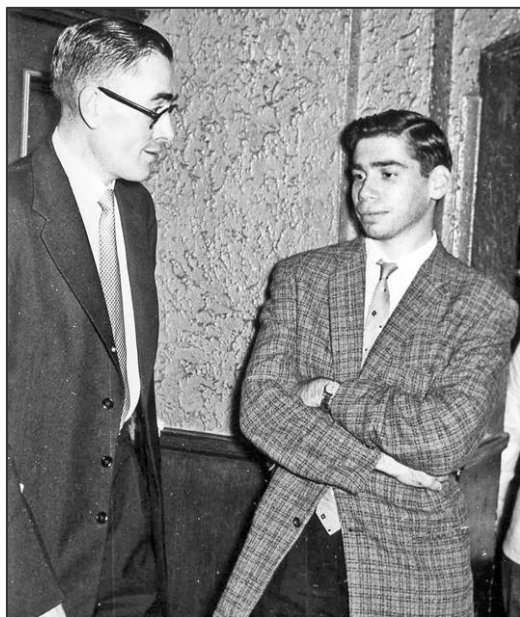
'Out of sheer boredom I plucked a bloom from one of the many floral decorations and stuck it in my lapel. Carefully then I reminded Mal [Ashworth] that I had been shot and that the James White he knew and loved was dead, but this, I ended triumphantly as I pushed the flower towards him, was my rein-carnation!

'I left Ashworth suffering from a sudden malaise as I spotted Peter Phillips. I went up to him respectfully, steadied him, then tried the same pun on him. Mr Phillips staggered back against the wall, then he straightened up, threw back his shoulders and for the first time in my knowledge of him he went clear around the edges. He said distinctly: "My Ghod, man, you've shocked me sober! I hate you!" Then he grabbed for the shoulder of a passing waitress and began to sob.'

'Phillips started playing a harmonica, quite brilliantly, with his left leg wrapped around his neck. Then he produced a sort of musical banister which he called a recorder and began to play that as well, and at the same time. At this point he fell off the table. After tottering to his feet he stated gravely that the discord he had just produced had been due to the harmonica and the recorder having been, in different keys: then he reeled away, bumping the doorway on both sides as he left.

'It is impossible to describe or to dislike Peter Phillips.'

**Jim White meets
Bob Silverberg;
one of the many
pictures in Rob's
hour-by-hour
account of Loncon.
Photo by Peter
West, from the
album of Norman
Shorrock.**



Here's Chuck Harris' account of the same incident:

'We sat here for the rest of the night whilst Peter Phillips, (Famous Author Peter Phillips), entertained us with flute, harmonica, and weird demonstrations of the art of Yoga. He wasn't very good at any of them, and the yoga was spoilt by his odd tendency to topple over as soon as he had one foot securely behind his head, but I thought it a very wonderful performance. He was, of course, on a par with any newt you care to name, and there was some tsk-tsking because of this. Personally, he seemed just the same as he always is to me -- comic, gentle, and very captivating, and, stewed or not, it didn't stop him from playing cards later on with Bennett, Thorne, and West and taking each and every one of them to the cleaners.'

Sounds like a fun guy!

[Bob Silverberg writes about Peter Phillips; "A terrific writer, unjustly forgotten. I remember him at Loncon One playing his ocarina with one leg tucked behind his head. I should have added that he was sitting atop a table (in the bar, I think) while playing it, and not standing on one leg. It was his party trick back then. I had a cat who used to put one of her legs behind her head and Barbara and I always called it 'the Peter Phillips position'."

Rob Hansen has finished his splendid tour-de-force on Loncon. Go to Rob's site, and follow the links through the THEN Archive to the 1957 feature: <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/>]

Mike Moorcock,
Texas



*Only known
image of Peter
Phillips at
Loncon I.
Photo; Peter
West*

Hi Pete,

Peter Phillips wasn't so much a man of mystery as a bit of a drunk, I think. I knew him fairly well when he worked for the *Herald*. He was literary editor, even after it became *The Sun* but was still a serious paper. One drunken evening in Fleet Street he talked a bit about 'Behold the Man', just appeared in book form in UK (1968?) and we bonded in beer at El Vino. Seeing the time he realised he was late with copy and we staggered off in different directions. Next day a great review of my book appeared in *The Sun* which is where my favourite quote of all time appeared -- 'A person of rare goodness and sanity'. Should have read, of course, 'A pershon of r -- hic -- rare goodnesh and shanity -- I like you, old boy -- hic...' It's appeared on many edition of BTM since then.

I lost touch with Peter after he left *The Sun*, with others, when Murdoch took it over. It became harder and harder for principled left-wing journalists to find work in Fleet Street. I was, incidentally, a great admirer of Peter's work, including one about a small boy's nightmares. There was wisdom in that story which I applied to my own child-rearing! Taking a child's nightmares seriously. My own children do the same with their kids. All thanks to Peter! When my son Max was little he had terrible nightmares about lions trying to eat him. I gave him a realistic looking BB gun 'Colt 45' to keep under his pillow and shoot the lion whenever it appeared. He still remembers how much better he felt by being 'empowered' in that way. It was Peter who was the 'person of rare goodness and sanity', not me.



John Burke in 1955; Jim Linwood says he "liberated" this photo from a library book: ALIEN LANDSCAPE

I was glad to see John Burke seems chipper. An affable, charming bloke. I have pleasant memories of him. A professional journalist, he was more like the blokes I used to hang out with in Fleet Street which was, after all, only a few minutes walk from the Globe. John was part of the grapevine which passed on potential work opportunities. I think he put together or knew the bloke who did, the *Searchlight Book for Boys* which was pretty much crammed with SF writers who went to the Globe. It had a long story by Bill Temple, two shorts by me, stories by Alistair Graham (who had given me my job on *Tarzan*), Syd Bounds, Ken Bulmer and others, and paid us around two pounds ten a thousand – Ted Carnell's top rate which he paid the likes of Clarke, Aldiss and Ballard (I never reached that rate).

I came across a checklist the other day and I don't think there was a writer in it I didn't know well. Apart from Frank Richards who had a 'Greyfriars' story and, I think, a 'King of the Islands' story. Spring Books bought a few of my early stories but I think the only ones actually published were a western ('Johnny Lonesome Comes to Town') and an 'historical' ('The Flamebringers')! They were also Charles Hamilton's main publishers, doing various 'St Jim's' novels as well as some *Billy Bunter Holiday Annuals*, as I recall. Those are what got me reading the old story papers, which led in turn to my interest in Sexton Blake, which got me my second job, as assistant editor on the *Sexton Blake Library*.

Once at Fleetway I was able to introduce Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer and Barry Bayley to various editors. Harry Harrison was already working for Fleetway and Jim Cawthorn also wrote regularly for their publications. For a while it seemed that *Tarzan*, Spring Books and Fleetway kept a whole lot of SF writers in jam. Best money was on *Look and Learn* and *Bible Story*, which paid a handsome 10gns a thousand. *Boys World*, run by an American friend of Harry's, also published a lot of stuff by Barry, me and Harry. They were good days, full of camaraderie and uncoloured by the feuds and rivalries which went on in SF fandom at the same time. They taught us to write in a wide variety of genres, styles and techniques and were for me about the best training possible. One day I'd be writing a 'Kit Carson' adventure for *Cowboy Picture Library* and the next I'd be writing a fantasy story for Carnell.

I also learned to turn text stories into comic strips and vice versa. Only a couple of years ago I turned a *Dogfight Dixon* comic for Fleetway into a 'Dogfight Donovan' text story for a book of 'thrilling tales' done in the US. It was supposed to look back to the pulp era. One criticism I remember was that it was too pulpy... Praise indeed! I've often wondered what I'd be writing today if Ted Carnell hadn't commissioned those first Elric stories and set me almost by accident on a career in SF and fantasy.

Certainly John Burke didn't specialise in SF. I think he's still highly regarded as the king of the novelisers (if that's what you call people who do novelisations) and has written an amazing variety of books. John always struck me as rather elegant – cool, if you like – and a model of what a good working journalist should be. John Wyndham was another who impressed me in that way. A good suit and a bit of style made them people to emulate. My own closer models, of course, were what people now call the mod bands of the mid-60s -- a lot of black, gleaming white collars and a thin black tie. We wore that style mainly because there were few clothes in the shops for the young chap who wanted to cut a bit of a dash. My kids now insist I was a mod but I didn't own a moped until long after I'd become an 'ippy. I'm always reminded of how good some of the old SF guys could look. Ted Carnell always wore sharp suits and I'll swear he had a camel hair overcoat. He looked like a successful dandified bookie.

These people stood out from the general run of fashion-challenged fans who adopted the universal sports coat and flannels. Ted would never be caught dead with patches on the elbows of a sports coat. Charles Platt tells me how disgusted he was when he first met me in Carnell's office and saw that I was wearing Cuban-heeled boots and tight trousers, etc. He didn't feel anyone could be taken seriously who cared that much for fashion. I didn't, of course. I was just wearing what my peers were wearing around Ladbroke Grove in those days.

Speaking of such things I did a thing at the NFT last August for 'The Final Programme' in front of a surprisingly full auditorium. After the show my daughter came up to me and said how impressed she was – with the audience. "They were almost all dressed normally," she said in surprise. I don't know whether she expected film buffs or SF buffs to be wearing nerd outfits but I have to say the general sartorial appearance of SF fandom has improved enormously since I was a lad! And I include myself -- I look at those 1957 Worldcon pics and shudder to my soul. You missed your chance. I'd have paid you a lot to keep those out of the fanzine!

The picture of the audience on page 6 in the last issue definitely shows Jimmy and Mary Ballard. Jimmy even looks as if he's having a good time. I was later privately hypnotised by the hypnotist. Interesting experience. In some ways that convention marked the zenith of fannish fandom and the beginning of new wave fandom. Even I, enjoying meeting musicians and so on, felt there hadn't been much discussion of science fiction. I hadn't quite expected the high-minded discussions of 'whither SF?' Jimmy had hoped for, but I had expected more than Campbell's Hieronymous machine and a fancy dress parade. I might have been too busy taking 'pep pills' and skiffing, of course.

This stuff both jogs and corrects my memory and comes at a time when I'm examining my own past in a strange book which is half closely autobiographical and half pure fantasy. Which is why people have found me a poor correspondent. Also I'm back on crutches with Book Signer's Foot. The shoe I wore and the way I angle myself at signings for the Dr Who book caused another ulcer we're trying to stop becoming a wound. We've had various crises over the past month. So apologies for any bad manners.

[We might have disagreed about this before, Mike, but your younger self looks perfectly OK to me, and to a modern viewer the striking thing about the people at Loncon is how well-dressed they were – suits and ties all around, dresses and skirts for the women. Not like these days, he says darkly.]



".....like a successful dandified bookie." Ted Carnell in 1960. Photo by Don Ford.

John Burke
Kirkcudbright

Dear Peter,

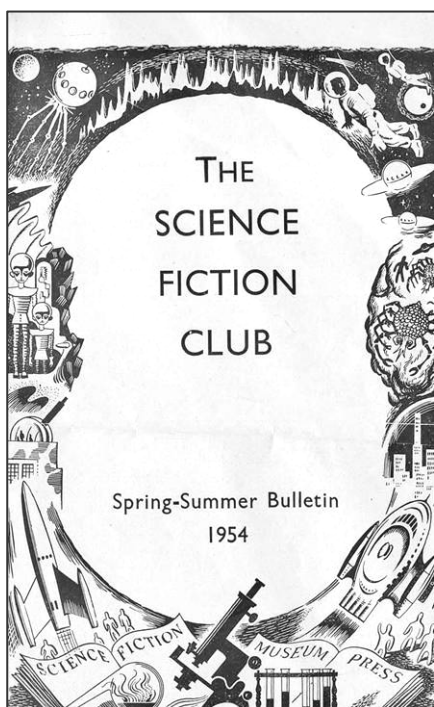
Another reason for giving up any attempt to write anything serious – here comes the latest *Relapse*, giving me an excuse to sit back, fill the glass near my left hand, and settle down to the latest Nostalgia Tour. I think I must make an effort not to let myself be triggered-off again by some odd reminiscence into waffling on with my own confused memories. Really must keep them ready for shaping up into something coherent one day.

Pleased, in the current issue, to see in one of the Bill Temple references the confirmation of my remark about Sam Youd's error in writing of the White Horse 'eleven o'clock closing time'. Bill quite specifically put it at ten-thirty.

As to the SF Luncheon Club, you are probably right in thinking that your experience of it did follow on from the earlier publishing group, since you've jogged my otherwise unreliable memory into recalling that we did indeed meet at Bertorelli's.

One flash of memory occurred to me the other day of something which I don't think I passed on to you, and which you might want to tuck in somewhere. It was actually John Brunner who found me my job as Editorial Manager with Paul Hamlyn. I was very dissatisfied with the way things were going at Museum Press, and he told me there was this vacancy at Hamlyn's 'Books for Pleasure' group. I went for an interview, but in the end decided to turn the job down . . . only to ask, some months later, if it was still on offer. Which, mercifully, it was. I felt rather guilty when in due course I quickly accepted John's offer of resignation over what he considered an impossible timetable for translation and production of the Larousse ASTRONOMY; but, as I think I mentioned, the rest of my department would have raised hell if I hadn't seized the opportunity!

Below; second of the 'SF Club' leaflets produced by Museum Press under John's editorial direction; you'll be able to read it more easily on the web-edition!



STAIRWAY TO THE STARS

Since its inception, the Science Fiction Club has gone from strength to strength, and the promise made in our last Bulletin that "the quality of the books will always be a paramount consideration" has been kept. We have presented a series of outstanding titles from the pens of American and English authors, and our future programme is even more ambitious.

On the following pages you will find advance announcements of books to come—books you will want to read and to own—and we think that the names of the authors are sufficient guarantee of their merit.

Just to whet your appetite, we would like to mention here that we have recently acquired for publication J. T. McIntosh's *WORLD OUT OF MIND*, the fascinating tale of a man created without emotions to mastermind a conquest without remorse . . . Publication date is not yet fixed. Watch for it!

Yours sincerely,
John Carnell

ASSIGNMENT IN ETERNITY
Robert A. Heinlein

Joel Abner, agent of the Federal Bureau of Security, arrives from the Moon carrying an incredibly valuable spool of microfilm. He becomes Captain Gilead, explorer and lecturer—but the transformation fails to deceive those who wish to relieve him of the film, and they close in. Thus begins one of the most gripping and exciting stories ever written by Robert A. Heinlein. And it is only one of four long stories which make up this book, each representing a different facet of this brilliant author's talent.

November 1954. 9/6 net.

Also still available, by the same author:

THE PUPPET MASTERS 9/6 net.
"No-one else comes even close to him in consistently and successfully fusing scientific thinking with fictional form."
—New York Herald Tribune.

EXPERIMENT ON EARTH

In our determination to offer good quality s-f to readers at the lowest possible price, while maintaining a high production standard, we are putting out cheaply two new titles, one by a well-known American author and one by an English writer whose name is familiar to all readers of this country's leading s-f magazines.

THE STARMEN
Leigh Brackett

Michael Trehearne was a changeling. Search for his past brought him to a hillside in Brittany, where he witnessed strange rites—and found also his future: the mysterious Shairn, and the faraway stars. This story of the Starmen is one of grandeur and excitement, but also of warm human emotion.

August 1954. 8/6 net.

PATTERN OF SHADOWS
Jonathan Burke

They told him that his name was Clive Rayner, and he knew they were right, because he remembered it. Or so it seemed. Remember . . . what did he really remember? This is a story that begins in a lonely farmhouse on the planet Mars and carries its baffled narrator across space in search of his blurred or forgotten past, struggling to find the answers to so many questions—answers that the reader, too, will want to know.

October 1954 7/6 net.

DRAGON'S ISLAND
Jack Williamson

Dane Belfast set out on the trail to New Guinea to investigate rumours of a warped-superior race of not-men threatening to supersede mankind. The truth was even more startling than the rumours. This is one of Jack Williamson's finest and most convincing stories.

May 1954. 9/6 net.

Also still available, by the same author:

THE HUMANOIDS 9/6 net.

John Baxter
genet@noos.fr



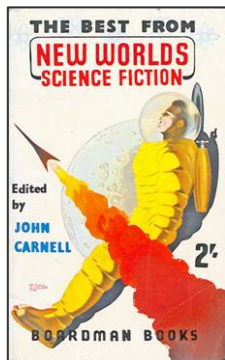
John in 2009;
his photo

Dear Peter,

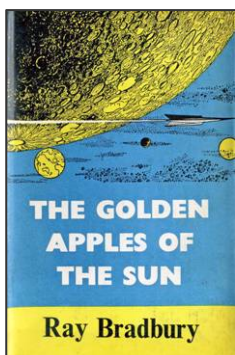
Thanks for *Relapse* 18. Lots of fun.

Phil Harbottle is generous about Ted Carnell as an agent, but I don't think many former clients would agree. He could usually sell a novel to Ace or Berkley, but after that you had to scabble for yourself. While he was, as Phil says, "uniquely placed to know all the best writers – on both sides of the Atlantic", he seldom made use of that fact, hardly ever leaving the UK – or, for that matter, London. His power base was mostly among ex-fans – hence his long-lived relationship with Ace and Don Wollheim. Once Judy Merrill came to London for the 1965 Worldcon and preached the (albeit-mixed) blessings of Scott Meredith, there was a steady flow of clients away from Ted, led by John Brunner and Jim Ballard. I think it was Brian Aldiss who described the atmosphere at his 1972 funeral as "heavy with guilt".

Seeing those Grayson and Grayson dust-wrappers brings back mixed memories. In Australia, where nothing from the US circulated unless smuggled in, they were our main source of SF, not counting wan BRE *Astoundings* and oddities like *Authentic*. Unfortunately for the likes of Mudge-Marriott (the name says it all, don't you think?), we had already seen real SF illustrations on the pulps brought out before the war as usefully absorbent ballast on cargo ships, to be dumped on the dock and subsequently sold off in chain stores like Coles and Woolworths. Apparently something similar took place in the UK. Brian Aldiss writes of seeing *Planet* and *Startling* back numbers on sale as "Yank magazines 1d each." Comparison with Ed Cartier and Hannes Bok showed up the lumpiness of Marriott and Co. Fortunately, by the time Pan, Panther and Penguin started SF in paperback, someone had discovered an album of Surrealist favourites and laid in a good supply of tracing paper.



Cover scans from Bob Wardzinsk's collection (much better in colour!)



The Boardman covers were an exception. There's an excellent design on the paperback of Ted Carnell's anthology BEST FROM NEW WORLDS – by Gerard Quinn, I think. Their crime covers were superior also. It was Cruel but Fair to show Marriott's pastiche of Frank R. Paul for the Grayson edition of I ROBOT next to the altogether more accomplished Boardman WHAT MAD UNIVERSE. Speaking of which, in the mid-1960s Federico Fellini intended to film the Brown book, under its Italian title *Assurdo Universo*. The novel was a parody of fandom, with the main character based on Sam Merwin, then editor of *Startling*. Fellini started out as a cartoonist, and fancied a film inspired by SF art; some of the drawings in his sketchbooks show he had a real flair. Dino de Laurentiis bought the rights for him, but though Fellini wrote a rough treatment, he never went ahead with it.

Phil doesn't exaggerate when he says that the Rupert Hart-Davis editions of Bradbury went out of their way to avoid tarring him with the SF brush. This is part of the flap copy from THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN. "*Punch* wrote of Ray Bradbury's last book, THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, 'to take the paraphernalia of 'science fiction', the rocket-ships, the robots, the great engines, the cosmic wars and galactic explorations that properly belong to the American 'comic' and film-serial, and fashion from them stories delicate and sensitive as Faure's songs or Cezanne's watercolours is a very considerable achievement.'" Comes complete with built-in shudder of distaste.

Nice to see Murray Leinster getting his due. He wrote the first SF story I ever read, a 1945 novella called 'First Contact'. It was included as a makeweight in an anthology of air stories called THE FLYING OMNIBUS, a misleading title which no doubt disappointed those enthusiasts for public transport who found it in their Christmas stockings. (Did many fans start out as flying fanatics? Many read *Flight* long before *New Worlds*. I even contemplated a flying career – a daunting thought, given my adult distractibility and tendency to nod-off after meals.)

J.G. Ballard famously enlisted in the RAF, of course, and, after expecting to be sent to West Germany, found himself freezing his balls off in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He was, as it turns out, not pilot material. He logged 22 hours in training but never flew solo, and resigned his commission. That he then spent years writing for Ted Carnell at £2.2.0 a thousand words tells you something about his belief in his prospects as a crewman in NATO's nuclear strike force. Incidentally, I didn't know until recently that Carnell had two rates. The likes of Aldiss and Ballard were promoted in time to £2.10.0 a thousand, while the rest of us scraped by on 2 guineas. It doesn't seem important until you remember that the average *annual* wage at the time was £180.

I hope someone comes up with a memory of Ballard at the '57 *Loncon*. On that subject, you might be interested in his opinion of his fellow SF writers, circa 1968. His Danish translator suggested compiling a collection of profiles of SF writers to raise money for the SFWA. JGB wrote back:

"As for your idea of a book of profiles, I'm afraid it's a complete non-starter. Firstly, who would be interested in buying such a book? I can't speak for Denmark, but as far as Britain and the US are concerned, the individual personalities of science fiction writers are of no interest to the reading public at all. The genre as a whole may be popular, in the paperback market principally, and among intellectual coteries, but the great bulk of writers are lumped in together. The fact remains too that the great majority of British and American writers are totally uninteresting. Contrary to what you might expect, they simply haven't got any original ideas. Some years ago *Amazing* ran a series of biographical profiles – how dull they were. 'Poul Anderson was born in Spokane, Washington, and studied at the local high school...his chief hobbies are sailing and collecting Indian beads...' As for myself, I have no wish to be included in such a book – I'm not regarded here as primarily a science fiction writer. Also I am not a member of the SFWA, and the idea hardly appeals to me of giving 50% of my share to what I consider to be a very backward and unimaginative society."

I think he goes too far. What's wrong with beads? Very interesting, beads...

[Funny you should mention the Fellini project, John, since over on the e-list we've been asking what we would film if someone gave us opportunity (and the money). I said that most SF just wouldn't work. Too technological and it would get swamped by the special effects, and the cerebral stuff – like THE DISPOSSESSED – would be hard to put on screen. You also need a nice, strong, easily-grasped plot line that takes place within a finite period, and most SF novels tend to ramble all over the place. My choice was Tucker's THE LINCOLN HUNTERS; Robert Lichtman chose WHAT MAD UNIVERSE.]

Dear Peter,

The library on the cover of *Relapse 18* looks exactly like North Shields Public Library circa 1956 or so, when I was delighted to find the OUT OF THIS WORLD anthologies and also such stuff as TIGER! TIGER! and SEETEE SHOCK, though in North Shields these were mixed in with the regular fiction from Aardvark to Zola, whom I was also reading. Of course Zola was also a sort of SF writer, of an erotic sort, since his novels were based on sound scientific genetic principles... I don't recall the library staff wearing such short skirts, maybe because it's cold up North.

My other source of SF was one-and-six or two-bob Digit paperbacks such as the immortal ANTRO THE LIFE-GIVER by Jon. J. Deegan, to be found in stationers if you were lucky – as was *Astounding Science Fiction*, although unaccountably I think I only ever bought one issue because I didn't understand it; a marooned-in-hyperspace story featured looking out of the spaceship's window and seeing "an infinite plane" which I could only visualize as the wings of the spaceship somehow extending away to a vanishing point. But the library was the most important source. Without the rather amazing emergence of SF hardbacks amongst the other fiction on the shelves I mightn't be the man I am today! As it were.

[Short skirts? You should have seen the Giles cartoon before I lengthened them!]

Ian Watson

martianinca@btinternet.com



Ian in 2005, Photo by Ian Whates

**Dave
Langford**
drl@ansible.
co.uk



*Above; Dave at
Novacon 39.
Photo by Ian
Whates.
Below; Robert
Conquest;
Stanford blog,
2010*



John Boston
john.boston@
verizon.net



*John in 2011.
His photo*

Dear Peter,

Thanks as always for the latest bundle of nostalgic goodies. Charles Platt isn't the only one to be fond of the famous Kelly Freas cover featuring the space-pirate framed in the airlock with a slide-rule between his teeth: Kingsley Amis gave it an approving nod in *NEW MAPS OF HELL* as a rare example of witty magazine art, and I couldn't resist mentioning it in my little *SFX* memorial piece on Freas (<http://ansible.co.uk/sfx/sfx129.html>).

You're right that Robert Conquest's *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE* is a dullish work overall; but there are further enjoyably silly bits, like the chap who invented a futuristic device which he called the 'torange', to provide poets with a rhyme for 'orange'; also the completely irrelevant section about a poetry-writing computer. Speaking of poets, did you notice the Tuckerisation of verse-writing friends as spaceship names: the 'Amis', the (Thom) 'Gunn', the (Philip) 'Larkin'?

George Hay urged me to buy Conquest's essay collection *THE ABOMINATION OF MOAB* when it appeared in 1979, but it seemed expensive at £7.95 and I waited years and years for a second-hand copy. It's an enjoyable book, including some poems and about fifty pages on SF. Little reverence is shown for '2001': "We see some primitive ape-men arsing around for about twenty minutes, latterly in the presence of a mysterious monolith. One of the apes becomes bright enough to use a bone as a club during this sequence. This was well done and worth five minutes of any viewer's time."

A single page collects the verse epigraphs for the *SPECTRUM* anthologies (including the famous "SF's no good ..."), numbered 1 to 4 but actually taken from books 2 to 5 – presumably he decided the lines in *SPECTRUM* #1 weren't good enough. Plenty of other interesting stuff, including (in the pornography section) a send-up of Freudian criticism which proves almost irrefutably that all those descriptions of sex in *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER* are actually symbols for D.H. Lawrence's furtive, guilty obsession with aviation technology.

Little did I know, when I scanned the *UK FIRST LENS* cover for you, that it would be part of a gallery of 25 illustrating Phil Harbottle's illuminating revelations of how hard-covers can be made to explode. If you had to do as much Photoshop work fixing scrapes, scars and tatty edges on all those other covers as you did on mine, you are an Obsessive Hero and I salute you.

I enjoyed Mike Ashley's loving piece on the great Peter Phillips (and will be using it to beef up his *SF ENCYCLOPEDIA* entry). Entirely by coincidence, my column for the November issue of *SFX* traces the central idea of the film *Inception* back through various non-cinema precursors, ending up as you might expect with 'Dreams Are Sacred'. This is one story I've never forgotten, although I feared the ravages of False Memory Syndrome when I couldn't find a record of the *Out of the Unknown* TV adaptation I knew I'd seen ... eventually remembering that they'd re-titled it as *Get Off My Cloud*. Since you're in touch with his family, maybe they and he would be cheered to know that Mike and Peter Weston aren't the only ones who remember!

[I sent Dave's comments through to Peter – he doesn't use a computer, but his family passes things on to him – and he was indeed much cheered to know that his story-idea hadn't been forgotten!]

Peter,

I was amused to see your comments on and quotations from Robert Conquest's *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE*, which I finally read 10 or 15 years ago and found alternated between a bore and a hoot. But you omitted to quote my favourite line from the book, the sprightly and flirtatious: "'Theory is able to predict long-term dangers in practice," the mouth beneath those cornflower eyes commented.' (A line made easily retrievable by my having put it up for Thog's Masterclass.) Maybe that one was omitted from the 1970 revision you read.

Phil Harbottle's account of the UK SF hardcover boom was most entertaining, especially the dust jacket gallery, but I'm not sure it conveys just how abrupt and total the end was. In the February 1957 *Astounding*, in a review column that would probably have been written in late-middle 1956, P. Schuyler Miller said: "From all reports, the hosts for the 1957 World Science-Fiction Convention now have the world's healthiest market for hard-cover SF." Leslie Flood's *New Worlds* book review column appeared nearly every month up until issue #58 (April 1957), but there was the harbinger if you paid attention: the column in #58 was leaded so heavily as to resemble 1.5 line spacing, so as to fill up the space despite the dearth of material.

The column then proceeded to vanish, without editorial comment, for the next six months, returning only in #64 with this comment from Flood: "This column's absence for several issues has been regretfully occasioned by the sharp decline in hardcover fantasy books published over several months. With the near cessation of reprints from America and stereotyped series from publishers who had jumped in with both feet and found the boom's-end too precarious for science-fictional adventuring, it remains for the more reputable houses – who shun the tag 'science-fiction' for what must be depressing reasons for the enthusiast reader – to present occasional novels with a science-fictional content for their general lists." After that, his column was published only at very wide intervals (#68, #76, #84), and he had a guest editorial in #73, lamenting: "I have received, in the past six months, a grand total of *three* books submitted for review, of which two bear the same publisher's imprint. All of them are reprints from the US. The cornucopia of English science fiction books, as we all know, blocked itself finally with its own squashy outpouring of perished fruit, and after its spring-clean, appeared to have dried up forever."

[John, like you I've been reading through the run of New Worlds and I'm struck by how perceptive most of Les Flood's reviews were, something I hadn't appreciated at the time. He's particularly good in his review of A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE IN #44; firm but fair, as they used to say!]

George Locke
george_locke@
hotmail.com



George in
2009. Photo
by PW

Dear Peter,

Thanks for another horrendously packed, absorbing ish. On libraries – your cover links up nicely with Phil's remarks on p34. But really, it has to be said that the hard-cover publishing of fiction in the UK in the 19th and 20th centuries was largely controlled by the requirements of both the public libraries and the rental library chains, of which Boots was the last survivor. So I suspect that if the libraries decided they didn't want SF any more, that was a strong reason for many of the publishers to pull out.

When I was a kid, riding round London on my bike in the 1950s looking for SF, two rental libraries were my main ports of call in north-east London. One was Harman's library, which stocked American imports. The other was none other than the Fantasy Book Centre. Being skint, I remember begging on all three knees for them to sell me their beat-up ex-library LENSMAN novels for, I think, 3/- (I did move on, and eventually replaced those beat up copies with THE HISTORY OF CIVILISATION, and I managed to find a second Harman's branch which coughed-up a couple of Jack Mann titles in jacket).

The remnants of those old libraries were fascinating on the rare occasions I found them. Most memorably was a certain Mr Bigg, who lived in a damp old farmhouse on the northern slopes of the Blackdown Hills in Somerset. He had apparently retired from his old rental library, but at the time he was in full flood, apparently, he made a point of buying pulp magazines as they came out and preserved complete sets of them. Many dealers (this was the seventies) visited him and bought stuff; I came away with a complete set of *The Spider* (which went to Ron Graham) and of *Scoops*, which I still own, as well as other stuff. Not much other SF that I remember; I was too late.

And, again, many years ago, there was a library in Brighton who had retained all their books' jackets, including salesmen's samples. The books were in rubbish condition – but those jackets; fortunes were made from them! And of course, a sprinkling of jackets for 1930s SF.

The public library system – yes, they also told me that they burned their books! Not any more. In the 1960s and 70s, I believe, the London system set up something called 'The Joint Fiction Reserve'; they were actively buying second-hand fiction from various booksellers, including G. Ken Chapman. Until a couple of years ago, I'd never heard of it. Then policies must have changed. Those rarely-borrowed books were festering in basements, etc, taking up a lot of room that could otherwise be used to accommodate computer keyboards and all the other accoutrements of the electronic age, so some of those libraries have been flogging off their JFRs. I among others was invited to view the books and there were some seriously rare treasures to be found among them, of the 19th and 20th centuries. And many of them still retained their jackets and were unread. So if you were prepared to put up with stamps, ticket pockets, and labels (as I was) you were laughing.

No, I mustn't use the words 'flogging off'. The buzz word is 'de-accessioning', I kid you not!

I liked your picture feature of those 50s hardbacks. So Phil Harbottle has the original cover painting for ALIEN DUST? I bought it many years ago from Ken Slater, and though I knew I had passed it on, I'm sure it wasn't for three mint copies of *Weird Tales*. So it must have been travelling some.

Incidentally, I have an original Mudge Marriott for an SF anthology that was never published, titled TOMORROW IS ANOTHER WORLD. Whether it was a sample, or actually intended for a projected anthology which didn't happen, I don't know. I'd be happy for you to use it, when I find it. It's either in the loft or in the shed.

[“What a way to treat an original painting,” I wailed. “I just hope the mice haven't eaten it!”]

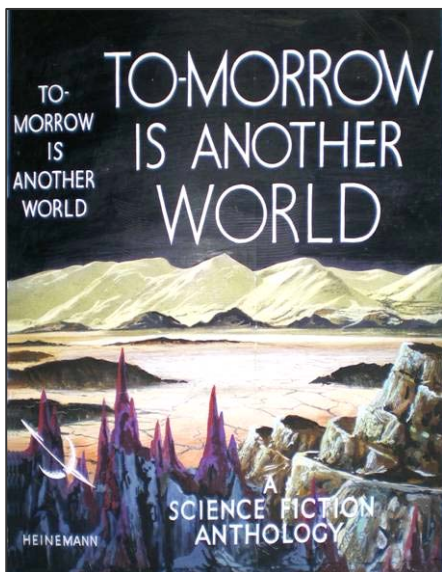
What better way to store the hundreds of original pieces of art I have than to bung 'em in the loft or shed? Touch wood, I haven't had a mouse at home in ages. I've found the art and Rita has photographed it. I should have a study for the William Sloane anthology by 'Biro' somewhere around as well.

In my experience original jacket illustrations come in two forms. The first is the study, usually one of two or three the artist submits to the publisher, who then picks the design he likes, whereupon the artist does the finished work. Studies are usually returned to the artist, and when the contents of his studio go on the market you almost invariably get the studies, which can often differ quite a deal from the finished work. When a publisher gets rid of stuff and hasn't returned the art to the artist (the norm until a few years ago), then you'll be buying the finished artwork.

When many years ago Les Flood sold off some of Ted Carnell's manuscripts, etc, one of the things he sold me was a wonderful study by Reina Bull for the cover of a 'Festival of Britain' issue of *New Worlds*. I clung onto it until only recently when an SF collector keen on the Festival prised it out of me.

Phil didn't mention, as far as I remember, Nevil Shute's contribution to 1950s SF – not just ON THE BEACH, but also IN THE WET. I'm lucky enough to have both the study and the finished art for the jacket of the latter. If you wanted to get into this business of studies and finished art, then I can probably find one or two pairs to illustrate the subject. I wonder if the ALIEN DUST piece mentioned in *Relapse*, was the finished work or a study? The final artwork, as used by the publisher, would have instructions for the printer in the margins or on the back.

Oh, and there's another little wrinkle. One of my favourite pieces of art of all time was the *Astounding* cover illustrating MARTIANS GO HOME. Ten years ago at the Sam Moskowitz auction, I found the original, only to discover that so many people loved it that some of them had commissioned Freas to paint specimens for them. So of all the originals of that illo around, only one in my view is a *true* original, the one used by the printer.



To me, nothing illustrates more clearly how the 1950s SF boom suddenly ended than this cover, commissioned for a book that was suddenly cancelled. -pw

Andy Sawyer
A.P.Sawyer@
liverpool.ac.uk



Andy in 2008,
his photo.

It was splendid to see the locs from Bill Harry and John Burke, and the phone call from Robert Conquest must have been a treat. John recalls Antonia Fraser being present at a gathering – like you, I wonder if she recalls being even if ever so faintly associated with horror and SF people? Perhaps, as she’s described as a “rather sniffy young lady”, she wouldn’t want to recall?

But a terrific set of covers in Phil Harbottle’s article, (even better in colour). It’s a shame we have to scabble around for book jackets nowadays; I think the British Library realises now that its policy of stripping the jackets off the books it acquires and sending them to the Victoria and Albert (where they disappear into a black hole, apparently) is misconceived, and it should only take another century or two for that policy to be reversed.

There were some fine artists doing book covers in the 50s, and as we discovered when the Walker Art Gallery did the retrospective on Josh Kirby, a lot of their work is surprisingly hard to find in good condition. The sidebar reference to Dennis Wheatley reminds me that I was quite a fan of his black magic stories and his historical novels at one point (I swear I passed my history ‘A’ level on the strength of all those obligatory digressions where someone would say “As you know, Sir Pellinore . . . “ and then go on for three pages on the causes of World War One, which was just the sort of thing you could insert into essays as long as you remembered to stop before the equally obligatory mildly stimulating sex scenes. Although even then I thought his SF was dreadful! Worse than W. E. Johns’s, and that’s saying something. STAR OF ILL-OMEN sounds like something I ought to re-read when I regain a life and want some mindless rubbish, though.

Praise for Charles Platt for his praise of Ted Tubb! I never met Ted, but as I’ve said before I’ve developed a fondness for his work. A much better writer than Wheatley, and far less cynical in his approach to what science fiction was and could be. And what a wonderful picture of a young S. Baxter with luxuriant locks, fondling his telescope!

[Last issue I was so short of space that I actually relegated Brian Aldiss to the WAHF page; such ingratitude to one of my oldest correspondents! I’m making amends here with several of his letters.]

Brian Aldiss
Oxford



Brian in 2005.
Photo by PW

Dear Pete,

It was good to see Tom Shippey [*in #15*] talking about my dangerous friend Kyril Bonfiglioli – a bonfire of knowledge, a bracing companion, an adroit drinker. He was born somewhere in the mountains north of Italy in pre-war days. Brought over to England, he was imprisoned in a British public school. “Every day I had to take some wretch down into the bogs and beat him up because he called me a wop.”

Tom is not correct in labelling Bon a snob (or else why would he have consorted with me?). Bon’s problem was that he hated the British after that taste of their schools; but he dressed like an old squire and knew every element of their sartorial foibles (which he imitated) including the fact that Tom’s dress shirt required a stud. Armed with such knowledge, he could feel himself superior.

In those days, I had a sword stick. I was foolish enough to show a little mild interest in Bon’s current sweetie-pie. Bon grabbed the stick and pinked my Adam’s apple with the point of the sword. We were probably both drunk. For some years after he had died, you could drink in any pub within a radius of thirty miles of Oxford’s Cornmarket and the landlord would say, in admiration, “Ah, that there Mr Bonfigly, he knew how to drink, he did!”

On a more melancholy topic, I still await one of your readers to say a kindly word regarding BILLION YEAR SPREE, later enlarged to TRILLION YEAR SPREE with the aid of David Wingrove. It’s the book that retrieves and returns the origins of SF to our shores.

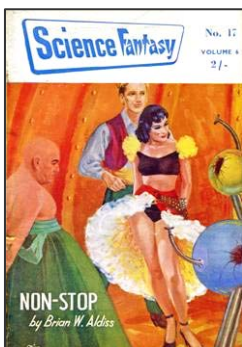
When I was embarking on this so far thankless task, the more adolescent and presumably orphaned among US fans were searching avidly for ‘the Father of Science Fiction’. Hugo Gernsback? Edgar Allan Poe? Lovecraft? Old Whoosit? I snatched the torch from their very lips and unveiled Mary Shelley – Mother of Science Fiction! – English mother at that. Some US magazines refused to review my history. Harry wrote to them and chided the blighters roundly.

[At this point I wrote to say I’d just completed my collection of Science Fantasy (thanks to Bob Wardzinski) and had noticed a few of Brian’s stories in there which I didn’t remember having seen before. “Good old Ted Carnell,” I said, “I’ve developed a great respect for his tenacity. But what a truly awful cover for NON-STOP (and why run it there rather than in New Worlds?) Of all the scenes Quinn could have chosen, that is the least representative of the story.”]

Agreed about Ted Carnell. He always brought out his magazines on time and paid regularly. What’s more, when my first marriage broke up, and I lost my house and habitation, I stayed with the Carnells in Plumstead for a week or two. Although it’s also true he did not know one end of a story from another. The case could be made out that Ted, admirable man though he was, edited magazines which, by providing stale echoes of U.S. stories, retarded the development of literacy in SF. The trouble was, Ted was perfectly content with what he was doing. Never be content! And directly Mike M and I approached the Arts Council for a little funding – something Ted would not have done in a month of Sundays – a great wave of vigour and subversion set in. In retrospect, it may not have been as wonderful as we thought, but it was alive and kicking...

You touched on a point that has always bewildered and/or vexed me, as to why *Science Fantasy* put that dreadful cover on NON-STOP. I believe it was because of the arrangements that Ted Carnell had with the artist, Gerard Quinn. He did some good work for Carnell and I suppose that at the last minute he found he had no cover for that particular issue and so shoved in whatever he had left to hand.

A deeply bad idea, agreed...



Sad-looking bald man in green skirt, couple in Flamenco outfits – any connection with the story is tenuous!



Sarah Thomas –
photo from
Bodleian website

I am on very amiable terms with the Bodleian Librarian, a position of some power within literary circles. Happily an American woman, Sarah Thomas, has been appointed to this august role. I have just put together a book I call 'Cover Stories'. It contains 96 covers of various books and magazines; sometimes there are four covers, let's say, produced for one particular book, contrasting UK, USA, and foreign editions. When you open the book, each opening has a picture one side and a commentary on the other, sometimes a learned disquisition, sometimes a comic anecdote.

I lunched with Sarah and showed her this book. She was immediately positive. I cannot imagine that any of her previous British holders of her important position would have said 'yes' straightaway without any manner of obfuscation. So we hope to go ahead.

But there's a serious problem about copyrights. I am hoping that can be overcome. But certainly if the book I visualise is ever made – with illustrations covering the last 50 years – it will be an absolute joy, particularly for all science fiction buffs.

It's tremendously interesting about Bob Conquest. He was a keen and learned fan. I met him first of all in the basement of Les Flood's science fiction shop in Sicilian Avenue. There was Bob, studying a copy of *Amazing*. I believe his first words to me were "This is Frank Paul's Pink Period". Then there was the time – have I told you this? – when Bob was getting married for the fifth time. I asked him why he was bothering. His response was "Well, you know how it is, I thought 'One for the road' . . ."

[Finally, on Rob Hansen's behalf I asked Brian about his memories of the 1957 Loncon for Rob's website. They're now on Rob's site, but as a postscript, Brian added: "I recall John W. Campbell striding along, grandly declaring, 'Creativity is simply input surfacing as output.' And Brunner scurrying beside Campbell, saying, slaving, 'Exactly, exactly, just what I was thinking...' "The Pratt..."]

David Redd
[dave_redd@
hotmail.com](mailto:dave_redd@hotmail.com)



David – looking
an awful lot like
Terry Pratchett –
during my Visit
in January!
Photo;
Catherine
Pickersgill using
her mobile
phone.

Dear Peter,

I have to second your "admiration for Ted Carnell and his long struggle." So many of our best SF editors were fans first and editors next. Certainly, reading the Carnell *New Worlds* and its companions I never realised how "marginal" the enterprise was. And the appearance of a story in *NW* was only the tip of the iceberg; in many cases he'd done his best to agent the story in America first, so he'd done a lot more on that story than simply extracting it from a slush-pile. Your mention of his copy of *SPACEHOUNDS OF IPC*, autographed by almost the entire SF world, shows what a fan he remained.

Other editors: Peter Hamilton edited and produced *Nebula* with those total-fandom back pages, and Mike Moorcock edited *New Worlds* into the cutting edge of the field, because they were genuinely true fans of SF in that they actually cared about this stuff. They certainly didn't do it for the money. More recently came another of the breed in Paul Fraser of *Spectrum SF*, where his book and magazine reviews were pure fan's-eye view affairs, and his being the first editor to publish a Charles Stross novel was clearly due to dedication rather than accident.

I can testify to Paul's editorial hard work; by the time *Spectrum SF* folded he was dragging three stories out of me: a novella set in *rtf* ready to print; an old German-only story for which he'd started suggesting updates; and a new 'Ice Schoone'" short – with MJM permission – which only reached first draft. All these projects went down with the ship, but they demonstrate that Paul must have loved SF a lot to put that much effort into editing. As did Ted Carnell, whose eighteen years or so keeping his magazines alive seem more and more amazing. You're right about the (sometimes-naïve) charm possessed by many of the stories he published, but I think their main importance lay in preparing the ground for what came after. Without a market already publishing people like James White and Robert Presslie, would J.G. Ballard have found some other way to support his children and never tried writing science fiction at all? Yes, this fan-history leads to some strange speculations.

Anyway, lots of good stuff in the R18 editorial pages alone, not to mention the rest. Who was Maurice Goldsmith? Half an intriguing story here. (In issue 17, your 'White Horse' photo included an even more puzzling character: we saw four authors, Ted Tubb, Syd Bounds, William Temple, and one David Griffiths, compared to whom Maurice Goldsmith seems positively ubiquitous.)

Also much appreciated were the Ashley and Harbottle pieces (with illustrations) and I suspect that *VULTURES OF THE VOID: THE LEGACY* will be a must-buy. As to the fading of the hardcover SF boom, was it finally killed off by the Fifties printing strike which brought a lot of unsold "mushroom jungle" SF back on the news-stands? More likely, the normal commercial process of only-the-strong-survive was at work. Ted Carnell couldn't be everywhere doing everything, even if he did try.

Thanks especially for Joe Patrizio's series of the Temple diaries, and it would still be nice to see a 'Best Of' collection appear one day. You and I obviously agree on *SHOOT AT THE MOON*; in say 1955 the good writing would have made it stand out, but by 1966 its content had been left behind. More interestingly, mention of Temple's work for *Rocket* makes me wonder if he ever met another figure almost as shadowy in SF as David Griffiths, namely the late Conrad Frost.

Frost does have something of a cult following, or rather his *Sun* comic-strip creations 'George and Lynne' do. His SF connections seem to have been put well behind him. (I think Frost's day job was as a Kemsley editor, in which capacity he "discovered" cartoonist Ralph Steadman, but he had a sideline writing non-fiction and occasional fiction such his 'Mogul' novelisations.) The early novel *GABRIEL* may be fantasy rather than SF – I haven't seen it. Indisputably SF, and collectors' items now, were his 'Rick Random' scripts for the *Super Detective Library* 64pp picture-stories. (He also scripted 'Lesley Shane' thrillers for the same library.) I noted in the 50's *Mickey Mouse Weekly* a space picture-story of hero Don Conquest, by "Kelman D. Frost," pictures by Winslade.

My article in Earl
Kemp's *eI*, August
2006, has more
about the *Rocket*
comic (pw)





In *Rocket*, though, until it was folded into *Express Weekly*, Conrad Frost provided the three text serials for its 32-issue run; Temple provided the short stories. (Other content was mostly Eagle-inspired comic strips, padded out with reprints.) Frost – again illustrated by Winslade – gave us a Martian-invasion story; a lost-race yarn about winged people in South America; and intrigue against a dictatorship. The set was unambitious but nicely varied, and all three had perceptive moments. For these and his contributions to ‘Rick Random’, the eternal schoolboys within us should be grateful.

I’d guess with low probability that Frost seems a more likely editorial presence on *Rocket* than the nominal editor, RAF ace Douglas Bader. Temple had at least one meeting with an editor of these comics – could he have met Frost? If he did, might he have invited him to a London meeting? The chances are that they never actually met, and lacking fannish contact Frost left SF behind for creations dearer to his heart, mainly ‘George and Lynne’. But it would be nice to know for sure.

Phil Harbottle
pjhar@globalnet.co.uk

During my early teenage days as a paper boy – in order to earn money to buy science fiction pocket books – I discovered the ‘Jeff Hawke’ strip in the Daily Express, and was sufficiently impressed to buy the paper for quite a while in order to collect and clip the strip. This was during the period when (although I didn’t know it) Harry Harrison was writing the continuities (‘Out of Touch’, his classic Seetee story). I used to see the Giles cartoons, and never considered them to be the slightest bit interesting or funny. But your reinterpretations ARE funny and interesting – well done!

I went from the cover to page 2, and then 3...and the whole thing was so interesting, I just kept reading under I had finished. Am I the only reader to do this? I suspect not. Usually with a magazine, one selects items of most interest, and then flips back and forward, laying the magazine aside throughout. But because *Relapse* is so wonderfully edited and integrated, you can’t help but read it as a novel, or as if one were sitting in on a conversation with the editor and his friends and listening in fascination. It’s a privilege to be allowed to sit in and, this issue, to actually take part.

[Nice of you to say so, Phil. That’s how I want Relapse to be received. And you’re about the first person to comment on the ‘Giles’ covers; I have a lot of fun each time in trying to find a cartoon that vaguely matches the current topic, and then thinking up a caption to fit!]

Mike Ashley’s wonderful and fascinating tribute to Peter Phillips reminded me of something I’d forgotten. Many years ago I came across a volume of James Gunn’s ROAD TO SCIENCE FICTION series that purported to cover post-war British science fiction history. It was shockingly incomplete, particularly as it made no mention whatsoever of Ted Tubb, who was one of the leading lights of the period. Gunn redeemed himself by reprinting a superb Peter Phillips story, but clearly he knew little or nothing about Phillips outside of his USA magazine stories, and didn’t even know if he was alive. So I wrote to Gunn and berated him for ignoring Ted, and told him how to get in touch with Peter via his friend Syd Bounds. I have a vague memory (which may be false) that Gunn replied to say that he had ‘relied on someone’s advice’ for his British essay; I wonder if it was a British literateur and poseur who was getting back at Ted by writing him out of British SF history?



Above: Ted in 2002 at the London Book Fair. Photo by Phil Harbottle

I was thrilled to see that Ted had managed to send you a LoC – and what a wonderful LOC it was. Thank you for preserving it for posterity. It is revealing of Ted’s devastatingly astute ability to assess character and human nature, and his contempt for bullshit and hypocrisy. But I can’t think why he was surprised that Clarke carried his clippings about, because Bill Temple had dubbed him ‘Ego’ Clarke before the war! Arthur, of course, cheerfully admitted to his human failing by using ‘E.G. O’Brien’ (!) as a magazine pseudonym, as every trufan knows.

Thanks also, Peter, for coaxing that absolutely superb essay out of Charles Platt. What refreshing candour, and Charles has absolutely nailed the essence of Ted. And again, it awakened buried memories, this time bitter-sweet. Charles doesn’t say *when* in 1970, the Brighton conference took place, but I’m intrigued as to whether or not it was before or after the Heidelberg World Convention in August. I was with Ted at the latter event where he had to make a highlight speech as a Guest of Honour. Normally so self-assured and spontaneous, Ted was a complete bag of nerves before his speech was due, and claimed to have no idea on what he would say to a huge and distinguished international audience.

Ted’s close friends Gerry Webb and the quite wonderful Ethel Lindsay (a great name that appears far too infrequently these days) supplied liberal doses of whisky and reassured him to “go out there and knock ‘em dead”. It was pure show biz cliché – but, by God, Ted did just that. He spoke (without notes-- he didn’t have any) straight from his heart and soul, and it wasn’t just a “fairly compelling case for traditional storytelling values” it was a barnstorming masterly thesis, that was the most brilliant analysis of what science fiction should be, that I have ever heard in my life. I had known it would be, and because of this I had arranged for one of our German hosts (Uwe Luserke? Hans Alpers? Alas, I forget who it was, but he had striking blond hair) to tape-record Ted’s whole speech. I would then publish a pamphlet reprinting the speech, and Uwe/Hans would publish a German translation. After it was over, however, I was devastated to learn that the recorder had malfunctioned, and not one word of his great speech had been preserved. It had disappeared into the ether. Had I been able to publish that speech, the pamphlet would have passed into fan history, but it was not to be.

I take some comfort from the fact that more than twenty years later I found myself interviewing Ted (and Syd Bounds) at the first London *Zardoz* Fair, and a friend of mine in the audience successfully recorded the whole thing on his camcorder and sent me the video cassette, which I still have. A transcript of Syd’s speech is included in my book, whilst Ted’s reminisces will appear as the introduction.

Thank you, Peter and Charles. It’s great Ted saw an advance copy of your tribute before he died.



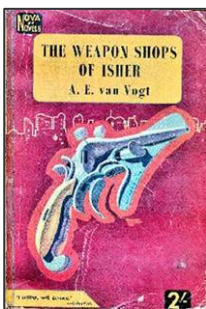
Below: Ethel at Heicon. You can just see Gerry behind her. Photo by Norman Shorrock

**Jim & Marion
Linwood**
JLinwood@
aol.com



Marion at
Cytricon V,
2008. Photo
by John
Dalman

Below; this
one has a lot of
sentimental
value!



Sandra Bond
sandra@ho-
street.demon.



Sandra in
Seattle, 2009.
Photo by Rob
Jackson, atop
the 'Space
Needle' during
Corflu Zed.

Dear Peter, [*this is Jim writing first;*]

Phil Harbottle's history of the 'Hardback Explosion' brought back memories of the transition I made early in the Empire of Adolescence from 'Dan Dare' to most of the novels mentioned, completely missing out on juvenile SF – I still have some I picked up as remainders or when Boots' library sold off their stock. Initially I joined several circulating libraries and then a young librarian who was familiar with SF took over the local public library and the hardcover titles started appearing on the shelves. In 1958 we both set up a display of SF books in the library with information and handouts on the BSFA, although no one joined because of this. I'd always assumed that the hardback boom (and the circulating libraries) died because of the availability of cheap paperbacks, particularly when import restrictions were lifted in 1959.

I liked Charles Platt's memoir of Ted Tubb and it was sad to hear of his death, although at nearly 91 he had a good innings. Ted was a key figure in London fandom, a Globe and Parker Penitentiary regular and had my admiration because I'd been a fan of his fiction when I was a boy. He talked me into joining the newly-formed BSFA at a party in 1958 – I left with a copy of *Vector* and he with my 5/- subscription. I'll always remember the day Kennedy died because Ted told Marion and me of the assassination when we arrived at one of Ella Parker's Friday night meetings at William Dunbar House on Friday 22 November 1963. Together we watched the unfolding events on TV and listened to Ted pontificating on what this meant for mankind.

Frank Arnold's piece almost confirms my belief that Lew Mordecai was more well-read than most of his Thursday-night patrons at the Globe. One night, Pat Kearney and I were sitting at the bar discussing 'All Quiet on The Western Front', the film of which we had both recently seen. Lew joined the conversation and pointed out that Henri Barbusse's 1916 novel 'Le Feu' (Under Fire) was a more passionate anti-war novel than Remarque's. This made me wonder if, like Barbusse, Lew was a pacifist as were a few of his contemporaries in fandom.

[*Thanks Jim. And now a word from your good lady Marion, who reveals the cunning way in which you wooed her! Other men send flowers but you relied on A.E. Van Vogt instead!*]

I greatly enjoyed Phil Harbottle's article because the cover scans took me back to the many books I'd read as a teenager. It reminded me that when I joined the BSFA and Jim started writing to me I mentioned to him that I hadn't read THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER and he sent me the 2/- Nova paperback by return of post – I still have it.

After reading Charles Platt's letter I got Jim to dig out the three 1959 issues of *Astounding* which serialised THE PIRATES OF ERSATZ which I re-read. It's strange to handle magazines that were once so exciting, hard to get and often embarrassing to buy because of the colourful covers. I used to put a brown paper cover around them, like with my school books, to hide them. It's great that such graphic art is now recognised and adds to the pleasure of reading. It was a secret pleasure back then to have something in my life that was disapproved of in the mundane world.

Thanks for the memories!

Dear Peter,

Relapse #18 has just arrived and there tucked away in a tiddly-wee box at the foot of one page is the answer to a question that has vexed me for years: what became of the White Horse (etc.) visitors' book at the death of Frank Arnold?

You see, I saw the book, actually saw it. Never met Francis Joseph Eric Edward Arnold or signed the book; though I could have, since I first attended London pub meets early in 1987 and Frank died late that same year. But I have a memory as clear as glass, or crystal, or the voice of Gregory F. Pickersgill addressing a convention panel from the back of a room without a microphone, of seeing the book itself on a visit to Vince Clarke's in my first year or two in fandom, while I was still riding high on a wave of neoteric enthusiasm and soaking up every scrap of fan-history Vince tossed my way, to the amusement of many older and more cynical heads.

He showed it to me, explained what it was, told me that in those fabulous fannish fifties everyone had signed the book on their first visit to the White Horse or its successor the Globe. Opening the book, there on the first few pages were many names I already knew well, pros and fans mingled together as was entirely appropriate given the way that they had mingled in the pub all those years before.

Vince flipped forward to the end of the book next and it nearly broke my heart. Frank had continued to attend meetings, it would seem, right up until the end, nothing short of death itself being able to break his track record. But it didn't take much imagination, even though I'd never knowingly seen the man, to mentally picture him sitting there quietly in a corner, knowing nobody, speaking to almost nobody. The book contained many dates in the last few years where Frank had recorded 'No signatures this night' or words to that effect; every now and again one solitary name would appear of someone with whom Frank had presumably struck up a conversation, or vice versa. None of these final signatories were names that I recognised.

"When Frank died," Vince told me, "we went round to his house and found the book, just lying around. I suppose it was naughty of us to take it, but I'm sure it would only have been thrown away as junk otherwise, and it seemed a shame to let that happen." And he gave me that look – that look that anyone who remembers Vince will have seen a thousand times – that look of mild nostalgic sadness with an overtone of wry amusement. Which I see from the photo at the bottom of page 11 of the last *Relapse* he was already wearing even in the 1950s.



“...that look of mild nostalgic sadness...”
 Vince in early 1950s. Photo from Ted Carnell’s album

Don Allen,
 don-allen@bushinternet.com

Joe Patrizio
 joepatrizio@blueyonder.co.uk



Joe at Cytricon V 2008. Photo by Keith Freeman

Ten years or so after that, of course, Vince died too, and his collection of fanzines and memorabilia was bequeathed, in the main, to Rob Hansen. I naturally assumed that the Visitors' Book was among this legacy, but Rob has repeatedly denied having possession of it. I confess -- and I'm sorry, Rob -- that I thought some uncharitable thoughts now and again about this, some along the lines of “Oh, he *must* have it somewhere, he just hasn't looked hard enough” and some more akin to “Well, if he hasn't got it, then it must have been left at Vince's and probably thrown out when the house was cleared and in that case it might just as well have been dumped when Frank Arnold died”.

But now it's all clear; Vince, wonderful selfless generous Vince, had evidently decided that the book was far too great a treasure and an artefact of British science fiction history to remain in his keeping, and had arranged for it to be passed to the Science Fiction Foundation. It is entirely possible, indeed, that Vince told me this himself and I either didn't take the information in, while thrilled by the experience of handling the book, or else forgot it.

So I guess it's now over to Andy Sawyer! I'm not even going to consider the possibility that the book made it safely from Frank to Vince to the NE London Poly as-was but didn't finally come to a safe home at Liverpool. It's there in the Foundation. I won't believe otherwise. And I want to see scans of it.

You weren't doing anything this afternoon, were you, Andy?

[Alas, Sandra, that last scenario appears to be correct – Andy Sawyer has repeatedly searched and he doesn't have The Book; if only Vince had left it lying around with all his other stuff we'd have it now, but it does indeed seem to have fallen at that last hurdle. What a shame!]

Dear Peter,

Reading Joe Patrizio's 'Bill Temple Diaries' jogs the memory; all those names and events, I can almost see those oak panels and smell the smoky atmosphere. Quoting extracts from diaries and letters is very appealing but where do you draw the line on what is of historical interest, relevant to SF or Fandom, and what is personal? I have many letters from fans, BNFs, and top authors before they were famous. Most of these letters are personal to me. For instance, poignant letters from Vinç Clarke telling me about the affair with Joy and Sandy, letters about arguments, feuds, who said what, and various versions of events. As I said before, some fans become real friends and so you get to know a lot about their personal lives. In the fifties letters were the main form of communication. No e-mails, no mobile phones, very few fans had a telephone. It took days for letters to arrive, even if answered straight away. Letters to America and elsewhere in the world took weeks. So "news" was never really up-to-date.

Here's an extract from a letter from Jim Cawthorn which I'm sure he wouldn't mind me relating. It's relevant to a recent topic anyway; “While waiting at Kings Cross Station for a train home, bumped into Harrison Marks and Pamela Green and a bloke who turned out to be Alan Dodd. I did not recognise him, never saw him before, but he recognised me from my pic in *Satellite*.”

[Good point, Don, and one which Joe had to tackle as the custodian of Bill Temple's journals; what to make public and what to keep private. But I think the insights we have gained into the mind of this complex man and his times have been tremendously worthwhile – and may not be finished yet.]

Dear Peter,

It was great to see that you managed to get Sam Youd to write something for *Relapse* #17. What with this, John Burke's piece, your appreciation of Ted Tubb, and the extracts from Bill's journals, we're getting a real insight into the 40s & 50s SF world. Sam certainly has got it right about Bill when he says he “resented the drudgery of writing”. It didn't take a lot to get him away from the typewriter; in the time that I'm reading about at the moment Bill accuses himself of Oblomovitis, but couldn't seem to do anything about it. Anne remembers Joy Gresham visiting Elm Road a number of times, but doesn't recall much other than that she liked Joy. On 19 Sept 1957, Bill writes in the journals: “re-read a letter I had from Joy Gresham (now Lewis) this morning from her sickbed in Headington Quarry, she said: ‘I'd infinitely rather have this illness (cancer) than the emotional & financial problems I've left behind me’”. When she died, C. S. Lewis wrote a letter to the Temple family, which we still have somewhere.

The Melting Pot is as good as always; I've got lots of crosses against things I wanted to comment on, but can't remember what half of them mean. Mike Ashley wouldn't have seen Bill's journals [*when he was researching Bill Temple for Foundation*], they were personal and private. In fact, Joan asked me to destroy them; I didn't say I would, I just told her not to worry about it. I really hope that there's not an afterlife, as I can barely imagine what it would be like with her going on at me about it for eternity. I should say here how much Joan looked forward to, and appreciated Mike's visits after Bill died – I hope he knows this.

And finally to D. West's comment on the back page. I really appreciate (as I suspect Jim & Pat do) his explaining to me why I was wrong in my opinion of Ken Potter. Now, I admit that having met Ken (unlike D. West) my opinion of him is necessarily clouded by things like the way he conducted himself and the things that he said, whilst D. West can retain a sense of superiority at not having his views affected by such reality. Callow youth that I was, I didn't realise at the time that I was being entertained simply by “the gadfly mind and the wild talk” (at times, of Dostoevsky, Camus etc as well as The Enchanted Duplicator). I'm afraid that I can only go with my own experience of Ken, and if he became the person written about in previous issues of *Relapse*, I find it very, very sad. However, if D. West wants to form his opinions on hearsay, then Mal Ashworth is that man as far as Ken Potter is concerned. As far as I know, Mal knew Ken better than anybody at that time.

A bit of a rant there, but I'm glad to get it out. *[There's now a 4-month gap between letters]*



**Bill Temple
in Rome,
1946. Photo
from Bill's
album.**

I particularly enjoyed your editorial in #18, although to call it an editorial undersells it, and I was surprised at how close are our views on Ballard. In your reply to Charles Platt you say there's not much to understand in Ballard's writing, and I agree entirely. His descriptions of place are truly evocative and he can make you *be* there – but nothing ever happens, there's not one character I can remember, and he never planted an idea in my head that made me think (but, of course, that could be a real failing in me). It's not that I haven't tried; some years ago my son, Andrew, bought me 'J.G. Ballard – The Complete Short Stories' – 1186 pages, and I read every one. Too many of them were not completed stories at all, but just jottings, waiting to be incorporated into a larger work when/if he ever got round to doing it. Big book, but totally lacking in substance. Anyway, very much enjoyed the exchange between you and Platt.

And a nice piece by Charles on Ted. I expect that you'll get hundreds of stories about Ted Tubb, from your readers – mine is how I upset him. I had a Ted Forsyth quote in *Binary*, which was that Ted wanted to be fandom's Brendan Behan, and he took umbrage at this. I genuinely thought it a compliment, but not TT; I really don't know why, but it might have been something to do with politics.

Well, that's about it (yes, I know, a pitiful response for such a wonderful issue – but aren't they all!) but there is one other thing. I recently came across another 31 pocket diaries of Bill's. What particularly interested me was that they covered 1944 and 1945, detailing his experiences in Italy, although I'm really frustrated at not being able to find one for 1943 which would deal with the Anzio landings, I expect. I've transcribed these up until the end of the war for our children. It's a funny mix of getting drunk, seeing films, trips round Florence and Rome, and being bombed and shelled and seeing friends killed. There's even some bits about '4-Sided Triangle' (we now know when he lost the original version) and 'The Three Pylons', but there's a lot of repetition. At times it reads like a holiday diary, but I'd say that the fun bits didn't make up for the rest of it, quite a lot of which I've left in because I think you will find it interesting (I certainly do). In a way it surprises me that Bill never talked about it to me, and we had a few heart-to-hearts. And the physicality of it is most un-Bill like.

[I've already said to Joe that I'm not quite sure whether or not Bill's wartime experiences might be 'an episode too far'; is this outside the remit of our 'fan history' mission? And next is something which I've hung onto for too long, having asked the original question way back in #15, Autumn 2009. Keith commented some little time after that, and this is probably almost the first LoC he's ever written!]

Keith Walker
[FanzineFanatique
@aol.com](http://FanzineFanatique@aol.com)

Dear Peter,

In your editorial you pose the impossible question of 'why publish a fanzine?' Well I wish I could attempt to answer it. I've been pubbing my ish almost as long as you. I believe we both took time out along the way but that's within the rules, as I understand it. But now many years later we're still at it. We must be mad!

OK, *Speculation* will probably be remembered as one of the all time great sercon-zines, and you have made such a splash with *Pro/Relapse* that it will surely be recalled as a great fannish fanzine. It's already collecting awards, for what they're worth. Me? I'll be happy if the odd person recalls me as the McGonagall of fanzine publishing. Publish and be damned, I say. While Ted White did manage to find a few kind words for the late Don Franson's little reviewzine, he's always hated *Fanzine Fanatique*. No sweat, I can live with that, indeed I take it as a kind of a compliment.

If I'd bothered to listen to criticism I would have given up long ago. Instead I can pore over the several thousand fanzines I've received in trade over the past thirty five years (I never throw any away) and modestly count that as some kind of success. Fanzine publishing for me is some kind of therapy. It's got me over some bad times, and given me quite a few good times. I still remember my first con in Chester when American fanzine fans greeted me like old friends. I really felt accepted as a member of a sort of fanzine fraternity. Well that doesn't happen very often now, but then I get to very few cons, they're too expensive.



**Keith at
Tynecon, 1974.
Photo by Mike
Meara**

That piece on Alan Dodd reminded me of our trip to the Greek island of Spetses a few years back. After hanging around in Athens for ages in the shivering early morning cold, we eventually got on to the ferry. Greek ferryboats are purely functional and whilst my wife, Rosemary tucked herself up in a corner trying to catch up on lost sleep and to keep warm, I wandered around the decks taking photographs of the various islands at which we docked on our journey south. I'd just bought my first real SLR camera and was keen to try it out, and committed the sacrilege of trying to wipe the lens with my handkerchief. A guy offered me a lens tissue, and we got talking. He was one of a group of photographers also going to Spetses on some kind of organised trip. He didn't seem very forthcoming as to exact nature of the excursion and I didn't press him. Indeed, it wasn't until a few days into our holiday that the mystery was solved. I found this same group of photographers snapping away at some totally naked French bird. I reckon she was probably quite attractive in her younger days, now she looked like a plucked chicken. But they seemed to be enjoying themselves and having a little harmless fun. I doubted if they'd be sharing these particular holiday snaps back home. How did I know she was French? Well, usually it's the photographer who does all the talking, posing the model, etc; but here the model was giving the orders, suggesting angles and such, and the French accent was quite unmistakable.

Tom Shippey's mention of C. S. Lewis reminds me of the time when I unwittingly acquired a fractured half-dozen of his books. My wife had rather been taken by a young American evangelist who had been preaching on Morecambe front and who was recruiting members for the local chapter of his church. When he discovered that I possessed some of the works of the devil (actually a few books on witchcraft, including a couple by Anton Lavey) he politely asked to borrow them; in exchange, he came

up with some brand new copies of Lewis's SF novels. That presumably eased his conscience, for I never saw the witchcraft books again. Indeed, it took me a little while to replace some of them.

John Brunner,
at Eurocon



Your mention of a bad deal from James Blish recalled to me a brief but equally unpleasant put-down I received from him. I'd bought a handful of his novels at auction at a *Fantasycon* (I think) and bumping into him, politely asked him to sign them. "Go away, and come back to me after you've read them!" was his brusque response. They remain unread on one of library shelves. It put me off.

Don Malcolm's article on Bob Shaw reminded me of similar treatment I received from Bob. I was taking an early morning stroll along the prom (at Blackpool in 1992, I believe) when I ran into Bob doing the same. I could hardly walk past him without saying good morning. "Leave me alone. I'm not in the mood for talking to anyone!" was the sharp response. Perhaps he'd had a hard night, but it seemed rather unkind. Of course, it's unfair to expect writers to be freely available 24 hours a day. However, John Brunner always appeared to have time to talk to his fans. I remember chatting to him at one of the Lancaster Literary Festivals. He also ran a writing workshop here with Barrington Bailey and offered to look over any work sent to him by workshop participants. Unlike most workshop writers, he made no attempt to flog his books, or advertise some expensive writing course he was running.

[Good old John! I think he was fundamentally such a very insecure person that he craved attention and flattery rather more than the other writers you mention!]

Hi Peter,

Ted Forsyth
[forsythted@
aol.com](mailto:forsythted@aol.com)



Ted in 1960.
Photo by Bruce
Burn.

Here is a little story which might interest George Locke. Twelve years after taking early retirement I had a phone call from the university to say that one of my ex-colleagues was retiring and they were having a "bit of a do" for him. I had not visited London in all that time so I thought it might be worth finding out how many of my ex-colleagues were still alive (!). Once at the university I had the problem of getting past the security barriers and, having managed that, then found that my old engineering department was occupied by a totally different discipline and all the engineering staff had been moved to another building – and several departments had combined.

I eventually met some of my ex-colleagues and one in particular had a story to tell. When he retired he became absorbed in his hobby of book collecting and developed an interest in book-binding. After attending classes on book-binding he would occasionally pick up an old book on his travels around the bookshops and attempt to restore it. On one occasion he found an old book with the title page missing and picked it up for £1. When he got home and investigated it properly he discovered that it was a copy of the first book by P.G. Wodehouse of which there were only fifteen known copies. He showed it to several of his friends and the news got around the community. Some time later he received a phone call from a barrister who said he collected Wodehouse books and would be interested to see the volume. "Could it be brought round to my chambers?"

When the book was in his hands he examined it and said, "How much do you want for it?" "Make me an offer," was the reply. "How would £1500 do?" The deal was done on the spot but the story did not end there. When my friend was on a trip to USA he took the opportunity to search for old books and came across a facsimile copy of the same book. He bought it (though I am not sure how much it cost), and sent it to the barrister saying, "Here's your title page!" He made a friend for life!

Dear Peter,

John Purcell
[j_purcell54@
yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)



John in 2008.
His photo.

Because I am an American fan, and one whose fannish career began in the mid-1970s, so much of what you publish in your zine is new historical information to me. It is all quite fascinating, and certainly fills in loads of gaps in my knowledge base of British fan history. This particular issue's theme (the story of the 'White Horse' years) was wonderfully fun to read. My fan base was Minneapolis, so we didn't have pub meetings like you British chaps did. Minn-stf has club meetings that are essentially excuses to hold a party. Again, my experience comes from the mid-70s, so the comparison is moot and irrelevant. Still, it's interesting, and the photos you publish are a perfect complement to the text. I certainly wish my Composition and Rhetoric students wrote research papers as well produced and documented as the fan history pieces published in *Relapse*. They certainly could learn a lesson from seeing How It's Done in something like, say, Phil Harbottle's "Fandom and the Post-War Boom." A very well done piece, that.

That spot illustration (the cover scan) of *One Hundred Years Hence*, the catalog produced to coincide with the opening of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Exhibit at Cushing Library on the Texas A&M University campus here in town. Hal Hall, the curator of the SF & Fanzines collection and special collections in general, is retiring very soon, possibly this summer, and he will be missed. But the collection is splendid, with over 46,000 items housed therein, and the exhibit is merely the topper-most tip of that iceberg. In the 19th issue of my fanzine *Askance* (March 2010) I wrote a short review of the exhibit. Wonderful items are on display; I could never get tired of browsing through those stacks; by the way, the entire second floor of Cushing Library is the SF Exhibit.

On a final note about the exhibit's opening, Michael Moorcock was in attendance, along with James Gunn and Elizabeth Moon. It was very good to see Michael again - the last time I had the chance to talk with him was at Austin's Corflu in 2007 - and it took him a bit to remember who I was (cheeky American fanzine fan that I am). He was looking well and had lost some weight, but I knew that he hadn't been doing well, so the good news was that he was out and about with his wife, and in fine spirits. It was a wonderful surprise. After Hal introduced Moorcock and Moon, James Gunn gave a wonderful speech to open the SF Exhibit, too; in fact, the introduction to *One Hundred Years Hence* is his speech. He ad-libbed a bit here and there, but if you read the catalog's intro, you are not missing much of what he actually said.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:-

Greg Benford: “Much enjoyed Charles Platt on his gradual evolution away from the New Wave. I learned a lot from the New Wavers, mostly that style and modernist methods could illuminate SF ideas. The battles in finz like *Habakkuk* and *Speculation* on this were the most intelligent conversations between fans and pros. That's fandom's most important function -- carrying the genre's conversation down through decades. For unlike other genres, SF needs that exchange. Mystery, romance, westerns, suspense, etc, don't, really – and thus they don't have large fandoms.” **Harry Bell** wrote “Your mention of *Rocket* set me off again. I've looked for references on the Internet umpteen times, but to no avail. It seems incredible that there are no mentions, no images, and you'd be doing me a favour if you could use your time-binding powers to dredge up memories and (even better) images.” [*See David Redd's letter, Harry*]. **Bronwen Burke** enthused “*Relapse* was a great pleasure to read. Thank you so much for keeping all these old science fiction boys (all boys, of course) in touch with each other. It clearly gives them enormous pleasure, too, to write about themselves and each other. Reading certainly brought back memories (and un-memories) for me: I recalled many London pub evenings with Pa and Dave McIlwain but had never known that Dave too was from Liverpool. Talking to Pa after I had read the articles has given him the opportunity to put me right and to reminisce some more.” [*Get him to write it down for me, Bronwen!*]

Bruce Burn recalled; “Never got to know Frank Arnold, although he was always there at Hatton Garden. Years later, I used to watch ‘Last of the Summer Wine’ and thought the actor playing the bloke who always wore a plastic raincoat bore a likeness to Frank, had the same quiet manner too.” [*That would have been Cleggy, played by Peter Sallis.*] **John Clute** joined in: “Phil Harbottle clearly understands right down to the core the need to examine dust-jackets in order to determine, in some cases, whether particular titles belong to an SF series or not. This is a task made more necessary, of course, because of the century and a half of vandalism at our beloved British Library, which has been stripping dust-jackets since djs took over from dust-wrappers, round about 1835 or so (as recent research seems to confirm). Thousands of works of art, huge amounts of information, markers of publishers' intentions, all of this pure gold for any researcher in reader response studies: all gone at the hand of the vandals who charge us for their salaries.” While **Mike Deckinger** sang the praises of Murray Leinster: “Despite his vast output, he showed amazing versatility in incorporating contemporary story-telling innovations and creating a narrative that captured your attention. When he was active, I always looked forward to a new work from him, expecting a satisfying journey, and rarely was I disappointed. He was never an upper-echelon writer, never on the level of Heinlein or Bradbury, but his reliability made such comparisons unnecessary.”

MJE writes: “Yes, I went to the SF Luncheon Club many times – unfailingly, I think, while I was working at Gollancz so could claim it as a business expense. It was run by the extremely pompous Gerald Pollinger, and Tom Boardman also played a key role (it was where I got to know Tom in the 1970s). The SF Supper Club (which you may have attended) was Chris Priest's and my response to what we saw as the deficiencies of the Lunch Club.” [*Not me, MJE, never invited!*] **Bryn Fortey** comments: “The Rob Hansen mugshot [*in R-15*] which makes him look like someone about to start a fifteen-year stretch for armed robbery is hilarious when considered alongside the gentle nature of the real person, unless he has changed considerably since we last met. Either way I would still have recognised him; John Hall though – Gosh Wow!” **Tony Glynn** remembers: “I have a distinct memory of being in the crowded bar of the Mount Royal at the 1965 worldcon where an irate gent was raising noisy hell with the barman because there was no Guinness. The barman had an excuse about the temperature of the place not being conducive to the keeping of Guinness or something. As to the irate gent someone said: ‘That's Peter Phillips, the pro writer.’ That glimpse was my only contact with him but I've never forgotten the incident.” While **Ron Hall** recalls: “To find myself wedged between John Burke and Sam Youd as I was so often at the Globe bar brought back a rush of memories.” [*Write, Ron, write!*] And **Rob Hansen** notes: “Nice to see Charles Platt's appreciation of Ted Tubb. I represented the SF/fan community at his funeral (though several others told me they'd have attended if they'd known about it) and it was sad to think of all the people who'd have been there if he hadn't outlived them.”

Dave Hardy complains; “That cover on page 26 is *not* ‘clearly influenced by *Destination Moon*’ to which it bears little resemblance, but *is* clearly influenced by the Bonestell/Ley CONQUEST OF SPACE (1949/50 in UK).” [*Well, let's say it's at least arguable, Dave!*] **Susie Haynes** writes; “Sorting out some of Ken's ‘rubbitch’ to take to *Novacon*, I found a 1947 December *Operation Fantast* with an article in which he mentions a trip to London where he visited the White Horse. Frustratingly for me, he says one of the reasons for going to London was for two female friends to go clothes shopping, but typically (as a man!) he doesn't mention who they were and if the trip was successful!! As it was the year before he married Mum I am guessing it was Joyce and perhaps one of her sisters who accompanied him....” **Ian Millsted** advises: “I don't know exactly what technology the BBC had for recording in 1953 but that was the year that the first *Quatermass* serial went out and the first two episodes, broadcast live, were recorded for posterity by filming the transmission. They never bothered recording the last four episodes. The Clarke programme on Coronation day may have been filmed ahead of time or there may have been early videotape.” And **Mike Meara** explains: “I find it difficult to relate to people I never knew, and who were quite a different kind of fan from the ones I knew in the 1970s and 1980s.”

Charles Platt; “I hope in the next issue we may see more memories of Ted Tubb. I felt quite a pang when I saw the photo of him that you included. A unique and wonderful man.” Similar sentiments from **Roger Robinson:** “The pic on p36 is very poignant – Bounds, Syd Birchby & Tubb all now sadly departed, and now his brother John. He was a gentle man and a good friend; this Loc is written on 10th October, which would have been his 80th birthday.” **Ina Shorrocks** remembers “A young student came to our house in Arnot Way with the Cheltenham group. He wore jodhpurs and riding boots which people were falling over as he had taken them off and left them at the bottom of the stairs. I put them out with the milk bottles. It was Bob Parkinson!” **Keith Walker** asks: “I'm sure some of my librarian friends would slaughter me for saying so, but to me nothing is dafter than the ‘destroy after ten years’ rule. I can understand it in relation to textbooks, where the facts will be out of date, sometimes well before that time, but why fiction?” And **Sean Wallace** writes: “I'm researching Bryan Berry, something I've been working on for some time. His supposed suicide in 1955 may have been false, as a death certificate has been issued for the mid 1960s. I've requested it from an online source, so we may well have a clue as to his true disappearance.” [*Let's hear more on that one, Sean.*] **Response** was also received from Robert Conquest, Ian Peters, David Redd, Greg Pickersgill, Lloyd Penney, Howard Rosenblum & Philip Turner. Thanks, all!

All together now: ‘*Relapse* is nothing without your *Response*’, so please do write to me with your memories, anecdotes and insights about British SF fandom (and old photos, please) and I'll gladly send the printed version if you want – well, to UK readers, anyway. Otherwise, I'll be happy to put you on the list for the pdf, e-mailed to you on publication. This issue went to the printer on 29/3/2011, was mailed a week later, and will be archived on the *eFanzines* site after a further four weeks.