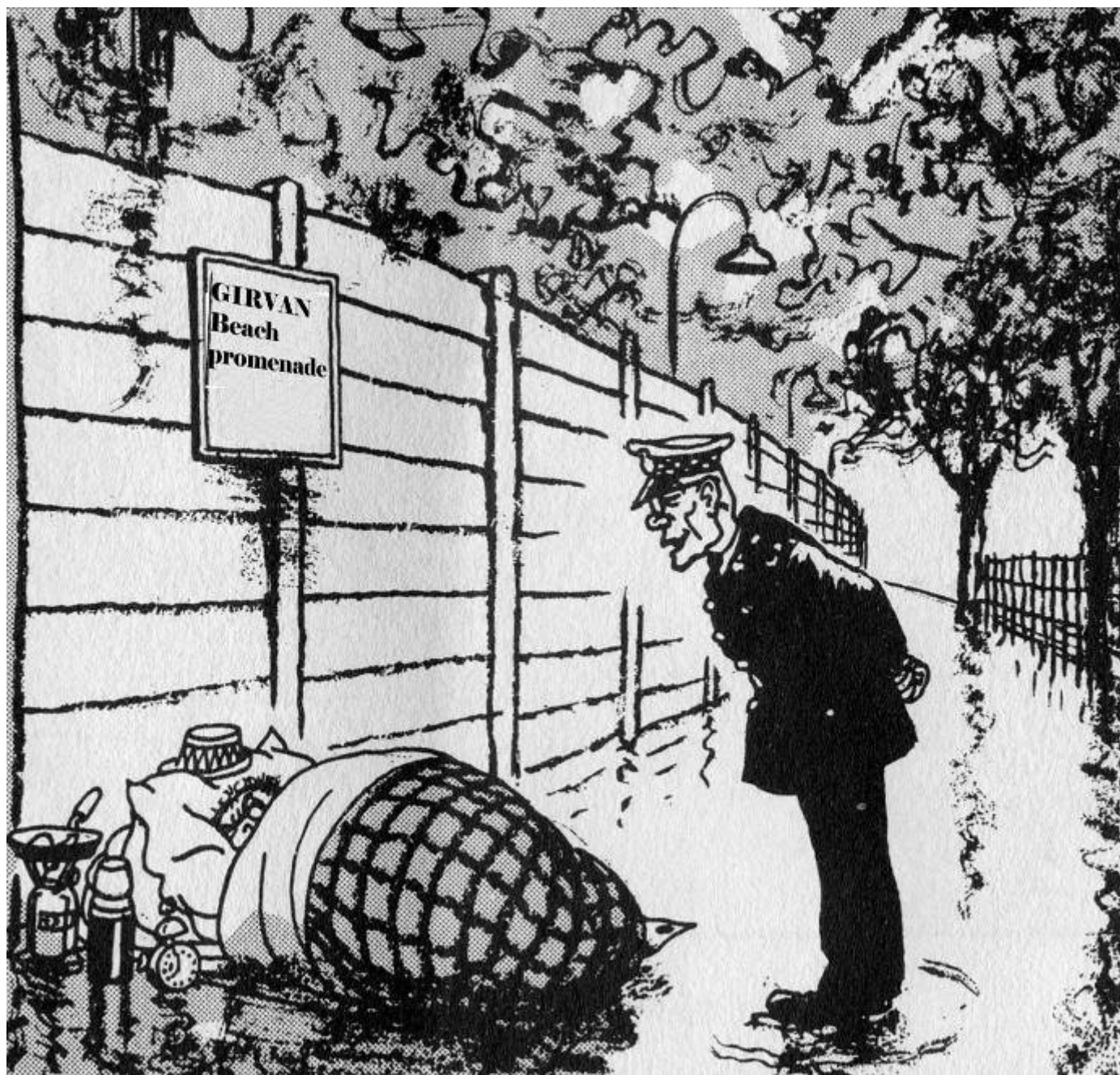


More journeys into the history of science fiction fandom in Britain.

# RELAPSE

Number 21:  
Spring 2013

“In the pages of *Relapse* I am like unto a visitor in your British Museum: old artefacts from before my time. I look at the objects, I read the labels, I am entertained and informed.” – Murray Moore, e-mail comment.



“Wakey, wakey sir, the Strathclyde Police Pipe Band will be coming along here in the next ten minutes”

The perils of camping – see Bruce Burn’s adventures. *With the usual apologies to Giles*

**INSIDE:** ‘The Rise & Fall of Leeds fandom’ by Rob Hansen; ‘The Wandering Ghu’ by Bruce Burn; ‘The Great Convention Double-Act’ by Peter Weston; ‘Out of this World – the Exhibition’ by Andy Sawyer; AND MORE.



# RELAPSE

That's better! It's just over three months since the last one and with Christmas between! It means I'm back on the hunt for stories about the places & people who have shaped British science fiction and its associated fandom. So please do keep those tales coming to me, Peter Weston, at 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS; or by e-mail to [pr.weston@btinternet.com](mailto:pr.weston@btinternet.com). This is the exclusive printed edition for the favoured few who contribute, express interest or can't switch on a computer, but I'll gladly send the pdf on request and it will go onto the *eFanzines* website a month after publication.

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"I've been reading the new issue with the usual delight, even though it's full of anecdotes about old friends who are no longer among the living. That is, I guess, the dark side of being a survivor, and I suppose I prefer it to the alternative." – Bob Silverberg, e-mail message

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Not that I wanted to labour the point last time, but an awful lot of people passed on between issues 19 (Spring 2011) and 20 (November 2012). I'm talking about rather special old fans, many of whom were contributors – 'relapsers', let's call them – those I've met or have corresponded with since this fanzine first appeared in 2006. Some of them we mentioned; Harry Harrison, Peter Phillips, Sam Youd, John Burke, and John Berry, but also in there were Terry Jeeves and Alan Hunter, both of whom I visited only a couple of years ago. And spare a thought for Dick Ellingsworth, Ted Tubb, Eric Williams, Jim Cawthorn, Ken Slater, Barry Bayley, Derek Pickles, and all those others who were here so recently and who have now gone.

Several things come to mind. First, I wish I'd started *Relapse* five years before I did. Second, doesn't it demonstrate the importance of preserving our collective memories of British fandom, now, while we still can?

Fortunately these gloomy thoughts were dispelled by a marvellous letter from Charles Platt, in which he takes note of the same remorseless progression of aging but presents it with dramatic comic effect, writing, "[it's as if]...people have contracted some terrible disease and are somehow not aware of what has happened to them. I imagine them all sitting around a big table, eating bad British food of the type we knew in the 1960s, drinking beer—and someone slips off his chair, and collapses onto the floor. His head breaks free from his body and rolls away across the floor. But no one even notices! They all continue chatting and eating and drinking!" Great stuff, and the full letter is in the Melting Pot this time.

Charles' imagery was so vivid that I thought it might make the cover, but surprisingly I couldn't find a suitable Giles cartoon to adapt in any of my 50+ annuals. Perhaps that's just as well – it might not have been in the best possible taste!

## Maybe that's what upset the Gillings brothers?

I've been beating myself up over the way I made contact with Ron Gillings, elder son of the venerable Walter (who died in 1979). You'll remember I described how we had an affable chat on the phone, after which I sent him *R-19* with its two articles about his dad. I expected him to comment – but he didn't, and all my subsequent attempts to get in touch failed miserably (they must leave that telephone answering machine permanently on). More recently I tried a flanking movement to approach Tony, the younger brother, but that didn't work either.

Somehow, I must have done something to upset them, and I'd just about come to the conclusion that the cover on issue #19 was to blame. You might want to take another look... (Ha! can't find it, can you!). I'd adapted a Giles cartoon to show two 1930 housewives gossiping over the fence, with one saying, "I hear you and that nice Mr Gillings made history last night!" It was intended to poke mild fun at the way we regard the meeting of a few young lads as the founding moment of British fandom – but I can see in retrospect that someone a bit lacking in the humour department might not have been amused. (In mitigation, I'll also add that I put the cover together months before I'd even thought of trying to contact Wally Gillings' family). But notwithstanding all my excuses, it looked as if I'd blown it.

Until I heard from George.

George Hills, that is. He contacted me via Rob Hansen, writing, "By a long and slightly sad chain of events, I find myself in possession of Walter Gillings' handwritten diary for the year 1970. It's quite a lot of dense (but comprehensible) hand-written text – not just a list of appointments. If you put your face against a page and breathe deeply you can just about still smell tobacco. I think it was part of his book collection, which wasn't broken up and sold until relatively recently. It's possible that his family would like it, or it should probably go to someone more interested in science fiction history than me."

I wrote back to say I would love to see it, that I would make sure it went to the Science Fiction Foundation, and I asked George to explain that 'sad chain of events'.

He replied, "I was good friends with a science fiction book dealer called Graeme Roberts, who sadly passed away last summer. He lived up here in Todmorden, near Rochdale for the last few years of his life. I think Graeme might have known Walter – but am unsure.

"I used to drive to London every month. In November 2007 I collected a good vanload of Walter Gillings' books (in bin liners!) for Graeme, from a chap called Andrew Coram. I don't know very much about that transaction – I just carried the stuff for Graeme – but the filled bags covered the floor of a standard size Transit van. I remember Graeme saying he thought the collection had been picked-through already as there wasn't much of great commercial value in it, and that it had laid, untouched, in Walter's empty house for quite a few years before the family had got around to doing anything about it.

"Graeme was a real character. Sometimes objects (books especially) would speak to him – I think in the antiques world it's called being a 'divvy'?. He was a good friend and there may well have been some purpose in him passing this on to me, but I'm afraid if so it eludes me. Anyway he passed me the diary and a couple of other books as a 'thank you' for carting them up the M1. I never felt very attached to it – it's hard to read, and I'm not an enthusiastic enough science fiction fan to want to read it. I also have a toddler, and limited house space..."

Aha! This was the missing piece in the puzzle. The story we told last issue about Gillings material being rescued from a skip sounds as if it was a bit of an exaggeration; instead, 'Andrew Coram' (the house-clearance character mentioned by John Egging) probably received it in the normal course of his business. And there must have been quite a lot of it – presumably all the stuff the brothers didn't want, books plus the letters, autographs, manuscripts, galleys, and so on, which Phil Harbottle has previously described as 'absolutely fabulous – truly breathtaking'. As John commented:

"Yes, Graeme died a few months ago; he didn't turn up for an event and when a friend went round next morning he was found collapsed on the floor, and died soon after. Whatever stock he had remaining would have gone to his relatives who live down south, but I doubt that would have amounted to much.

"From what you say in *Relapse* about Wally's sons and their 'hot and cold' approach to you I would surmise that they dumped all of Wally's correspondence thinking it was worthless, and kept only the books. They were quite happy to chat with you initially but when they realised what they had done they didn't want to admit it and have clammed-up. This is something Judith and I frequently come across when we view a collection; before calling in a dealer the seller will often clear out all the 'rubbish' – which often turns out to have been the most valuable items!"

I'm happier with this explanation – the Gillings brothers realised we'd caught them out and didn't want to admit it! But how foolish they were, because as Phil Harbottle went on to say, "the archive was worth scores of thousands of pounds". Still, since they'd allowed an expensive house to stand derelict for years, perhaps they didn't need the money.

### **JB, the final revelations....**

Someone who most definitely *did* need money was John Brunner, and the mystery, to me, has always been why he appeared never to have received any help from his family, who had at one time been very wealthy. The answer to this and other mysteries came quite unexpectedly via a new critical volume from Jad Smith, professor of English at Eastern Illinois University. There's a review further on, and I'm afraid I've been a little unkind – not to the book, I hope, which is interesting and well-written, but to his central premise that JB was a 'Modern Master of Science Fiction'. However, in the references I noticed something titled 'A Short Autobiography', and asked Jad for more details. He replied:

"It appeared in Centipede's deluxe edition of THE SHEEP LOOK UP (ed. Kim Stanley Robinson, printings in July 2009 and May 2010, 300 copies total). The essay is copyright 1989, but there's no indication that it appeared previously. I certainly have not come across it elsewhere. If you have trouble finding that edition I could perhaps scan the essay."

Needless to say I said "yes please", and the result was fascinating, and surprisingly personal. For starters, JB wrote that his father, Anthony Brunner, had been 'immensely rich', but that he had lost his fortune in the Wall Street crash. 'He used to grouse endlessly about not being able to give his children the 'advantages' he had enjoyed. But I stopped worrying about that when I heard him and his sister arguing about whether they had 25 or 29 servants.' However, they couldn't have been entirely down on their uppers because his father decided to run a farm as his contribution to the war effort. The one he bought was near Droitwich, 'a half-timbered Elizabethan manor with Jacobean additions'.

There's a fair bit about John Brunner's early, troubled childhood – he caught mumps at age thirteen – and he explains another mystery; why he didn't go to university: 'While at recruit camp [in the RAF] I received a letter from my father's younger brother. I had a state scholarship and a place at Oxford awaiting me, and the letter stated that ICI would pay for me to go through university providing I read the subjects they chose. I considered the idea for at least a minute.'

So the old ICI-Mond family connections were still working! He said he never regretted that decision, but I wonder... Later, he explains how he met Marjorie; 'towards the end of 1956 I inserted an advertisement in the *London Weekly Advertiser*', and things went on from there. They married in July 1958, 'much to the annoyance of my parents'. And there's a very personal story about having treatment in 1960 for mumps-induced impotence.

Naturally I forwarded the autobiography on to our resident researcher Ian Millsted, who has done so much previous investigation into John Brunner's life. As it happens, Ian had himself been busy. He replied:

"Regarding the money, Brunner's mother [Felicity] did not die until 1994 and she may well have inherited everything from Brunner's father. From what I've read she was fairly conservative and did not entirely approve of everything JKHB did (including his choice of wife) so Brunner may not have inherited anything until a year before his own death. In any case his parents had been living off the money all their lives and probably ate into the capital rather than just living off the interest and dividends, so there may not have been much of it. If there was, then presumably LiYi had what remained but as Ian Watson's recent piece for *Relapse* suggests she has had to downsize in Somerset that may reflect not much is left. Given that the only work of Brunner's that is in print now is STAND ON ZANZIBAR in the 'SF Masterpieces' series, and his contribution to DANGEROUS VISIONS, I doubt if she receives much in royalties these days.

"I noticed that JB was born in the same year as my father and started his national service in the same year, I asked Dad where he did his initial training. Turns out he also reported to Padgate in January 1953. He didn't remember the name, and as my father was not an officer they probably would not have come into contact with each other, nor even been there the same week, but this is an interesting near-coincidence to me at least. I suspect Dad and JKHB would not have been each other's types of people in any case save perhaps in their use of the station library, if there was one.

"I asked fellow Bristol SF fan Amanda Kear, who works for the BBC down here, if there was any way of getting hold of a copy of a programme about Brunner broadcast on the BBC West region in 1977. She managed to find out that it does still exist but may be tricky to get hold of, so that's possibly something to look forward to."

Well done Ian! Let's end this Relapsarian (© Mark Plummer) episode with a little story from Ian Watson, best delivered in a rich, fruity voice: "It was after John's exploratory visit to Bangkok (a wonderfully resonant name for the place) that I urged him to rescue his ruined finances by applying for a bail-out from the Royal Literary Fund administered by the Society of Authors. I'd already been bailed-out generously by the RLF, and so had Bob Shaw after I advised him to apply. But dear John began his letter of application by writing, "Lately I have had exceptional expenses. In my search for a new consort to replace my beloved deceased Marjorie, I was obliged to fly to Bangkok..." Or words very much to this effect. Result: application denied."

You couldn't make it up! And while I had lots more to say, that will have to be all for now, folks! PW, 5-3-2013

Rob Hansen is our Bede, or Roger Bacon, arriving in British fandom at a time of great darkness and almost single-handedly chronicling our origins. If Rob had not befriended Vince Clarke during his second incarnation and decanted his knowledge into THEN (his on-line fan-history) then we would be so much the poorer. Subsequently, many others have added to the record and *Relapse* has attempted to flesh-out some of the fine details, but Rob himself has been continuing his researches and now presents the definitive account of our first major fan-group. [pw]

## The Rise and Fall of Leeds Fandom

By Rob Hansen

Picture from George Airey, via Rob Hansen. See below



I'm currently (very) slowly updating THEN, my history of the first fifty years of UK fandom, in the light of material that has come to light since it was written more than twenty years ago. (Expanding not extending, you'll note; while I'd love to read a history of the subsequent thirty years, that's a story for someone else to tell). One of the things I always wanted to delve into more deeply was the feud that split Leeds fandom in two in the late 1930s.

Unlike say New York fandom, whose early history often seemed to consist entirely of feuds, these have actually been fairly rare in UK fandom, so I was fascinated to discover one had sundered what was then our largest fan group so early in our own history.

While the cause of the initial fault-line in the group had been clear back in 1988 when Vince Clarke and I were initially doing research for THEN #1 – the first of the four paper fanzines that were the form in which THEN originally appeared – the event that triggered the final split was not. I now believe I have discovered what this was, and it was something that at first sight does not appear particularly momentous or malign. But before we get on to that let's return to the Leeds group's beginnings...

The UK's first fan group was the Ilford Science Literary Circle which was formed by Walter Gillings and Len Kippin in Ilford in 1930 (see my article in *Relapse* #19). The second was the Universal Science Circle formed in Liverpool by Les Johnson in 1931, and the third was the Hayes group, formed by Paul Enever in Hayes, Middlesex, in 1932. Despite some contact between their principals, these were all isolated groups that had no great impact nationally. The same would not be true of our next few groups, whose stories began on the other side of the Atlantic when, in May 1934, the Science Fiction League was started by Hugo Gernsback and Charles D. Hornig in the prozine *Wonder Stories*.

During 1934-35 so many letters from British fans were printed in *Wonder Stories* that in August 1935 'The Reader Speaks' department was dubbed a 'British Edition'. Of the thirty-seven chapters of the Science Fiction League that were granted charters up to the time that Startling Publications became its new sponsors, Mort Weisinger its new secretary and the magazine was re-named *Thrilling Wonder*, five were in the UK. The first of these – our fourth fan group – was in Leeds.

Douglas W. F. Mayer had written to *Wonder Stories* proclaiming himself to be secretary of 'a small English science society', the Institute of Scientific Research, which embraced 5 other organisations including the International Scientific Correspondence Club and two radio research societies. Nevertheless there was still room for the SFL, which duly appointed him Director of Chapter no.17, on 1st April 1935. This would eventually go on to become the country's most active fan group.

Mayer had called on his friends George Airey and Herbert Warnes to form the quorum necessary to apply to become an SFL chapter. When THEN #1 came out Mal Ashworth put me in touch with Airey and Warnes and I sent them copies, asking for clarification on certain matters, one of which was the Institute of Scientific Research. Bert Warnes wrote back:

**The photograph shows some members of the Leeds SFA, in November 1937, after the split in the club had taken place.**

**Back: P.W. Berry, F. W. F. Dobby, A. Miller, F. V. Gillard  
Front: George Airey, D. W. F. Mayer, Herbert Warnes.**

**Mayer looks confident and in command; he was the founder of the original Leeds club, then instrumental in the subsequent break-up, and became 'director' of the new Leeds Science Fiction Association.**

"The first of the Leeds SFL official meetings was held at Doug Mayer's house, which was also apparently the domicile of the Institute of Scientific Research (phooey!) We are convinced this super organisation was invented solely for the benefit of our American cousins – it has a 'ring' to it, hasn't it?"

"However, George and I had been there previously at Mayer's request, and this request was to make up the necessary quorum to join the American SFL. Which we were only too pleased to do. So we were definitely on the go prior to this."

The announcement of this chapter's formation in *Wonder Stories* attracted other local SF enthusiasts, of course, and in May 1935 it held its first official meeting. Naturally, this was reported in *Wonder Stories*:

"Our first foreign Chapter, in Leeds, England, held its first meeting on May 18th in the library of the Institute of Scientific Research of Leeds. All the members were present... and dues of four pence per month were decided upon to cover secretarial expenses and the purchasing of old science-fiction magazines. C. H. Maclin was elected treasurer and Albert Griffiths was made a new member of the Chapter."

The 'Institute of Scientific Research' and its 'library' was actually the house at 20 Hollin Park Road where the 16-year old Mayer lived with his parents. By the end of July membership had grown sufficiently – numbers having been swelled by newcomers such as R. W. Robson, W. G. Stone, F. W. F. (Fred) Dobby, and P. W. Berry – that the comings and goings had all gotten to be too much for Mayer's elderly parents. Thus, in August, Leeds SFL moved its meetings to the 5 Florist Street home of the newly-married Warnes, which was to be its home for the next year. Warnes has estimated that by the end of 1935 Leeds SFL had about twelve members, of whom about half were regulars. As to what the group did:

"Our activities closely followed those of other fan groups of the time with discussions and debates on all manner of subjects, largely stimulated by stories in the pulp mags. These often went on until the early hours of the morning and many a time Albert Griffiths stayed with us overnight as he lived outside the Leeds area."

Hot on the heels of Leeds SFL came a Belfast chapter, Chapter no.20, with Hugh C. Carswell as Director. Little is known of this group, and it would be another fifteen years or so before Belfast fans became a significant force in UK fandom. Of more immediate importance at this point was the next UK group to become a chapter of the SFL. This was Nuneaton fandom, whose birth would be written up in *Wonder Stories* the following year:

"On June 7th, 1935 the Nuneaton Chapter of the Science Fiction League was given charter by Headquarters, in future to be known as Chapter Twenty-Two, with Charter members Dennis A. Jacques, First-Class SFL No. 737, (Assistant Director), J. E. Barnes, SFL No.926, M. Crowley, SFL No. 927, P. W. Buckerfield, SFL No.928, and Maurice K. Hanson, First-Class SFL No. 738, (Director)."

There are interesting clusters of membership numbers there, with Hanson and Jacques one apart and the other three being consecutive. This suggests Hanson & Jacques applied to join the SFL together, as did the other three. The SFL charter required a minimum of three to form a chapter, so Hanson and Jacques would not have been able to do this until contact was made between them and the trio. Of course, the trio could have applied to form a chapter by themselves, but presumably they saw Hanson

and Jacques' names listed in *Wonder Stories* and decided to get in touch with them first. Early meetings were held at the 89 Long Shoot home of Dennis Jacques:

"The first official meeting was held on June 26th when hazy plans were clarified and made concrete. There were later Chapter meetings at intervals – these consisting largely of discussion and planning – followed by the foundation of the Chapter Library. The nucleus of this (consisting of odd magazines presented by members) gradually developed into today's product, (helped very much by the presentation of 3/4 dozen magazines dating back to 1930 by newcomer D. R. Smith, SFL No. 1199)."

Smith would go on to be a major fan and stay active in fandom for decades, but the Nuneaton group will be remembered for *Novae Terrae*, the first true British fanzine. (*Fantasia*, the internal newsletter of the Hayes group preceded it, but this was apparently not circulated outside the group and no copies still exist – given the small circulation it was almost certainly just carbon-copied.) *Novae Terrae* was published by Maurice K. Hanson and Dennis A. Jacques, the first issue appeared in March 1936. There were another twenty eight, the last in January 1939.



**Left: Snappy-dresser Dennis Jacques started well but disappeared from fandom soon after the Nuneaton group closed. Photo; Ted Carnell, about 1938**

**Right: Maurice Hanson in 1938, approx. He later went to London and moved into The Flat with Arthur C. Clarke & Bill Temple as described in '88 Grays Inn Road' (published by George Locke). Photo: Ted Carnell**



**Left: Always smartly turned-out, Michael Rosenblum made contact with the Leeds group in 1936 and went on to become one of the major players in the SFL/SFA dispute. This early picture is from his own archive, courtesy of Howard Rosenblum.**

At some point in 1936 one of the Leeds group's earliest members, W. A. Dyson of Huddersfield, was killed in an accident. So far as I can tell, this was the first death in British fandom. Here's Bert Warnes again from our correspondence, picking up the story of Leeds SFL:

"Sept 1936: About this time the SFL officially left Florist Street, primarily due to the fact that the whole district was shortly to be demolished (although, in fact, this did not take place until late '37). In a way this could not have happened at a better time as the SFL, as we were then, had outgrown its home and was ripe for expansion with an increasing membership."

It appears to be around this point that J. Michael Rosenblum contacted the group (his own belief was that he was among the first Leeds fans to contact Mayer but neither Airey or Warnes remember him being at Florist Street). I speculated that he and the other newcomers who joined the group with him actually responded to a further mention in *Wonder Stories*. Warnes agreed:

"It was about this time that Rosenblum came on the scene, and this would support your idea that he knew not of our Florist Street endeavours and genuinely believed he was first in the field when he got in touch with Doug Mayer at his home in Hollin Park. There was a brief period when for admin purposes only the HQ of the SFL was located at Doug's house although no meetings were held there.

"However, early in 1937 a clubroom was obtained at 9 Brunswick Terrace. The premises concerned were owned by Mike Rosenblum's father, [an estate agent] who let us have them rent-free or at a peppercorn rent – neither George or me were privy to the exact nature of this transaction – but the room allocated was immediately above a small printing business, otherwise the building was empty. George has produced for you a comprehensive plan, which I am sure you will appreciate.

"I would like to record at this point a tribute to George Airey as it was largely due to his efforts that the club developed as well as it did, and as quickly. George is a very quiet and modest individual not given to blowing his own trumpet, at I would like to emphasise that a great deal of credit should be his which I know he would not claim for, himself. I know of one occasion when he trundled a large armchair a considerable distance over cobbled streets on an old handcart! He provided most of our amenities and creature comforts, making bookcases etc., for our extensive library...."

On Sunday 3rd January 1937, Leeds SFL ran the world's first ever SF convention, which was held in the Theosophical Hall, at 14 Queen Square, an event which attracted several out-of-towners.

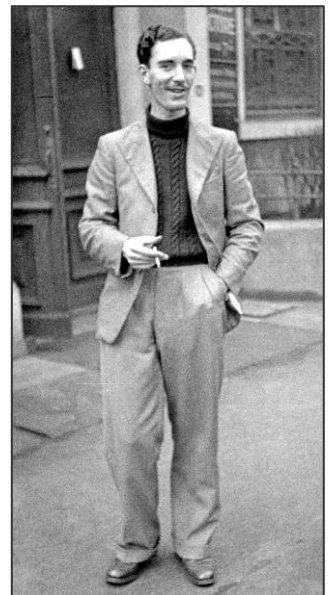
Ted Carnell, Walter Gillings and Arthur C. Clarke met up at St. Pancras Station late the previous night and caught the mail train to Leeds, with Maurice K. Hanson joining them at Leicester. The train arrived at Leeds station – which was apparently then still under construction – around 4.00 a.m. The quartet were met by Harold Gottliffe, who whisked them away to the clubroom, where they were given breakfast. I think this indicates Warnes has the date wrong above and that the clubroom was actually obtained in late-1936 because you can't get much earlier in 1937 than January 3rd, yet they were already in the clubroom by then, which Ted Carnell described thus:

"That Clubroom really had something. It was as comfortable as any large single room could be, which had been fitted out by the ingenuity of the members and we remember Michael Rosenblum giving us a conducted tour

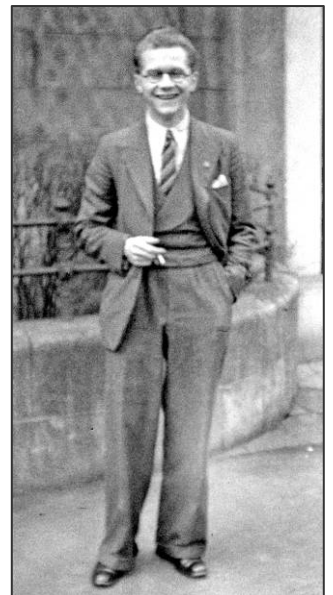


At the First Convention, Queen Square, Leeds 1937;

Left: Eric Frank Russell. Below: Ted Carnell



Above: Arthur C. Clarke Right; Walter Gillings



Left: Harold Gottliffe, the man behind the camera, who took the above pictures. Photo by Harry Turner



round the book-wracks – sorry – but they were an eye-opener to ordinary fan who hadn't had the yen to make a collection."

Around noon Eric Frank Russell and Les Johnson arrived from Liverpool, and after lunch the convention met to consider a proposal made by Leeds SFL for a non-commercial organisation to further the cause of science fiction in Britain. This was the Science Fiction Association and it was set up "...to encourage publishers to pay more attention to sciencefiction and to stimulate public interest in science".

The intention was to ask the British SFL chapters to become branches of the new organisation and to encourage the formation of other branches throughout the country. The visiting fans proposed that Leeds should be the headquarters for the SFA, and that *Novae Terrae* should become its official organ.

This was agreed and Mayer was appointed the SFA's first head. (It was proposed that H. G. Wells be asked to become its president, but this idea was soon abandoned.) Not everyone was happy about the SFA, as was soon to become clear.

On 24th January 1937, at the Leeds group's regular meeting, Mayer moved that the club formally secede from the SFL and thereafter be known as Leeds SFA, in accordance with the decisions taken at the convention. However, there were those in the group, led by J. Michael Rosenblum and Harold Gottliffe, who opposed Mayer's motion (which was passed) and decided to remain affiliated to the SFL rather than sever their ties with the US organisation. And so a rift developed, with the Leeds group having two separate factions.

(In THEN, I speculated that this may have been partly attributable to personal animosity between Mayer and Rosenblum, believing Rosenblum to be the leader of the SFL faction. Subsequent research inclines me to the view that the leader of that faction may actually have been Gottliffe).

Conflict between the two sides seemed inevitable until Harold Gottliffe announced that the SFL faction was nevertheless behind most of the principles of the SFA and would continue to solicit memberships for it. So conflict was for the moment, averted.

According to Rosenblum:

"When the SFA was formed the arrangement had been that the Leeds group should do the actual running of the society. But this idea turned out to have the seeds of discord hidden within and two schools of thought developed.

"One held that *only* the managing of the SFA mattered, and that members of the group should conform to the instructions of the SFA officials as nominated by the formation convention; even if such officials were out of conformity with the constitution of the group – as Mayer was by then: whilst the opposing viewpoint was that the Leeds group was an autonomous body, entitled to run itself as its members wished, and that if need be the official positions could be re-arranged within the Leeds group by free election."

By contrast with Leeds, Nuneaton SFL changed not only their organisational allegiance but their city of allegiance as well, becoming not Nuneaton SFA but Leicester SFA.. Maurice Hanson lived in Leicester rather than nearby Nuneaton anyway, and presumably a change in numbers with the weight of membership shifting in favour of Leicester provided an excuse for the change.

The February issue of *Novae Terrae*, though still identified on the cover as 'Produced by Chapter 22 of the Science Fiction League, NUNEATON, ENGLAND', announced the fanzine's change in status:

"With this issue *Novae Terrae* becomes the official organ of the Science Fiction Association. As you will read elsewhere in the issue the Association was a direct outcome of the Science Fiction Conference held at Leeds on January 3rd; it fulfils a need that has been increasingly felt since the dissolution of the B.S.F.A. – a primarily British science fiction organisation with headquarters in this country."

(That 'BSFA' was not the current organisation, by the way, but another incarnation of the Hayes group. However, it was the earliest use of the name).

The issue carried the first of what was to be a monthly report on the SFA, opening with a list of its 'Aims and Objects'. This confirmed that 9 Brunswick Terrace was to be the national headquarters of the Association and with Doug Mayer as Secretary, George Airey as Treasurer, and Bert Warnes the Assistant Treasurer. It also stated:

"At the time of writing although the 'membership drive' has not commenced, we have fourteen members, and one branch has been formed."

That branch was Leeds SFA, of course. Also included was a report on their progress. This listed Bert Warnes as Chairman, Harold Gottliffe as Treasurer, and George Airey as Librarian. It also stated the Leeds branch currently had eleven members, so only three of those recruited nationally by that point were not members of the Leeds group.

February 1937 also saw the publication of the first issue of *The Science Fiction Gazette*, published for the SFA by the Leeds group, with the second issue appearing in April and the third in May. In the spring Doug Mayer put out the first issue of *Tomorrow*, the quarterly journal of the SFA and the respectable 'front' it intended presenting to outsiders.

The April 1937 *Novae Terrae* was the first to list Hanson as sole editor, with Denny Jacques now an 'Associate' along with Maurice T. Cowley. The SFA report this issue was titled 'Notes & Jottings' and credited to 'the Secretaries', presumably Mayer and Warnes. It gives some interesting data on the Association's finances:

"It is with regret that we announce that we shall not be able to issue our first quarterly in printed form. The cost of printing would be between £2-10s and £3. We have at the time of writing forty-five members, each paying 1/6 per quarter (5/- per year is merely 1/3 per quarter). Of this, sixpence per member goes to pay for the three copies of *Novae Terrae* that he receives.

"This leaves a total of only forty-five shillings to pay for secretarial expenses, circulars, etc., and the quarterly. It is thus quite obviously a financial impossibility to have the quarterly printed at present. There remain three alternatives for the future: (a) the subscription should be increased, (b) the membership should be increased, (c) the quarterly should be duplicated. It is hoped that (b) will be the one ultimately followed, but meanwhile, we are acting on (c), and the quarterly in a special duplicated form (probably with a printed cover) will appear about April 26th."

Just how busy the Leeds group were can be seen in this bit from the report on the activities of that branch:

"The regular monthly meeting was held on Sunday, April 4th. It was decided to hold meetings to discuss scientific topics on Tuesday evenings, and to have meetings of the practical science section on Thursday evenings, besides the regular weekend functions."

Among those listed as having joined the SFA in the past month were P. W. Berry and B. H. Cohen of the Leeds group, and L. Flood of South Hackney, London – presumably this was Les Flood.

But by the end of June 1937 open warfare had broken out between the Leeds group factions, and after close examination of publications from that time I believe I've found what may have triggered the conflict. Surprisingly, it appears to have been this seemingly

innocuous notice in the 'SFA Monthly Report' in the first *Novae Terrae* for June (there were two that month):

OFFICIALS: It is suggested, to save time when writing, that letters should be sent direct to the various officials who are: General Secretary – D. W. F. Mayer, 20 Hollin Park Road, Leeds 8. Assistant Secretary – H. Warnes, 5 Florist Street, Leeds 3. Treasurer – G. A. Airey, 9 Gledhow Park Drive, Leeds 8.

Why do I believe this caused the trouble? Because there are copies of this issue of *Novae Terrae* with the following notice stamped on the cover (I have copies with and without it):

**‘THE SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION  
9 BRUNSWICK TERRACE, LEEDS 2.**

**NOTICE: Will members please note that, owing to the resignation of Messrs Mayer & Warnes from the Leeds group, and consequent change of officers, all correspondence should be addressed to the society's HQ & NOT to any private address.’**

The notice would have been the work of Rosenblum and/or Gottliffe and/or Cohen, and in order to have stamped the covers they must have had a hand in the distribution. This suggests that after it became the SFA's official organ, editor Hanson was forwarding the print run of *Novae Terrae* to Leeds HQ for mailing out, so perhaps relieving him of postage costs and the chore of envelope stuffing was part of the *quid pro quo*.

The fact that not all copies bear the stamp further suggests that the members of the SFL faction had already mailed a number out before someone thought to look inside and spotted the offending notice.

Why did they take offence? Well, 9 Brunswick Terrace was both the Leeds group clubroom and the official address of SFA HQ and, despite their differences, members of the SFL faction were clearly still doing their bit for the Association. For Mayer and Co to request correspondence to be directed to their private addresses may have been seen by the SFL faction as an attempt to freeze them out.

Even so, for Rosenblum's SFL faction to claim that Mayer and Warnes had resigned from the Leeds club when they had done no such thing may not have been the wisest of moves, and matters rapidly worsened when in July both factions released their own versions of the fourth issue of *The Science Fiction Gazette*, causing confusion and consternation to those who received them.

As London fan Eric Williams noted in a letter at the time:

“I am returned (from holiday) and what do I find on opening the postbox? Two gazettes filled with acid... Gottliffe tells me that Mayer is a dirty faker (in so many words) and Mayer tells the world that Gottliffe and Co are playing a hoax. Both it seems are able to publish gazettes, both declaim the other. Who is right?”

It's a good question, and one difficult to answer at this remove, particularly as I don't have access to copies of those *Gazettes*. Someone who did was Sam Moskowitz:

“Gottliffe issued his own fourth (July 1937) number which had every appearance of being an official publication. Almost simultaneously Mayer also put out the bona fide [SFA] issue of the same date. When Gottliffe's copy was received, Mayer, together with Herbert Warnes and George Airey (respectively assistant secretary and treasurer of the SFA) hastily produced a fifth number, also dated July 1937. In this they called Gottliffe's action 'degrading', implied that it was a device to secure funds

illegally for his personal use, and suspended Gottliffe, Rosenblum, and Cohen from the SFA:

“...for a period of three years, the suspension commencing today, July 13th, 1937. After July 1st, 1940, they may rejoin, subject to the approval of the members and officials of that time. They must be made to realise that although science fiction fans are notorious at ignoring conventions, there are some things that even a fan must not do, and disgracing a science-fiction society is one of them.’

“Apparently the expulsion did take effect, because no Leeds SFL member is listed as attending any British convention sponsored by the SFA up until the outbreak of World War II. They either stayed away voluntarily or were led to believe they were not welcome. Nor did any of their contributions appear in SFA publications until 1939, except for a reply to the SFA's allegations.”

This took the form of an 'Editorial Note' in the July 1937 *Novae Terrae*:

“In connection with the disagreement in Leeds Mr. Gottliffe and his [SFL] supporters ask us to state: a) that new members accepted by 9 Brunswick Terrace are official members of the SFA.; b) That people at 9 Brunswick Terrace consider themselves at least as well qualified to receive monies on behalf of the SFA as anyone else and that all monies taken will be accounted for; c) That these people consider the expulsion of certain members null and void.”

This affair was the sort of thing there is no coming back from and though the two factions had previously managed to co-exist within the same fan group that would now no longer be possible. Though they were banned from participating in SFA activities, the Leeds SFL trio were still welcomed as visitors and contributors by other fans, the bad blood between the factions in that city being seen as a primarily local affair.

Severing ties with the SFL had been the ostensible reason for the separate factions arising, but it's possible there were other factors at work. Quite apart from any personality clash, the antagonism between Mayer and Rosenblum might also have had a political dimension. In the early-1930s socialists and pacifists had been united in their opposition to war but with the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 and, more decisively, with the start of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, that marriage came undone.

From then on the two diverged dramatically, pacifists maintaining their opposition to all wars while the socialists argued that all means must be used to reverse the spread of Fascism. Where once there had been unity there was now antagonism, and it's not unreasonable to assume the pacifist Rosenblum and the socialist Mayer mirrored this clash. However, Sam Moskowitz had an alternative theory:

“By the time the smoke had settled there were two separate fan groups in Leeds. The smaller, with nine members, was the new SFA chapter under Douglas W. F. Mayer's direction; the larger, under Harold Gottliffe, was the old SFL chapter with seventeen members; J. Michael Rosenblum, Eric Moss, Bernard Cohen, James H. Gilmour, Augustyn G. Snowden, Percy Friedman, John Moss, Frank Meilin, George Thomson, Mike Goldblatt, Mathias Rivlin, John D. Lewis, I. Crowther, Donald Price, E. Rose, Harold Solk, and of course Gottliffe himself.

“Were there any unspoken factors in this schism? Scanning the names on the Leeds SFL roster brings one possibility to mind. Though the Jewish population of

England at the time was very low – around 300,000 – a large majority of the members were of that ethnicity. There might, therefore, have been racial undertones to the split.”

While this is possible, of course, none of those who continued in fandom over the following decades appears to have ever mentioned such a thing having occurred, so it seems unlikely (and Abe Bloom certainly had no problem travelling to the inaugural meeting of Manchester SFA with Mayer the following year).

Then again, after the split Leeds SFA held their weekly meetings every Saturday at 7pm, a timing which could have made it difficult for observant Jews to attend, particularly during summer months, though this being a problem may just never have occurred to them. Interestingly, Leeds SFL members Gilmour, Thompson, Rose, Moss & Moss joined the SFA the month after the split. Presumably, they remained affiliated with Leeds SFL socially as opposed to the Mayer-led Leeds SFA group.

Writing to me about this period some fifty years later, Bert Warnes said the conflict:

“...split our membership irrevocably. (Looking back, we were rather surprised to find we were at Brunswick Terrace for only about 6 months!). Come the break and in the summer of '37 we were officially back at Florist Street once more, where we remained until October '37 when we were removed because of impending demolition.

“With hindsight, George and I quite agree that in reality it was a personality clash and a power struggle between Mayer and Rosenblum.

“It was some little time after this event that the actual split took place. The division was sufficiently drastic to lead to both factions going their own way and to differing locations. We have talked over this period at great length. Neither George nor I, who were actively involved at the time, now have any clear recollection of what actually occurred. No doubt (Brunswick Terrace) was vacated by both parties – it is thought that at one time serious consideration was given to our taking over another room in the building, but that is as far as it got. We [SFA] cleared out, taking with us that part of the library we considered to be ours.”

Since the SFL faction refer to themselves as ‘9 Brunswick Terrace’ in the July 1937 *Novae Terrae* quote above, this suggests the group did in fact remain at that address after the departure of the SFA faction, at least for a while – the address is notably absent from Leeds SFL publications from the following year. A report on one of the first post-split meetings of Leeds SFL can be found in the Feb '38 *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. It was written by Mike Rosenblum, and gives some inkling of the acrimony the split generated:

“On Sunday 5 Sept, 1937, the Leeds Chapter of the SFL held the first of its Winter Session meetings. Among those present was the director, Harold Gottliffe, the secretary, J. M. Rosenblum, the treasurer, B. H. Cohen, and many other members. By special invitation members of the Leeds Rocket Society attended, as their Technical Advisor, J. H. Gilmour B.Sc., gave a short talk later in the evening.

“The proceedings opened with a short speech by the Chairman, A. C. Snowden, who outlined, for the benefit of new members, the history of the Chapter. When he mentioned the resignation of the first Director, [Mayer] he was unable to proceed for some minutes because of the cheering.

“He said: ‘You will remember also – those of you who were present – how at our meeting of 24th January a

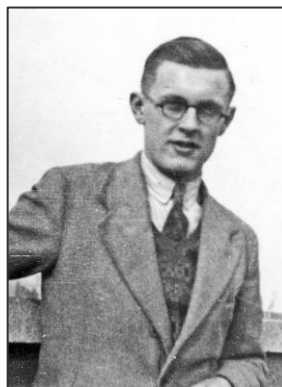
majority of members present decided to dissolve the chapter, and how only the prompt action of Michael in reorganising the remaining members present saved the first English Chapter of the SFL from complete extinction. We cannot thank him too much for the service he has rendered in the past.”

Not surprisingly, all this conflict was worrying non-Leeds fans. The time was ripe for London to take over, and so it would. All the factors that would lead to the gradual eclipse of Leeds by London fandom were falling into place, including Maurice K. Hanson's recent move to the capital. He took *Novae Terrae* and his duplicator with him, his absence leading to the decline of the Leicester/Nuneaton group, which faded away soon afterwards. On 21st August, Eric Williams wrote to Sid Birchby with the following proposal:

“For some time now Ken Chapman and I have been thinking of really going all out for a London branch of the SFA, and now that Hanson of *Novae Terrae* has come to town I think this is the time to take over a little of the duties of Leeds. As you know, there has been a spot of bother up there which if it continues might injure the reputation of the Association with the fans. Mayer has suggested that if London formed a really strong club, they might take over a large part of the business.”

On Sunday 3rd October 1937 London members of the SFA turned up in full force to launch their new branch at a meeting held in Catford at the 11 Clowders Road home of Eric Williams. Eighteen fans attended and the meeting, which opened at 3.30 p.m., was apparently held amid considerable enthusiasm. G. Ken Chapman, who presided, was elected Chairman of the branch, with Williams as Secretary. William F. Temple was elected as Movie Director and as Chairman of the Amateur Authors' Circle. Also elected to the latter were Walter Gillings as Advisor and Sid Birchby, Arthur C. Clarke, and Eric Williams as Associates.

**Left: Ken Chapman was active well into the fifties and was one of the backers of *New Worlds*.**



**Above; Sid Birchby. Right; Eric Williams**



**Photos from Ted Carnell's album.**

Though much reduced in numbers following the split, Leeds SFA was still the HQ for the national organisation, however:

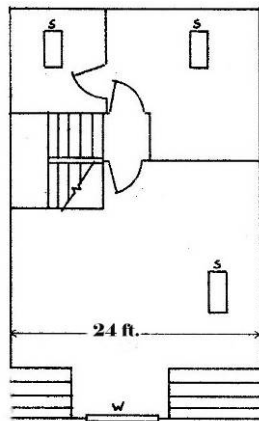
“January 1938 - April 1938 found us with an accommodation address at Mayer's place in Hollin Park. The Winter edition of *Tomorrow* was done there.”

Leeds SFL launched its own publication during this period, the *Bulletin of the Leeds Science Fiction League*, which was edited by Harold Gottliffe. This saw two issues in all, the first in January and the second in March. I don't have copies of these so can't comment on their contents.

For some time Ted Carnell had been urging that Britain's next SF con should be held in London and it was. On Sunday 10th April 1938, 43 people attended Britain's second convention - called simply 'The Second Convention' which was held at the Druids Hall, on Lambs Conduit Street, about five minutes walk from The Flat.

There were two sessions, in the afternoon and evening, held in the hall's 'temple', which was dimly lit and had cardboard scenery representing Stonehenge at dawn. Carnell was Master of Ceremonies and Ken Chapman the chairman. In the evening session were speeches by Gillings, A. M. Low, Les Johnson, I. O. Evans, Doug Mayer, Benson Herbert, and John Russell Fearn. Greetings were read out from Dr. John D. Clark of Philadelphia, Oliver Saari of Minneapolis, Dr. Otto Steinitz of Berlin, Leo Marguiles at *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Ray Palmer at *Amazing Stories*, and the Los Angeles group.

It was the afternoon session that proved most significant however. It was here that London's dominance of British fandom became complete when control of the SFA was passed to an all-London committee (Ken Chapman was appointed secretary, Carnell was made treasurer, and Prof. A. M. Low - beating out Gillings, John Wyndham, and John Russell Fearn - became president). It was a bloodless coup. Mayer remained editor of *Tomorrow*, which would see its seventh and final issue in the autumn.



**A recent photo of the Roundhay Road premises. The building firm George Airey was working for had offered him the attic, rent-free - one room with two smaller areas at the rear. The drawing is by Rob Hansen, after an original sketch by George Airey (skylights marked with 's').**

With the burden of being the HQ for the national organisation now lifted, Leeds SFA settled into a gentler routine. Here's Bert Warnes again:

"April 1938 - Sept 1939: We now come to the real hey-day of Leeds SFA, which was now comfortably ensconced at 321 Roundhay Road. The premises consisted of an attic flat over some shops, which we were delighted to obtain through the efforts of George Airey, who was able to again prevail upon his employers (the builders and estate agents I referred to earlier on).

"The flat was sited opposite the Clock Cinema and was undoubtedly the best venue we ever had. In fact it was to cosy and comfortable that later when George and his wife married, they occupied it as their home for some time.

"We were fully occupied the whole of 1938 and well into 1939 at this address. George had done his stuff again and we were not without our creature comforts. As a result our membership was strong and attendances were regular, although we did have a few 'fringe' followers who came and went. Our activities were now becoming more varied. Apart from 'lectures', film shows etc., we can remember being into ESP. However, this rather flopped when Doug as the 'transmitter' (from his house) to George as the 'receiver' (with a pack of cards in the club) 'forgot all about it', so poor old George was left more or less playing Solitaire.

"We can confirm that our friends in London were invited here and that several accepted and were, we believe, duly impressed. You are also correct in assuming we were active until just prior to the war."

In June 1938, Michael Rosenblum published the first issue of a new series of his fanzine, *The Futurian* (previously his FAPazine) a name that would subsequently be appropriated and made famous by a New York fan group whose members would go on to become some of the biggest names in science fiction. Indeed, in the second issue Fred Pohl wrote in the 'Americanews' column:

"The Futurian Literary Society has been formed as a New York fan group, restricted to persons of progressive leanings. It will take over the publication of the furor-creating 'Science Fiction Advance', and may affiliate with a shortly-to-be-announced new international alliance of science fiction fans."

Reports from Pohl on the New York Futurians would also appear in subsequent issues. In his editorial in the first issue, Rosenblum explained that:

"With this number of the *Futurian* we have to announce that the committee of Leeds Science Fiction League have decided to discontinue the publication of their bi-monthly *Bulletin*. The reports of this society will appear each quarter in the *Futurian*, and the bibliography which was to have been issued as a supplement to the *Bulletin* will be distributed with our magazine; the publication of the binding case has had to be postponed but we hope to give full details in our next issue."

Like most fanzines of the time, *The Futurian* was a fairly serious and earnest journal, containing reviews, poetry, and book news. Fortunately for us it also contained reports on the activities of Leeds SFL. To give some idea of those activities, it gave a full 'Leeds S.F.L. Report' in the second issue (Sept 1938), which included a programme of monthly talks including one in April by Eric Moss on what he was pleased to term 'Practical Communism'.

Both Leeds SFA and Leeds SFL appear to have continued along their separate ways, but with the arrival of 1939 it became increasingly obvious that war with Nazi Germany was coming. Leeds SFA was the first to shut up shop, as Bert Warnes described:

"Regrettably, in mid-'39 we had to face the inevitable and it was decided then to pack it in. Of what became of our records and library we are none too sure. We think Mayer bundled the lot up and dispatched it to our HQ in London, and what became of it all then is anyone's guess. Lost without trace we fear. Other factors were, of course, present. Doug was at this time beginning to lose interest in the SFA. His undergraduate pursuits were becoming more and more demanding, and without his active support our organisation, which was so much in his hands, was bound to fail sooner or later."

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939 following the German invasion of Poland, it was immediately decided to suspend the Science Fiction Association and the British Interplanetary Society for the duration. All across the country young men started to receive their 'call up' papers. This inevitably included fans. In a hand-written editorial insert in the Autumn issue of *The Futurian*, Mike Rosenblum lamented:

“As many of you kind people who keep in touch with us in Leeds are already aware, my two collaborators are now with His Majesty's Forces, so that this and future issues will be 'all my own work'. Moreover this is practically my first attempt at duplication!”

Those 'collaborators' – listed in the colophon as associates – were Harold Gottliffe and Eric Moss. As Rosenblum recalled, years later:

“...within one month there was no Leeds group. Of the four executives one was a Territorial who was immediately called up; one joined the RAMC, being a qualified chemist, and three weeks later was the youngest sergeant at his depot by 12 years; and a third was stranded outside Britain where he had been when war was declared. Your scribe was the fourth. And the rank and file gradually became another type of rank and file. Our numbers had stayed steady at around the dozen; a hard core of eight and a constant joining of new members who drifted away in ones and were replaced by others. The average age by 1939 was 19 to 21.”

The obituary for Leeds SFL appeared in the Winter 1940 issue of *The Futurian*, the penultimate issue, where editor Rosenblum wrote:

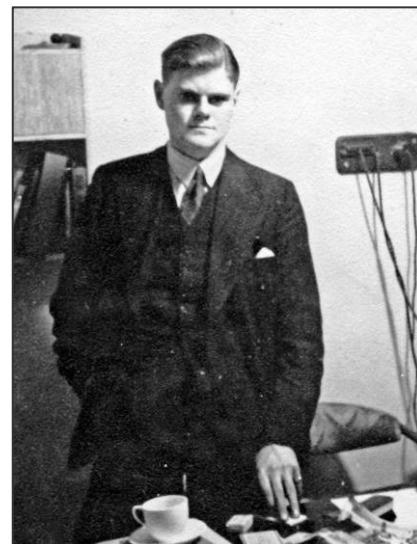
“We deeply regret to have to announce that the Leeds Science-Fiction League is now "suspended", due to the forced preoccupation of its members with other activities. At any rate that is a nice way of putting it! We hope that, after some four years in existence, this is not the end of the organisation, and that it will be revived in happier times – any rate we are following the august examples of the B.I.S. and the S.F.A.

“Eric Moss, our ex-Librarian now of The Royal Corps of Signals, has been spending a few days in hospital in the salubrious surroundings of Harrogate, England's premier Spa (Advt). Then he spent a week's leave, telling us all about army life – and we are still Pacifist; and has now departed to defend our empire in one of the more far-flung parts. Harold Gottliffe has also been on leave, and told lurid tales of sailing the seven seas in his gory Hospital ship. Both these gentlemen are doing as well as can be expected.”

Harold Gottliffe never resumed fannish activity on his return. Following wartime service in which more than one ship was sunk from under him, Gottliffe changed his name to Harold Godfrey and opened a chemists' shop in London. He died there in 1998.

Doug Mayer was at Leeds University in 1940, studying physics, and according to Airey and Warnes, he:

“...also wrote a science column for the local paper, *The Yorkshire Evening Post*. From papers and information gathered at the university he deduced that the atomic bomb was now more than just a possibility. He mentioned this in his column and as a result the editor had no choice but to refer the matter to 'higher authority', who promptly whisked him away to London, where he became one of the famous 'backroom boys'. From there on we had no contact with Douglas nor any news of him until after the war....”



**Doug Mayer,  
probably  
around 1940.  
Photo by Harry  
Turner**

Mayer never returned to fandom. After holding various posts in education in the UK he emigrated to Canada in 1956, where he took up the position of General Secretary of the World University Service of Canada. He died there in 1976, at the young age of 57.

One of those pre-war Leeds fans whose activity did continue was Mike Rosenblum. During the conflict he was a conscientious objector who, between days doing farm work and evenings spent fire-watching also somehow managed to publish thirty-nine issues of *Futurian War Digest* over the course of the war. *FWD* was largely responsible for holding British fandom together during those years and for that reason alone is one of the most important UK fanzines ever.

Rosenblum remained active in fandom after the war and continued to attend conventions until his death in 1978, by which point Leeds fandom had been reborn and a new group arisen that was to make Leeds once again a significant force in British fandom. In 1987 this group ran *Conception*, a convention organised to commemorate that first-ever convention of fifty years earlier. They located George Airey and Herbert Warnes and invited them along, the first contact the pair had had with fandom since the dissolution of Leeds SFA.

The pre-war Leeds fans were responsible for several firsts. They were the first SF group to have a national presence in the UK, they had our first major feud, and they organised the world's first science fiction convention. They should be remembered for all those things.

- Rob Hansen, February 2013

#### Notes:

1. All quotes from Herbert Warnes and/or George Airey are taken either from their article in John D. Owen's *Crystal Ship #14*, or from their correspondence with the writer. All non-contemporary quotes by Mike Rosenblum are taken from columns in his 1950s fanzine *New Futurian*. The Moskowitz quotes are taken from the sequel to *THE IMMORTAL STORM* that was being serialized in A. Langley Searles *Fantasy Commentator* at the time of his death.

2. Accounts of the first and second conventions mentioned herein (the first with photos and the second without, alas) can be found here, along with links to full runs of the fanzines, *Novae Terrae*, *Tomorrow*, and *Futurian War Digest*:

<http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THEN%20Archive/archive.htm>

From the pre-war period we zip forward a couple of decades to the first British worldcon in 1957 where Harry Harrison first met Brian Aldiss. In the last issue Tom Shippey penned an elegant tribute to our old friend Harry who died on 15<sup>th</sup> August last year, and before running out of space I had intended to add this short retrospective. It first appeared in the *Novacon* 40 programme book but since no-one has ever admitted to having read it (including the editor of said book) I thought that with a little light editing it could usefully stand a second airing. [pw]



## The Great Convention Double-Act

By Peter Weston

(Illo by Jim Barker, from WITH STARS IN MY EYES)

Brian & Harry... Harry & Brian, their names went together like ham and eggs (*but which one was the ham?*) with a double-act that seemed to have been around forever. Well, for fifty-five years, actually, back even before Rog Peyton and I discovered fandom, but I'll get to that in a moment. First, my own memories, starting in 1964.

I visited Oxford that summer in my old Ford Popular, the first time I'd been to the city, and I remember spotting the road-sign for 'Marston Street' with a little thrill of recognition for I knew this was where a Famous Professional Science Fiction Writer lived. I'd seen the address in a book – probably the oddly-titled *SPACE, TIME AND NATHANIEL* ('STAN' for short) in the Birmingham Central Library in 1958, right back when I first discovered adult SF, and I'd been reading everything by Brian Aldiss ever since. I liked his first novel, *THE BRIGHTFOUNT DIARIES*, about life in a bookshop, and enjoyed subsequent collections; he was someone I felt I 'knew' about, even though we'd never had any actual contact.

By then I was producing a fanzine and the December *Zenith* was a bit of a breakthrough number in which the very first shots were fired in what was to become the 'New Wave' controversy. Daringly, I sent a copy to Brian and he responded magnificently, beginning with the line "Although you devote overmuch space to that arch lowbrow Heinlein, you more than recompense your readers by the thrilling spectacle of Moorcock and Jeeves bleeding and dying for their beliefs."

Now we really *were* in contact, and I would shortly meet him in person.

Harry Harrison was another Big-Name Science Fiction Writer whose career I'd watched with great interest

since 'The Stainless Steel Rat' in the December 1957 British-edition of *Astounding*. I always think of that as his first SF story though in fact he'd been selling since 1951, but 'Rat' is the one everyone remembers. I'd followed his name through the 'Deathworld' sequence and other stories, including his famous short in *New Worlds*, 'The Streets of Ashkelon'.

Harry moved around a lot in those days – Mexico, New York, London, and by 1963 he was living in Denmark. But he was a member of the BSFA (can you believe it?) which made his address available when Rog and I were sending out the second *Zenith*. Harry, bless him, was one of the few people to respond, writing "it's as stuffed with facts as an egg with meat", so in one sense I 'knew' Harry even before Brian. He followed up with other LoCs and a particularly long one in my ninth issue (about 'The Ethical Engineer').

But before that arrived I'd met him in person.

The occasion was the 1965 *Brumcon*, held in April at the gloomy old Midland Hotel in New Street. Harry was Guest of Honour that year, and as he appeared in front of the 10-foot-high black demon figure of Mike Higgs' backdrop (which we'd all spent the previous evening painting) Brian Aldiss shouted, "You're casting a long shadow today, Harry!"

This was the opening shot in the Brian & Harry Show which would entertain us for the next 36 hours. The highlight was Harry's GoH address titled 'SF Confidential'. To the uninvited accompaniment of the Salvation Army brass band playing in the street below, he launched into an unrehearsed and hilarious expose of the private lives of the American SF fraternity.



**Top:** ‘Take that you swine’, Harry as Jason din Alt gives Brian a wallop during the lost Delta Group saga, ‘Breathworld’, filmed at the 1965 *Brumcon* (still captured by Bill Burns).

**Above;** What is he going to do to Ted Tubb? Seen with Kingsley Amis at the 1961 *LXIcon* (photo by Eric Bentcliffe).

**Below:** Brian meets Harry at the 1965 *Loncon*. This picture always makes me wonder whether the steely-eyed Aldiss had one of those electric-shock vibrator thingies in his hand. (photo by Norman Shorrock).



Partway through Brian entered the room, late back from lunch, and with a great roar of “this pie is *rotten!*” Harry seized an unsold pork-pie from Brian Burgess in the front row and hurled it at Brian, narrowly missing the reporter from the *Birmingham Post* who observed in the next day’s paper that ‘the pie was still nestling inside its protective cellophane wrapper (British Railways issue)’. A few months later Brian and Tom Boardman bombarded Harry with pies at the second London world convention. Thus was born one of the great traditions of British fandom.

But we need to go back to the previous British worldcon to find the origins of this great comic partnership, back to the shabby London of 1957.

Brian wrote, “The convention was held in a terrible hotel in the Queensway district. A distinctly post-war feeling lingered. Bomb damage was still apparent. There was no mistaking the general American recoil from the ghastliness of plumbing and food, and their amazement at the prostitutes parading along the Bayswater Road. The whores had not adjusted their make-up to the new sodium lighting, and looked as if they could offer mankind nothing better than necrophilia.”

It was Brian’s first foray into what he called the ‘family life’ of science fiction and he had written only a handful of short stories, mostly for Ted Carnell, which Faber collected in hard-covers around this time as STAN. He was just 32, had recently gone free-lance and as he writes in his autobiographical volume *BURY MY HEART AT W.H. SMITH*, he was struggling with the twin problems of poverty and a broken marriage, but nonetheless and with some misgivings, he went to the convention anyway.

Harry was also 32 but he’d been supporting himself for years by editing, illustrating, and writing for the pulps and men’s magazines, and he knew his way round SF fandom. Married to Joan and with a young baby he’d just moved back from Mexico to New York where he’d sold ‘Rat’ to *Astounding*. Hearing about Dave Kyle’s plan to bring a plane-load of fans to *Loncon* for \$100.00 return-tickets, he signed-up on the spot, becoming one of the 76 Americans who attended the worldcon, where John W. Campbell was Guest-of-Honour.

And somewhere in those five days Brian and Harry ‘clicked’.

“What was the attraction?” I asked Brian. “You’d seem to have had nothing in common except your ages and yet you formed this enduring friendship.”

He replied, “It’s a good question, as much a sociological as a psychological one. In 1957, London was still bestrewn by ruins from the time of the Blitz. I was still trying to adjust to no longer being in the East, in the army. I loved the East and there was much about England I hated. I had made a disastrous marriage. I didn’t know London.

“Harry’s situation was somewhat similar. He had sold a story to John W. Campbell and plonked the money from that down on a flight to England for himself and Joan and the small kid. We were both, in different ways, living in alien territory. We had been in different armies but we had both learnt that one way to deal with adversity was to tough it out and laugh it off. We were both tough and both felt we didn’t really belong in the SF tribe at the time, though clearly we had much in common with that tribe.”

After the con Brian went back to Oxford and his troubles, to complete *NON-STOP* from a furnished room, to buy his little house on Marston Street and eventually to meet and marry Margaret. Harry stayed in London at a “dreadful B&B” before going on to Denmark where he wrote *DEATHWORLD* and its sequels.



**Above:** This one always makes me laugh – Harry runs amok at the Fancy Dress parade, *Chessmancon*, 1972. Fred Hemmings was inside the clock. (photo by Mike Meara).

**Below;** The skill of the photographer captures one of Brian Burgess's pork pies which Harry has just thrown, at *Seacon 75*, at Coventry. (photo by Mike Meara).

**Bottom;** Harry in buccaneering mood (all he need is a slide-rule between his teeth) with Eileen Weston and his daughter Moira on the tall ship at the *Glasgow Interaction*, 2005. (photo by Ian Whates)



They kept in touch, but didn't see each other again for four years until *LXICon* at Gloucester in 1961, where they had a fine time with GoH Kingsley Amis and the scholarly Geoff Doherty, who gave them the idea for *SF Horizons*, intended to be a critical magazine about science fiction. They produced two issues in 1964 & 1965.

Brian continued, "In sixty-three we met again, this time in Trieste. We were there for the new Trieste Science Fiction Film Festival, and we stayed in the Grand Hotel de la Ville, which had once briefly been the British Embassy. The films were shown up in the Castelo de San Giusto. Trieste has an amazing history; there we met Joe the Jug, who guided us to the railway station where we drank slivovicz. A wonderful drink, like Jugoslavia itself.

"Harry and Joan drove me over the border into Jugland (as we called it - it means Southland). It was hot, unruly, backward. At once I felt at home. We drank the local wine at a gostilna and ate oozing fat black olives. Bliss. At once, I determined I must have more of Jugland. Next year, I took Margaret and a used Land Rover to tour all Jugland and write my one travel book, *CITIES AND STONES*. We lived like gypsies and met up with Harry and Joan at a coastal town called Makarska. The arrangement had been made months before, yet we pulled into the car park within ten minutes of each other. Great fun!

"Harry brought us good Danish food and some good books and we swam in what later we discovered was the town sewer, emptying into the Adriatic. Harry asked me, 'What induced you to do this crazy trip?' (We were away for half-a-year.) I said, 'I was in search of those big fat black olives...' 'I bought them in Trieste marketplace,' said Harry. 'The Jugs don't grow olives like that.' I realised to my chagrin he was more cosmopolitan than I.

"After that jaunt, we often stayed with Joan and Harry. They and the kids had a house towards the north of Denmark, not so far from Elsinore, Hamlet's castle. The Danes were great, as were the Swedes. We often stayed in Stockholm with our local pal, Sam Lundwall, who ran a magazine, *Jules Verne Magasinet*. A lot of very pleasant time was spent in Scandinavia, here and there.

"At one time we stayed in an old wooden mansion, built in 1901, on the edge of an inlet of the Baltic. There the men stayed up half the night talking to Goran Bengtson, the Swedish culture-vulture who had just come back from staying with Philip K. Dick in California. Goran had one short-coming: he drank only Calvados. Calvados gives you terrible hangovers. In the mornings, we'd strip off, run along a little wooden pier, and dive into the Baltic. It was FREEZING! You'd die if you stayed in it for five minutes. But it did cure hangovers."

And so the partnership continued, at conventions in 1962 & 63, then on to 1965 and *Loncon II*, where Brian was Guest of Honour, with Harry (and pies) in attendance. That year he won a Nebula for 'The Saliva Tree', and already had a Hugo for *HOTHOUSE*. Harry's own reputation was climbing fast, having completed *BILL THE GALACTIC HERO* and other novels, and he would shortly turn in his brilliant, impassioned *MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!* Together they would go on to edit over fifty anthologies – Harry said that while their writing styles were completely different, they shared identical tastes in reading.

As for their convention double-act, Brian and Harry kept it running; in 1966 at *Yarcon*, in 1969 at the *Galactic Fair*, at *Chessmancon*, and so on to modern times. In 1971 the Brum Group was formed, and soon afterwards Harry and Brian were invited to be Joint Presidents. Forty years later they were invited as joint guests of honour at *Novacon-40*, though sadly Harry was unable to attend. // pw



Bruce Burn would have seen several appearances of the Harrison/Aldiss double-act after he came to Britain from New Zealand in August, 1960. Once here, Bruce quickly became part of the London fan-scene and kept copious notes and photographs throughout his time in the UK, which have already featured in the three previous instalments of his adventures. In this episode he sets off to explore the country and I find it truly remarkable that Bruce not only recorded his travels but that his notes and pictures have miraculously survived through fifty-odd years – what papers have *you* kept from 1962? I've been very remiss in that the previous instalment appeared in *Relapse* #14, May 2009, and Bruce delivered this episode in the early part of 2010. What can I say, except that so much other excellent material kept getting in the way! Sorry, Bruce, and here we go, at last. [pw]

*Photo from the London Evening Standard*



*All photographs by Bruce unless noted.*

## **Wandering Ghu Meets Wavering Thumb**

When you say you're going on your OE, people usually ask several questions.

To be fair, it's not an expression used much outside of New Zealand and Australia. Well, it wasn't in the sixties, when I did my OE. The question people ask (if they ask anything) is "What's an OE?" sometimes followed by "Why would you do that?", "Why would you *want* to do that?", and "Isn't that an awful waste of time?"

You see, 'OE' simply means 'Overseas Experience'. In my youth, every kiwi and Ozzie who had the opportunity to take off for an overseas trip somewhere in the late teens or early twenties would scrimp and save for a boat fare and enough money for a few months of a 'working holiday' at some chosen spot on the globe.

The phrase 'working holiday' is something of an oxymoron, but it describes the usual OE very well: most people never could save enough money to make the trip entirely a holiday, so work was done along the way to pay for the journey. Indeed, the work done, usually on a casual basis, was regarded as part of the holiday since its variety was very different from the work normally done back home.

"Why would you do that?" Well, most of us did it between finishing our education and getting set into a career. Some did it as a treat after studying at university and some as part of re-locating overseas for work or studies. Everyone would have their own reasons for taking such a trip, but generally it was a chance to see something of the world, visit the old countries of Europe, experience living within other cultures and alongside people who lived very different lives to those whom we had grown up with.

OE was accepted as a way of broadening your mental horizons and often helping you appreciate what you had 'back home'. For some, it was a means of testing your independence or sowing your wild oats or generally an

accelerated way of growing up. Waste of time? I don't think so, although there comes a time in most lives when each person has to decide how they want to deal with the world on a more regular basis, perhaps for the rest of their life.

So an OE has to include a mixture of work, hard slog, and time to drift around. It might include camping trips that took you all over the landscape, sometimes over many weeks or months. We'd travel on scooters, mopeds, even Shank's Pony, alone or in groups, sometimes on buses, occasionally in the cheapest bangers we could keep going, and very often in other people's transport. My OE certainly included most of those means, but perhaps my most memorable trips were by Rule of Thumb.

Hitch-hiking in the 1960s was considered a safe and sensible way for impecunious youngsters to get around and see the world. Road Rage hadn't been invented then, and people generally behaved well towards each other. You'd hear the occasional horror story, but I never met another hitch-hiker who had any bad experiences in their travels. And since I often stayed at youth hostels I talked with many other hitchers, many of whom had travelled far more extensively than I did.

I had already made the occasional weekend hitching trip into the Home Counties, (that's the counties around the greater London area), and had planned a longer trip around much of Britain. This would involve some fannish visiting, but the Europe trip delayed my plans for another year. So it wasn't until the summer of '62 that I finally packed my haversack and took to the highways and byways of Blighty.

The break came at a good time for me. Well, perhaps not a good time; I was actually at a low ebb personally. Amongst other problems, I was frustrated with working at casual jobs. A couple of months previously I'd finished what had become a year-long stint working for the

Royal Automobile Club Competitions Department, worked for Swan's Travel Company during April and May, then left that very comfortable job to become some sort of assistant sales person with Stern Importing only to get sacked after barely two weeks because I wouldn't kowtow to the manager who owned the company! I felt my personal life was in a bit of a mess, and after a year of being OMPA Official Editor I felt I'd had enough of fannish 'activity'. I suppose I was ripe for a holiday.

I planned this particular trip fairly carefully, because when I set out on my chosen date of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1962 I had just a little over five weeks before I had to be back in London for work commitments. Having planned much of the projected journey to a nicety, I shouldn't have been surprised when the schedule got changed even before the trip began. Strangely, the journey actually began from Dunstable, a market town in Bedfordshire about thirty miles north of London.

Dunstable is on the edges of the Chiltern Hills, which are largely based on chalky ground and feature several steep chalk escarpments or inland cliffs. Somehow, the landscape lends itself to providing fair breezes and many up-draughts of air, which is why the London Gliding Club was based there. So, on the 7<sup>th</sup> July I found myself hitching from West Hampstead to take up an invitation from George Locke who thought I might enjoy watching gliders for the day. It took only two hitches, one in a mini-van which got me well clear of the main city roads, and a second in a car which took me right to the Dunstable Gliding Club since the driver was a club member intent on getting airborne himself.

When I arrived George was already involved in trying to get aloft and Alan Rispin was also at the club with Diane (Nell) Goulding, looking to enjoy a day of fresh air and sunshine away from the city. They had three launching systems at Dunstable: one was a machine launch, with a long rope attached to the glider, which had to be released as soon as the glider had sufficient elevation but before the rope would otherwise start pulling it down to the ground; the second was a car launch which worked with the car racing *towards* the glider with a tow rope going round a pulley and pulled the glider forward to build up speed. The actual uncoupling of the glider was automatic, so it was important the pilot should gain as much height as possible before his craft unhitched itself from the tow rope. Taking off into the wind helped!

George had invited AlaNel and me to Dunstable to see what his hobby was all about, but he had a secret motive. He and another gliding enthusiast were looking for someone to join them later in the month at a National Gliding Championship in Devon. The temptation was that the trip would be expenses-free for the week beginning July 26<sup>th</sup>. Ahha! It was a great temptation to a likely lad like me, even though it would shorten my hitch-hiking holiday. What a busy social schedule!

We had great fun helping the gliding group launch their machines all afternoon, and learned enough to begin to understand how it all worked. Essentially, the pilots sought rising air or what they called thermals which would take their gliders up into the heavens. Light wind was helpful during the launch, but once released from the propelling cable a pilot had to find the rising air pretty quickly. They had some very primitive devices on board the glider to help them in this, but a lot of the time they had to use their own best judgement to avoid an ignominious sinking feeling.

Those who could afford the cost of a small powered aircraft could be towed to greater height, and this of course



**Top: George Locke the intrepid glider pilot.**

**Below: Ken, Bruce, Diane and Dave Hale (possibly he was suffering from stiff-neck, or was he just pleased to see her?)**

gave a huge advantage. It was the third system of launching available at Dunstable, but not as popular as the other two because of the cost. However, those who used the aircraft tow not only had much more room in which to find a thermal or up-draught, but they could time the release from the towing aircraft so they would be in an area of rising air, and hence immediately start climbing into the wide blue yonder.

Eventually, late on a gusty summer afternoon, we all shared a convivial beer or two, and I eventually unpacked my tent and sleeping bag. AlaNel headed back to town, and I hit the sack and slept like a top.

Then, it was Sunday, the day I'd scheduled as the first day of my well-planned trip. For a while I sat around watching the gliding activities, then took my leave and headed for Birmingham. I'd decided to start my hitch-hiking tour of Britain with a visit to Ken Cheslin, who lived in Stourbridge, a town more-or-less absorbed into the Midlands urban sprawl. Indeed, against my normal habits I was carrying extra bits of luggage on this particular trip: the accumulated pile of OMPAazines which every association editor had to look after in case people wanted back-mailings.

It made for a difficult couple of heavy bundles, and I was unsure how it would affect my being picked up for hitches, but it was all for the good cause of saving OMPA some money; we had no economical courier systems in those days. I left Dunstable at 12.30 pm and the trip took me a full seven hours, with four lifts ending near a bus stop not too far from Stourbridge. I'm not too proud as a hitcher – I'll take a bus if it's convenient, so I arrived at the Cheslins just in time for dinner.

Ken was a great host, and we got on well from the word go. He was excited to have a fellow fan call in, and introduced me to his mother and other members of the family.



**Here's Ken Cheslin, looking very happy, but concealing his right (prosthetic) hand, as became his habit.**



**Ken's mother; "nuggety strength from having weathered life's storms".**



**Dave Hale's mother, who "wore the standard pinny".**



**Ken's sister, the lovely Audrey, a vision in pink. Bruce doesn't mention her in his report, but he was the one who took this picture! My reaction, when I saw it, many years later, was to ask why Ken didn't ever tell me he had a sister!**

His mother was a delight. Of Irish extraction, she was a very hospitable lady the like of which are the generous heart of British people. She'd been through all the hard times, but had that nuggety strength that comes from having weathered life's storms, with a positive attitude that just "Got on with it." The home was filled with warmth, even though Ken's brother-in-law was worried about continuing work prospects, and Ken himself had suffered the loss of his right hand in an accident at work, and clearly wondered what he could turn his other hand to.

It was quickly arranged that I would stay the night in their home, although I suggested I could pitch my tent outside. And, after several gallons of tea from the huge brown tin teapot sitting on the coal range in the kitchen, the household settled, although Ken and I talked on into the night, checking through the OMPAzines in my bundles, and exploring Ken's large collection of fanzines and science fiction that he had amassed in his room.

The next morning, Ken suggested we should visit a couple of other local fans, Dave Hale and Darroll Pardoe. Eventually, we did, but not before Ken took me to a couple of local sites of interest: a rather unusual cow shed and the Seven Sisters of Dudley.

The cow shed was actually what is called a 'folly' on the estates of the Cobham family. Lord Cobham had recently been Governor General of New Zealand, but it was his father who built follies on his land: unusual structures in the style of Greek or Roman buildings. The fate of such constructions is that the builder's descendants often find uses for the edifices that were not in the minds of those who designed them. Hence the Roman Temple had become an informal and rather ramshackle cow shed open for use by any passing stock and worth the trouble of rambling over the land to see it.

By comparison, the Seven Sisters was a natural curiosity: a series of large caverns in Dudley, a town near Stourbridge. They were reputed to be part of a large subterranean network of caves and tunnels that spread underground for many miles around. There were seven wide tunnels within a huge natural foyer of a cavern: they were steep and gravelly and we had no lights or ropes so we couldn't do much more than admire the scale of the caverns while the daylight allowed.

Then it was time to meet the Hales. Dave Hale was one of the fans behind the creation of Ken's *Les Spinge*, and proved to be a keen young man from a family of practical people. His mother wore the standard pinny and was busy making jam in the kitchen when we called, and her husband was up a ladder painting some part of their house. Dave himself was taller than Ken and I (we were very average height, well short of six feet). Dave was lean and studious-looking, with a great sense of humour. We had a cup of tea with the Hales, and then returned to the Cheslins.

What sort of a guy was Ken Cheslin? I've been troubled in recent years to see some fans comment that Ken seemed rather glum and not the cheerful man I recall. If that is so, I can well understand if his nature lost its happy way. Not only did he have to cope with the obvious handicap of losing his right hand in a work accident, but after marriage and raising a family, limited finances put a considerable crimp on the things he wanted to do with his life.

He really wanted to be a publisher. Not a commercial publisher; a fannish publisher. He loved nothing more than to slave for hours producing the voluminous publications for which he became famous. The *Olaf* collections of cartoons, the re-prints of the wonderful wit of Irish Fans like John Berry, and many issues of *Les Spinge*.

He was an incredibly generous soul, after the nature of his mother, and was immeasurably helpful to anyone who needed to get into stencilled print.

In later years, he helped me a great deal by duplicating my stencils while half the world apart. After I re-discovered fandom via the internet in the nineties I was able to telephone Ken on one occasion. We talked for well over an hour, and clearly he was working on his fannish projects in very difficult circumstances, normally doing all his writing and printing in an unheated garage in the middle of winter. Glum? Would you blame him for losing his cheer occasionally? So what sort of a guy was Ken Cheslin? The words cheerful, enthusiastic, helpful, generous, perceptive, all come to mind. \*

Refusing the piles of fanzines Ken insisted on offering me, because I had no way to carry them, but accepting his lift into the middle of Birmingham, I took my leave the next day. I had a schedule to keep, and wanted to reach York and perhaps Harrogate that night, and wanted to visit Coventry Cathedral on the way. I took a bus along the A45 to the Stonebridge Island, and then flagged down a lorry that drove me directly to the Cathedral, which impressed me immensely.

The new parts of the building had been a replacement for the ancient structure which had been bombed and burned during the second world war, but instead of simply demolishing the remains they had been incorporated and blended into the thoroughly modern building as a memorial to those who died in the conflict. It was quite breath-taking, and I would have liked to linger, but with constant rain that day I knew lifts might be fewer and far between so got back onto the road.

A van got me to Leicester, a lorry to Grantham, and then a car got me back on the A1. Another van to Newark, and a lorry dropped me off at a pub in Howden. Interesting liquid afternoon tea, because everybody in the pub seemed to have relatives in New Zealand and one old bloke insisted on sharing his ploughman's lunch of healthy cheese sandwiches with me. I seem to recall signing some visitors' book while at the bar. What kind people!

It rained constantly the whole day, and I was glad of my plastic mac which covered my corduroy slacks and thick blue sweater (knitted by my mother as a going-away present) and sandals. Outside the Howden pub I waited patiently for a lift, but the traffic had died away so when a bus pulled in I leapt aboard and that got me to the York Youth Hostel at 9.00pm. But at least I was in Yorkshire, and the next morning I headed straight for Ron Bennett's hometown, Harrogate, where the 1962 Easter convention had been held just a few months earlier. \*\*

People go to Harrogate for pleasant if unexciting holidays or to visit a health-spa. It's also a popular place for retirement, and has a population that keeps its Jewish traditions. I went there to watch Ron Bennett tip boxes of used stamps into a warm bath of water.

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\* Unfortunately Ken was none of those things to me. I've written before about his strange attitude whenever we met – he would never speak directly to me but act as if I wasn't in the room. He could have been so much help in explaining fandom and helping me get started with my fanzine. I've often wondered what his problem was – maybe I was just too keen and apparently sercon! [pw]

\*\* Bruce claims to have a blank in his brain about the convention, though all the evidence suggests he was there that year!

He was sorting his accumulation of stamps, but first he had to take them off the envelopes. He explained that because there were severe restrictions on the amount of money you could take across the Channel to the continent, he had found he could often finance his trips by taking packages of used stamps and selling them to dealers over there.

"I was annoyed when you decided to come to England, Bruce," he said. "The New Zealand stamps on your letters were very popular and worth quite a bit because they'd been printed in England then sent round the world and posted back here."

I'd arrived at Ron's flat when he was getting ready for his next trip to France and Germany. There's a lot of work involved in sorting a bath full of used stamps, but Ron did it all to a system and it didn't take all night. I'd called as soon as I reached Harrogate, and fortunately Ron was home – it may have been holidays at school. He introduced me to his girl friend, Elizabeth Humbey, who later became Mrs. Bennett (who bore a distinct likeness to actress Julie Christie).

Ron was a delightful character; he was over average height and tended to stoop and this, added to the thick lenses of his spectacles, gave him a studious and scholarly look. He bore a distinct likeness to Groucho Marx, although much younger and slimmer. I think he cultivated the likeness, and certainly had the sense of humour to go with it. He had travelled extensively over England and parts of Europe – you might remember he had been one of the "welcome committee" who had met me at Southampton almost two years previously. Ron's *Skyrack* newszine had brought him into contact with fans all over the world, and his fanzine *Ploy* was very popular. He was a school teacher in private life, and a good companion, especially if you played card-games like Hearts or Brag.

Ron was keen for me to meet Colin Freeman, who had produced a fanzine or two from his hospital bed in the Harrogate Sanatorium at nearby Knaresborough, so in the afternoon Ron got his car out and we drove over to see him. Colin was improving in his health, and he had found fandom a great help in fighting the boredom of hospital regimen. He was new to fan-pubbing, but had joined OMPA and was keen to correspond with fans wherever they were. He was pretty well bed-bound at that time, and watched by the nursing staff because they worried he could overtax his energies and impair the rest and recovery he needed. We stayed a couple of hours, and when the nurses started dropping hints about long visits we returned to Ron's flat.

Ron and Liz and I bought in a delicious fish and chips dinner, and we chatted the evening away. That night, I slept in comfort in my sleeping bag on their plump sofa.

The next day, I'd scheduled another long hitch, and although it meant I might not see as much of the countryside as I'd wished, I kept moving. First, a bus from Harrogate to the A1 highway, then a van picked me up and took me to Bambridge. A short stop, then I got a lift with Frank Sheridan who drove a car transporter he called his 'semi-automatic bicycle' all the way to the centre of Newcastle. That was a rather slow and very noisy ride indeed, and conversation was almost impossible with the cheerful driver. We rumbled down the highways and eventually into the big city of the north-east, and Frank drove over the River Tyne before dropping me off.

Newcastle is part of the double-city of Newcastle-on-Tyne and Gateshead. Roughly speaking, Gateshead is to the south of the River Tyne, and Newcastle to the north.

**Ron soaks his stamps in the bath.**



**Liz Humbey – actually already Mrs Bennett – they were married on 27 March 1962, but for obscure reasons kept it secret for a further 18 months.**



**Colin Freeman, with a hand full of aces!**



**A better picture of Ron & Liz, at the Harrogate convention earlier in the year (photo by Norman Shorrock)**



**The Esplanade and gateway at mighty Edinburgh Castle**



This is an ancient city, tracing its development back a couple of thousand years. I didn't realise at that time but there are museums in the area specialising in part of the Burn family history because my ancestors were among the 'Reivers', a not entirely savoury clan of families who preyed on travellers and eked a living as rogues in the border areas between England and Scotland in the middle ages.

But I wasn't staying there long enough to see much apart from the bridge over the muddy and slow-moving Tyne River, because I had a schedule to keep. Four short lifts later I was being driven into heathered countryside looking incredibly like the hills north of Wellington, NZ. These were the steeper hills of Scotland, and I felt quite at home when the last driver let me off at the foot of the hill on which stands Edinburgh Castle.

I *should* have felt at home there, since my family traces some of its roots to this part of the world. My full name, Bruce Lambton Burn, acknowledged such association, and I remembered my father telling me that when he visited Edinburgh, the people he met hailed him as a friend and insisted on calling him 'Lambton Burn', rather than by his Sassenach names.

It was a pleasant sunny day, so I decided to hike up the road and into the castle. It seemed open and free for a walk around, although I found there was no (free) way to see more than simply the entrance and a courtyard or two. Some great views over the city though, through the battlements. I took few photographs because I was running out of film and daylight, so I sought lodgings in the Edinburgh Youth Hostel.

The next day the fine warm weather continued, and I had a quick series of six lifts that got me to Inverness. I had planned to visit Aberdeen, but with the shortened time for my holiday I had to pass by Ethel Lindsay's home-town.

Not that I could find much to do at Inverness: it really was a quiet town that day, looking for the tourist trade to earn a groat or two. The shops open all seemed tourist-oriented with prices out of my reach, so I settled for getting a few basic groceries, finding the hostel, and settling in at a sports ground where a game of rugby was being played between two Scottish teams. The big friendly crowd on the terraces cheered for both teams in a friendly match which went on into the early evening as the temperature began to drop and that long autumn sunset began.

Back at the hostel I began getting some dinner ready, met a couple of girls who were also getting a late dinner, and a Norwegian traveller, Eirik Aksel Larsen, who was from Verdalen but currently a student at university in Oslo, so we pooled our resources and had quite a feast. The girls were Ann Wood, who was English but living in Belfast and working at a factory that made soft toys, and Rosaleen Hillock, who was Irish and worked in the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard in Belfast.

They seemed like fun, but the girls were heading home via Edinburgh the next day, Eirik planned to head back into England, and I was determined to see a bit more of Scotland while I had the chance. Never thinking it might happen, we all decided that if we could get to Belfast within a week or so we'd all meet up at Ann's place.

I'd decided that the next day would be best spent hitching south towards Glasgow, but after waiting for three hours on the road out of Inverness I took a bus to Fort William and stayed the night there, on the advice of other hitchhikers and travellers – and even locals – that it'd be hard to hitchhike on a Saturday, and Sunday would be worse. "You'll never get a lift on the road in Scotland on a Sunday."

So, on the Sunday, in cool and dry and sunny weather, I left my pack at the hostel and climbed the flanks of Ben Nevis. It seemed the sort of mountain most countries would call a hill, and apart from a few places the climb was more an easy walk over rough tracks which had obviously had rain coursing down them and eroding the surfaces in recent times. I joined up with Irene Irvine and her friend, a couple of local girls who were also taking the hike, and with many a joke we reached the top. And from the top, it all appeared much more like a mountain as we scanned the horizon above the glen far below. The hill we had ascended had a steep cliff-face on the other side, which looked like a genuine mountain. I suppose Sunday strollers and serious climbers alike all found satisfaction on Ben Nevis.

We turned to descend the hill again, after a snack on the summit. Irene and her friend taught me the words to 'Scotland the Brave' and we sang the national song lustily and loudly as we took long steps down the track. The next day was Monday, and after six rides I was travelling through the mean streets of a cold grey town called Glasgow. I could see no reason to stop even though I remembered it was the birthplace of Ella Parker and Arthur Thomson, so hitched on to Girvan, but it was getting late by then so I pitched my tent on the beach nearby and slept like a log until morning.

One quick hitch got me to Stranraer, where I would be able to take the ferry to Larne in Northern Ireland. I wandered the uninteresting streets around the ferry terminal until it was time to board the ferry. As I recall, the ferry left a bit late, the sea was very calm, and I fell asleep on a wooden bench while the captain made a smooth cruise of it all, arriving in Larne in time for fish and chips for lunch. It then only took one ride to get into Belfast, and the driver kindly dropped me off just down the road from Oblique House, the residence of Walter A. Willis.

I confess to causing some amusement for the driver of that last hitch when I asked about "Newtownards Road", the Willis address. The driver looked puzzled: "New Town Ards Road?" he said. "No, no. Newt'nuds." It was that quick and clipped Belfast accent. The words are almost muttered very quickly, rather than spoken openly, and I hadn't heard much of it until then. Anyway, I was already raising my backpack onto my shoulders, and started walking up a gradual rise looking for number 170 – Oblique House, so called because WAW began his fan publishing with a fanzine called *Slant*.

I found the house quite quickly, paused for a moment to look at the vaguely Victorian edifice, which appeared to have three main floors and a steep roof. The short, sloping driveway suggested there might be a basement under the house, which was of red brick like most of the other houses round about. I was a fan who had grown up on the writings of Irish Fandom, and this place represented all that was most exciting about the wonderful talents of these incredibly talented people. 170 Upper Newtownards Road – an address you never forget.

Walter A. Willis, a man who seemed a colossus of fandom: a writer of amazing skill, who could describe crossing the street in a way that would delight and absorb the interest of any reader. Bob Shaw, whose literary acrobatics could make you laugh at your own funeral. John Berry, whose fertile imagination could take the humdrum stuff of life and turn it into whimsy with some ingenious twist of tale-telling. James White, a popular and diligent writer who had begun to make a reputation with his medical space operas, George Charters, Ian McAuley, talented and able men with their own styles. The people of IF: apparently living in an enchanted land where fandom had found its own

Tower of Trufandom, and the quirky nature of the mundane people of the land around it blended into a cultural background that could nurture such a group. I was in awe of these people, of their achievements, of the very front door I was about to knock on to gain admission to this fabled part of fandom.

I knocked. And knocked again. Time passed. I knocked again. I called out, but no-one was listening.... Either no-one was home, or they were hiding behind the drapes and giggling as the Wavering Thumb turned his back and retraced his steps down the road. It would be fair and just if that were so, since five years previously my first personal contact with Walt followed the first issue of *paraFANalia*, my own fanzine, which had included a merciless parody of *Hyphen*, the Willis fanzine: I'm sure I deserved to be taken down a peg or two!

Well, what to do? Lunchtime, an overcast day with threatening showers, and nowhere to go in a strange city, and the weather did not look kind. I remembered the two hitchhikers from Belfast and the vague date we'd made to meet in the Ulster capital.

Maybe I should look them up? I had an address quite a way across town, so decided to have a meat pie and coffee before finding buses and so on. The weather was a limiting factor, making the prospect of wandering round unwelcome, so I bussed into the middle of town, settled into a cheap cafe, and took my time with the meat pie. In a while, I sought a bus to get to Ann's place at 360 Antrim Road, in a suburb the other side of the city.

When I got there, wouldn't you know it... they were out. Probably still at work. Somewhere in here, I recall having a cup of tea with the landlady, contacting Ian McCauley, probably at work in the Royal Victoria Hospital, who told me there'd be a gathering of IF at Bob Shaw's home on the Thursday night, and set up a visit to John Berry's for the Wednesday night.

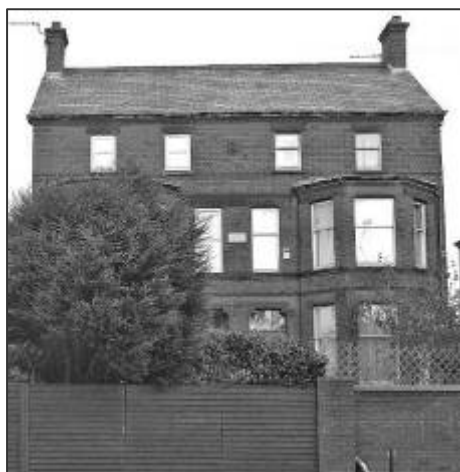
Eventually, Ann and Rosaleen got back from their work and we began to celebrate the reunion with dinner preparations, when in walked Eirik Larsen our Norwegian acquaintance! Surprisingly, we'd all kept the vague date we'd made back in Inverness! And, again, we shared a pot-luck dinner. But it was getting late, and Eirik and I made ourselves comfortable in our sleeping bags on the dining room floor (the only spare space for invading travellers).

In the morning, Eirik had to be off for his hiking round Northern Ireland because he was on a tight schedule that would see him back in Oslo within little more than a week, the very accommodating landlady set about contacting a friend of hers who might have a room to spare for me over the next week, and then I was given the job of driving the girls to work (in Ann's car), following which they gave me the car to use so I could get around the city more easily.

It never occurred to me until many years later that the girls showed great trust in handing the car over to a pretty-well complete stranger, but the times we lived in were more trusting, I guess.

Actually, in some ways the car was an inconvenience, and I parked it and made my way round the town centre by foot. I had nowhere I particularly wanted to visit, so just cruised around and my tracks eventually lead to a large courtyard with the largest, most chaotic, book fair I've ever seen. The courtyard was certainly fifty metres square, or more, and the concrete and cobbles were covered with tables bearing piles and stacks of books. I seem to remember there were paintings and furniture for sale, as well, but the amount of books was astounding. I couldn't find much SF

**Oblique House  
– a red-brick  
Victorian pile.  
(This is a  
modern picture)**



**Ann Wood,  
cooking dinner**



**Bruce and Ann,  
getting to know  
one another.**



**John Berry at  
his Belfast  
home. A slightly  
blurry picture  
but a precious  
record,  
nonetheless!**



there, but innumerable hefty tomes and large leather bound volumes made the table tops sag.

This was to prove to be a frustrating encounter with riches: how could I possibly carry any of the largesse from this book fair? I was hitchhiking, darn it, and luggage was not something I could take with me. As it was, I brought a few irresistible items as presents for the people I was visiting, but I had to steel myself against any further indulgence.

I picked up the girls at lunchtime and found we could drive out of the city to enjoy a lunch sitting on a haystack in the country – demonstrating the great advantage of living in a smaller city. The sun had come out on this second day, and it was almost like being at home, up in hills beyond the suburbs, looking down on the terraced streets and suburbs, and distantly admiring the port of Belfast. We made a picnic of it, sitting in the sunshine on some farmland, leaning our backs on a haystack.

My sparse notes of the times in Belfast are not much help to jogging the memory, and I suspect the interest I had in fannish matters had to take a back seat to the interests I had in being a tourist and chasing the girls. Well, come on, we were all young and healthy, so what would you expect? And would you waste time keeping a diary?

I remember very little of the visit I made that evening to the home of John Berry, and even my photo collection doesn't help me much there. A picture of Goon Bleary, a couple of family shots, and the whole evening must have been quite a gabfest because the only note I have in my diary is "Berry's in evening till 3.00am."! I felt that visit was an outstanding experience, because believe it or not, I was able to ascertain during it that all the things John wrote about were based on truth.

He *did* type with a standard manual typewriter with a broken carriage return spring so he had indeed tied a can of beans with a piece of string so that the weight of the can kept the typewriter working! John wrote about that evening visit in his SAPSzine, but I've never read the article because I've never been a member of SAPS.

The next evening, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 1962, I found myself surrounded by the Wheels of IF in the front room of Bob Shaw's home. The evening was delightful, and although I didn't make any notes, I do recall a little of the marathon punning session that developed.

Conversation was somewhat stilted as the minds of the assembled twisted and turned the meaning of words to enable a play on the words used by the person who had just finished speaking. It was like a conversation based on a free-association of each other's words, a curious experience which lasted quite a few minutes. Somehow, I found enough wit to join in a little, but really I was awed by the exchanges, and probably just sat goggle-eyed with wonder. \*

Much of the punning was on the inferred words, or meanings of words, which arose during conversation, and some of it was amazingly subtle. After all this time, the only dialogue I recall was WAW mentioning that Don Geldart and George Locke were in the Army, and both Sergeants. Bob Shaw asked why they were both sour gents, and I contributed the remark that "Ah me! It's the life they're leading." But I assure you, my slow wit couldn't keep up with the twists in the conversations for long!

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\* This was a favourite trick of Archie Mercer's when Rog Peyton and I visited him a few years later, trying to turn a pun from everything anyone said. We found it disconcerting, and after a while, extremely annoying! [pw]



Composite picture of Bruce's evening with the Irish fans; Bob Shaw, George Charters, Jim White, Sadie, Ian McCauley and Walt Willis. John Berry is not shown. Note the slightly bemused expression on Ann Wood's face!

I was able to shoot some film in my trusty Samoca camera, and I thought I captured some good images of these Giants of Fandom. I had taken Ann to the evening with me (as we were using her car, after all), and she agreed afterwards that we'd had a fine time in excellent company).

Walt Willis appeared a somewhat intimidating person, probably mainly because I had some knowledge of his background and his fannish activities, which were indeed awesome. He was tall and thin, with a towering forehead, and when he sat in an armchair he brought to mind images I had seen of the statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Monument.

I think you will see what I mean in the photograph. The other members of the Wheels of IF clearly held WAW in great esteem, and the way the room was arranged they faced him as a body of acolytes sitting at the feet of the great teacher. This might all sound rather formal, but the company was relaxed and we were just enjoying the time together.

George Charters was the quietest one amongst us, and although nothing was said then I learned later that he had a health issue and would soon have a serious operation at the very hospital where Ian McCauley practised his skills. In fact, on my next visit to Belfast a few months later I would make a point of visiting George at the hospital. Ian for his part reflected his newness among the Wheels with almost a youthful vigour and a lively sense of humour. James White sat back and let the others do the talking, although he was cheerful company, but the surprise for me was John Berry.

He was the vastly talented Goon Bleary, of *Retribution* and *Veritas* fame, the man whose Goon Defective Agency and wildly imaginative tales from the Emerald Isle had exploded the myth that Irish Fandom was only an intellectual and literary bunch.

Incredibly, at the time he was writing his gloriously outrageous stories he was a serving policeman in the Ulster Police Force. And not just any copper: he was an acknowledged fingerprint expert with an international reputation. Yet, he showed an astonishing modest deference to WAW, clearly considering himself to be a junior member of the Wheels of IF. I held John Berry in the highest esteem: *Hyphen* may have been a great fanzine, but I personally delighted in *Retribution*, to the extent of carrying a Goon Defective Agency ID card while hitching around GB! John was a fannish hero to me, and his modesty did nothing but reinforce his heroic standing in my eyes.

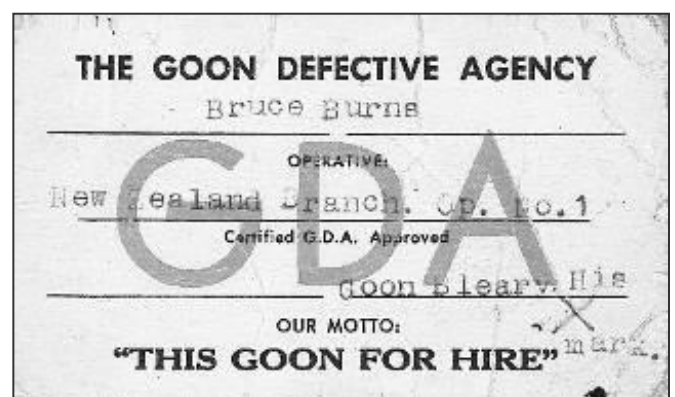
I'm sure that Madelaine Willis could have held her place in the tortuous wordplay of the evening, but she was in

another lady's home and our hostess was Sadie Shaw, who was hospitality personified. We enjoyed a supper and the evening ended with a feeling that we would all be delighted to share a similar occasion whenever possible.

I satisfied my tourist instincts the next day by visiting Belfast City Hall, the Belfast Castle near Cavehill, and viewing the Belfast Lough and Smithfield Markets, but on the Saturday the girls had organised a drive to the Mountains of Mourne, where we stayed at the Knochbarragh Youth Hostel, and walked the Mountains some more the next day. The weather was overcast the whole time, but there was a barren beauty to the Mountains of Mourne that was sombre and relaxing at the same time.

While the scenery and company made for a fine relaxing holiday, I could not be entirely unaware of the Troubles of Northern Ireland, even though my visit seemed to be in a lull between storms. On the drive to Knochbarragh, we'd paused to look at some of the ghastly tenement housing at Newry, one of the flashpoints in The Troubles, where the drear buildings and wasteland around them looked desolate. We took our leave of Knochbarragh and drove north to Belfast for one last night in the Ulster capital, then bright and early the next morning the Wavering Thumb reluctantly left this body of new friends and hitched his way to Dublin.

There were a couple of things I wanted to do in Dublin or Baile Atha Cliath as they say in the old Irish tongue. One aim was to view the Liffey, the river at the heart of the city, another was to walk across the O'Connell Bridge, and the third was to drink a Guinness stout in the first pub I might find there. Well, I struck it lucky as the main lift of the day was a businessman who not only made it easy for me to cross the border into Ireland from Ulster but dropped me off right beside the O'Connell Bridge.



In a few minutes I had achieved two of my aims in walking across the river Liffey by pacing the fifty metres or so of the O'Connell Bridge, reputed to be the only bridge in Europe as wide as it is long. I stood, surveying life in the Irish capital. There was only one pub among the shops facing me, so I made tracks directly to it.

It was more a street-side bar than what I considered a pub, a sort of step-in with a few tables and chairs. But it had a Guinness sign at the entrance and that was good enough for me, so I strode to the counter and ordered a half-pint of draught Guinness. The barman gave me a curious look, and as he pumped the stout I began to notice a strange silence had descended on the bar.

It had me puzzled, and I had an uncanny feeling someone was watching me. I dropped my rucksack to my feet, and casually turned to look over the room, but I couldn't see anything out of place, and although several of the eyes of other customers seemed to be looking in my direction, no one met my gaze, so I turned my back on them and slowly sipped my stout. It was all as it should be: a cool heavy drink with no sweetness but a soft texture to the brew. Mmmm. It was a warm day, and the drink was refreshing. I thanked the barman, picked up my backpack and made my way back onto the street.

It was ages later that I wondered about that strange silence in the bar. Remember, this was 1962 and I was in Dublin... and the backpack I was using was a gift my brother Chris had given me when he left the British Army. He told me it was a paratrooper's pack, and I'd always found it very convenient: the right size and weight with just enough capacity to take the small amount of gear I liked to hitchhike with, and it had straps to carry a sleeping bag on the bottom and another set of straps to hold my small tent and plastic mac on the top. But its design would be well known to the more militant members of the community. And this was Ireland. And this was Dublin. And this was 1962, a bit of a lull in The Troubles. And I had just crossed the O'Connell Bridge. Maybe I'd had a lucky escape....

My course was set to reach the ferry terminal at Dun Laoghaire (pronounced Dun Leeree), which was a good dozen kilometers from Dublin. I couldn't be bothered hitching there, and found a cheap bus trip was available just along the road, so took to the busses and arrived in good time to learn I'd have to wait several hours before the ferry would sail for Holyhead in Wales. I spent the time reading the small Fredric Brown paperback I'd brought with me for just this sort of purpose, ANGELS AND SPACESHIPS.

Then an elderly gentleman came into the bus shelter. He turned out to be a retired railwayman, who regaled me with many stories of the violent past in Ireland. He maintained many of the stories in history books were distortions of the truth, although how he could claim that I don't know. He had a different view from the history books, including the actual causes of much of the Irish struggle for nationalism where he said most of the trouble was caused by Irish republicans rather than English administrators.

Eventually, the ferry was ready for sailing, I made my way aboard, and soon the vessel quietly steamed away from the shore of Erin. I found a place to lie down and sleep, and we sailed into the night.

The ferry arrived at Holyhead just after midnight, and I had missed any opportunity to arrange a lift with any of the passengers who brought their cars on board, so I found a dry-stone wall in a farm field just out of the village, set up a primitive bivouac and climbed into my sleeping bag for the rest of the night. It was drizzling lightly, so I placed a large



**On the last lap of his journey, Bruce finds a reminder of home!**

plastic bag over my legs as further cover. Not the best idea: I woke rather damp from my own condensed sweat. What prompted me to wake fully and get up was a herd of curious cows who'd wandered over to see who the stranger was snoring in a corner of their field.

Then it was up and pack and get on my way because traffic was passing by and I needed some quick hitches to get me to Birmingham. First there was a mad drive in a speeding newspaper van which took me to Bangor, then short hitches to Colwyn Bay, St. Asaph, and Chester, Nantwich, Whitchurch, and eventually Kidderminster, which merges into Stourbridge, where I stayed the night again at the Cheslins.

The rest of that long hitch-hiking trip was almost entirely of a non-fannish nature, involving a very brief return to the slant shack in Kingdon Road and a week or so of crewing in a Gliding Championship in Dorset, so it wouldn't hold much interest for you in this fanzine. Maybe another time and another place? – Bruce Burn, 2010

*Bruce ended this journey but remained in the UK for nearly another two years, during which time he attended the first Peterborough convention (and produced some splendid colour images). So will there be a further instalment of 'The Wandering Ghu'? Stay tuned to this station! [pw]*

### **A technical note on Bruce's photographs**

The pix you have seen are scans of the contact prints I've had sitting on my desk for many years: rolled up and neglected and only reminded of them when reading a nice email from the *Multiverse* site 'Moorcock's Miscellany' (Reinart der Fochs or somesuch is the website moniker the person uses), and it reminded me of pictures I have of Mike in addition to my favourite one – the one from *Petercon*.

So I went out to my 'office' and grabbed the roll, steamed it to give it a bit of flexibility so I could unroll it and cut the strip into individual prints, which I then scanned individually and doctored a little in Picasa 3. The prints were not in very good condition, and were all available-light shots like most of mine, so I really didn't know how well they might scan, but, well you have the result.

I would wish the images had a bit more detail and a better exposure, but you have to remember these were all taken with a very rudimentary exposure meter built onto the camera, using available light, and the images you have were scanned from contact prints of 35mm negatives. [bb]

And now we move completely forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, where SF is a feted and respected part of the literary establishment – or is it? In the last issue Mike Ashley told us about his involvement with last year’s major SF exhibition at the British Library, and how he eventually came to write the accompanying book. Now, curator Andy Sawyer gives a behind-the-scenes account of how it was all put together, his perspective on what must have been the largest and best-attended science fiction event ever held in this country. [pw]

## ‘Out of this World’ – the exhibition

20 May – 25 September 2011

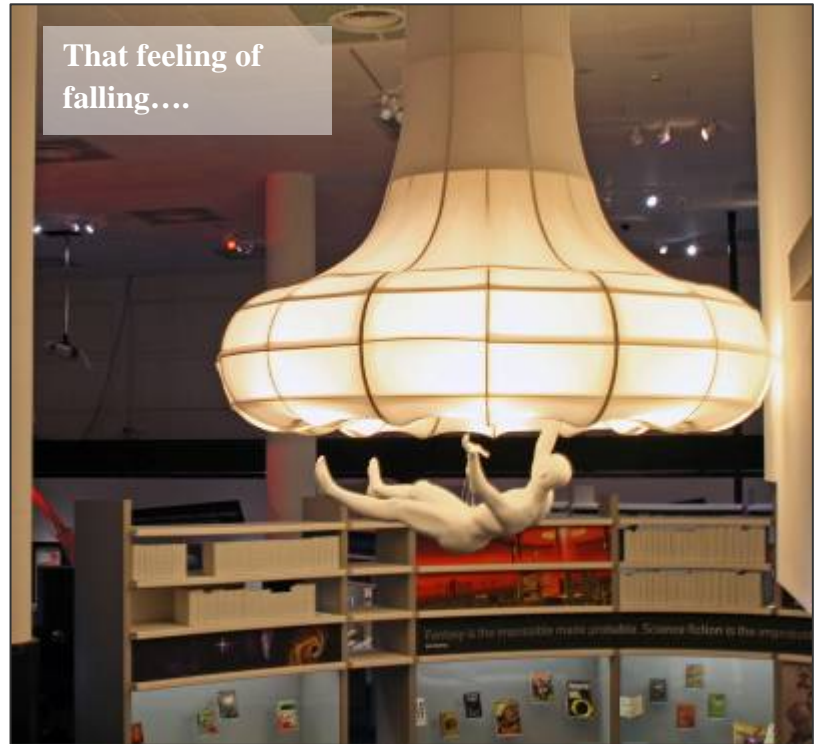
By Andy Sawyer

Illustrations on this  
page courtesy of the  
British Library

My involvement with ‘Out of This World’ actually began a few years earlier, when Geraldine Kenny of the BL’s exhibition team contacted me and came up to Liverpool to talk about ideas for an exhibition on science fiction. We tossed around some possibilities, and Geraldine went back and prepared some ideas which, however, never got beyond the initial “put it to the Committee” stage.

In 2010 she contacted me again and said that there had been some firmer ideas agreed, but the plan as then was had to be re-thought because the person running it had left. We talked around some more possibilities, and the result was that a few weeks later the BL asked me if I would be the external Curator of the exhibition, working closely with the Exhibitions team and the internal BL staff of specialist curators. And could I come up with some ideas about the scope and range and subject-matter of the exhibition?

Ignoring the fact that I had no experience at all of this kind of thing and with the phrase “jumping in at the deep end” resounding around my brain, I started writing extensive notes based upon the rough plan of what the BL wanted, and set off down to London. After meeting the team and a short period of firming up both what the BL wanted and what I felt I could do, it was go!



The first thing was to construct a kind of narrative for the exhibition: it's all very well to have cases full of stuff for people to look at, but what were they expected to take away from it?

The BL, obviously, wanted to showcase their own holdings; and to suggest to people who didn't necessarily come to their exhibitions that their store of the nation's literary treasures included a lot of more – er, *popular* material. They also wanted to show people who regularly came to their exhibitions, and might be nonplussed by the sudden shoot downmarket, that this thing called 'science fiction' was actually a lot more complicated than they thought it might be. We agreed pretty early on that we'd want to confuse people a bit and get them, perhaps, arguing about why we'd included some particular things.

Part of my briefing was point out to them that there was a core of *extremely* well-read people in the science fiction field to whom, perhaps, the idea that NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR and FRANKENSTEIN were science fiction novels was just a bit obvious – but even so, there could be things that even fandom might not expect.

I spent some time drawing up a chronology of significant dates in science fiction, and researching the very early roots of proto-science fiction, and contacting SF specialists in other countries for possible ideas.

At one point stealing the format of the recent British Museum's 'A History of the World in 100 Objects' was a working plan ('A History of Science Fiction in 100 Objects' is still something I'd quite like to do at some stage, if there are any publishers reading this) but eventually we decided on a format I'd been playing around with for some time in trying to explain SF to students and general audiences: that one way we could think about science fiction was as a number of "imaginary worlds".

By thinking variously of "the worlds of the future", the "alien worlds" of what *might* be out there in the universe, the "virtual worlds" of cyberspace and information technology, "parallel worlds" of time travel or alternative history, the "perfect worlds" of the utopias we dream of (and their opposites!) and the apocalyptic scenarios of the "end of the world", we get a pretty good coverage of what we experience when we read science fiction.

We would also be able to show the richness of the field by, for instance, showing that many of these things had been imagined by writers who wouldn't necessarily be associated with science fiction as most people think of it, and that these "worlds" were not separate spaces but often intertwined. Some of SF's great figures, like Wells and Mary Shelley, would be encountered time and time again.

After that, some logistics. There would be a book associated with the exhibition. It was pretty clear that I would not have the time for exhibition *and* book, and also that because of print deadlines the book would have to be ready some time before the exhibition was due to go live. It could not, in fact, be a catalogue. Which was just as well, because we were still debating whether there was room for some items a fortnight before the exhibition opened!

So who would write the book? Mike Ashley's name came up very early on in this discussion. I knew that he had previously worked on an exhibition (not to do with SF) at the BL. His HISTORY OF THE SF MAGAZINES for Liverpool University Press and the range of bibliographical work he's done in the field made him an obvious candidate as someone whose work I trusted and admired. The BL people thought highly of Mike from his previous work for them, and I knew Mike well enough from the *Fictionmags* list to be convinced that I could work with

him. Fortunately Mike accepted, and made many valuable suggestions (and provided many contacts) during the course of events. I am only sorry that I took him away from his work on the final volume of his LUP "history"!

Once that was done, all (all!) that needed to be done was help select the team that would do the physical design (a firm called REAL Studios) and draw up a list of objects to be exhibited, with the help of Katya Rogatchevskaia and Tanya Kirk (internal curators), and Janet Benoy from the Exhibitions team.

Around 400 items were to be whittled down to around 200: an almost impossible task made more – er – interesting by the fact that every so often someone (sometimes Mike, sometimes Katya or Janet, sometimes just someone who'd heard we were doing this), would come up with a suggestion. *And it would be a good one!* (which just made making decisions worse). Janet in particular was great at tracking things down: what she doesn't know about hollow-earth fiction, nobody knows.

At one point I was travelling to London every fortnight to examine things that Janet had pulled from the BL stock, when we'd discuss whether it was suitable for showing – not just because it was an important item in the story we were trying to tell, but was it visually interesting?

Right from the start, we had to face the problem of the "small brown book" – the object that was *\*really vital\** but also, frankly, boring to look at. One example was the first instance of a Bengali feminist utopia – to the uninitiated a couple of pages of text – or (my own particular favourite) Jane Webb's THE MUMMY!: A TALE OF THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY (1827).

At the opposite extreme was the embarrassment of riches. Which magazine covers would be used? Which of the many wonderful illustrations of H. G. Wells's novels would we reluctantly have to leave out? How could we possibly represent Jules Verne?

The title evolved into 'Out of This World: Science Fiction but Not as You Know It' – chosen eventually by the publicity team despite the fact that the Canadian National Library had used 'Out of This World' for a major science fiction exhibition a few years back, and '... but not as you/we know it' crops up everywhere! But it did fit. From the start we wanted to take a broad rather than a narrow view, to think upon what we now call "science fiction" as something with a history and a context. Or if you like, with several histories.

Without getting too academic about it, I think that science fiction is what you do when you write about how your world could be made different by a technological change, or a change in how we understand the world, so you can talk about SF in different cultures and different historical times but which have clear links to today's SF: Mary Shelley influences *\*anyone\** who writes about scientific experiments that go wrong; Lucian's 'True History' influenced H. G. Wells, who influenced Stephen Baxter, and so on.

What we wanted to do was avoid as far as possible the really pervasive images (all right, we ended up with a blue police box and the 'K9' robot from *Dr Who*) and look for things which would be relatively new to at least some of the people who come to see it.

As someone (I can't quite remember who, but I'm pretty sure he is a reader of *Relapse* pointed out), while the subtitle is 'not as you know it', for some it was *'exactly as we know it'*, but I hoped that for even *\*really\** hard-core SF fans there would be something they hadn't seen before, or thought of as appearing in an exhibition devoted to SF.



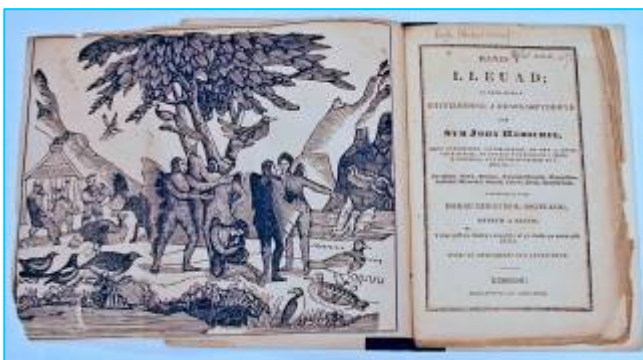
**Above: China Mieville addresses the gathered multitude. Right; Andy in his interview suit! Photos by Rob Hansen**

**The Great & the Good; Left, Geoff Ryman, top; Chris Priest; above, John Clute & Dave Langford smile benevolently.**

There were fortuitous discoveries. Among my favourites were Enrique Gaspar's *EL ANACRONOPETE* (1887) suggested by someone who knew the marvellous cover of the original and had come across the suggestion that it was the first novel to feature an actual time machine. It predates even the first version of Wells's *TIME MACHINE* ("The Chronic Argonauts") published in 1888.

Out of the publicity arising from this, Enrique Gaspar's great-granddaughter contacted me and sent some marvellous information about her ancestor. Coincidentally, Yolanda Molina-Gavilan and Andrea Bell, two experts in Spanish SF, were working on an English translation for Wesleyan University Press so I was eventually able to read it! It's a lovely piece of work.

There was a Welsh print of the inhabitants of the moon which were observed (according to the *New York Sun* in 1835) by the astronomer John Herschel, and I was very pleased that the BL not only had the original sheet music to the tune "A Signal from Mars", which apparently was inspired by signals that the inventor Nikola Tesla announced in 1901 that he had picked up, but that they had the first edition with two robed Martians observing Earth through a telescope – pointing the wrong way round!



**'The Moon Hoax', printed in Welsh! (1835)**

As well as books, there were manuscripts. It was a thrill to see mss from Angela Carter, and something of a scoop to have the first public showing of a J.G. Ballard manuscript, from the Ballard archive, which the BL had recently acquired. And there were the Brontës. The Brontës? Ah, this was one of our crafty wheezes. I'd always had a thing that the Brontës, writing stories for each other in which the Duke of Wellington was one of the main

characters, set in their slightly fantastic otherworld of Angria, were doing fan-fiction. That wasn't to say that *JANE EYRE* or *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* were science fiction (though both contain supernatural elements) but the Brontës were exploring fantastic "otherworlds" in a way not unlike modern writers of what John Clute calls *Fantastyka*.

And imagine my delight when I discovered, in one of these stories, that there were balloons between England and Angria; if Mary Shelley and Jane Webb were writing a kind of SF in imagining the potential use of a current technology, so was Charlotte Brontë!

Sadly, the Brontë scholars who were wheeled out to enquire about this tended to agree with me, so we never did get the heated debate that I was partly hoping for.

One of the music curators got really into selecting possible songs to include on the sound-points people could sit at and listen to. We only had space for a couple of dozen, so that brought the whole selection dilemma close to critical. I got the Ran-Dells "The Martian Hop" in, but lost out on the Handsome Family's "Tesla's Hotel Room" which isn't actually *about* early pulp magazines but evokes that atmosphere of "the last days of wonder" with Tesla dreaming of disintegrating planets and photographing thoughts. On the other hand, I was introduced to the wonderful SF surf-guitar of 'Man or Astroman?'

Were there things I would have done differently? Of course. It would have been good to have showed more British SF magazines. It would have been good to have more film clips. It was a shame we never got to display the ms of *FRANKENSTEIN* (which is actually held at the Bodleian library), because it was being used elsewhere.

It was important to me that we showed at least one fanzine (Walt Willis's *Slant* was the one finally chosen: getting something by Walt Willis into a British Library exhibition appealed to my sense of fun and general appropriateness) and I was delighted when someone actually noticed! But I don't think we had the space to do this side of things justice: I would have liked the space to have had fandom as another "world".

And while the lack of *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and blockbuster film/TV generally was a conscious decision, we could have used more comic-book material. Yes, Dan Dare was there, but I wish, now, we could have used something from Sydney Jordan's wonderful "Jeff Hawke" strip, even if it had been simply blowing up panels and projecting them.

Some foreign-language material that I wanted to use simply wasn't *there* – in the end, our two examples of modern Chinese SF were books donated by a science fiction scholar from China – and we could have done more to have shown SF as a global field.

One approach which had to be jettisoned for various reasons involved a greater use of film clips or stills, music, art and even stamps (there are some wonderful SF-related stamps in the BL's philately collection) to show how a particular theme or author had been picked up on by all these media. Again, perhaps at another exhibition.

And there were a few hiccups on the way. The BL doesn't keep covers (look: don't get me started on this one!) so on one occasion we had to hunt around for copies of books we wanted to show, but which wouldn't have made the point without the cover. One author didn't like the cover of the first edition of her novel, and wondered if we'd use the paperback cover instead. (We didn't: but she was cool with that decision). I discovered that it really *is* true that the SF Foundation Library is in many ways a better and richer record of "core" science fiction than the British Library.

Because of work commitments, I didn't get to most of the talks during the summer, and missed out on some of the filming that was done before the opening, including a visit by Margaret Atwood (who, I was told, was very appreciative and a great guest). The few weeks before the opening – when text had to be written and re-written to get the captions down to 25 words, and decisions suddenly had to be made about cutting x or y vitally important item because a display case had to be moved or redesigned and the space available was suddenly less – were a blur. Though everyone – the British Library staff, people at work when I suddenly had to disappear for an afternoon for a hastily-arranged video-conferencing meeting, friends and family when I ate, drank and breathed 'Out of this World' non-stop – was very supportive.

There were wonderful highlights. We managed to at least point to my own little obsession – that SF was born when Jane Webb decided that the future was a cool place to set a novel in and "borrowed" ideas from Mary Shelley.

Very early on, we reserved a place for whatever would win the Arthur C. Clarke award that year, and not only was Lauren Beukes' *ZOO CITY* a great choice, especially because it fit squarely in the questions we were trying to put to people who came to the exhibition: is this science fiction? Why do we think it is (or isn't) SF? Lauren was interviewed the day after the award was announced and went down well. China Mieville got it absolutely right on the ball when he opened the exhibition, and was a star on the TV and radio reports he did.

And I was personally delighted by one brief meeting. Just about everyone of my age who became a fan became so after listening to Charles Chilton's *Journey into Space* on the BBC in the 1950s. Absolutely wonderful – first landing on the moon, and it's 1965 and it's the British Commonwealth behind it and there are these brilliant aliens which knock spots off anything in *Doctor Who*. So when Mike Ashley told me Chilton had the script of the very first episode, we *had* to have that. It was the fan-boy experience of my life to meet Charles Chilton (who sadly died earlier this year), shake his hand and say "Mr Chilton, thank you. All this is \*all your fault\*."

Did it work? Well, most people seemed to think so. Every so often, ideas were sent off to focus groups (which made me nervous) but they generally came back approved. The target of attendance the BL set for the exhibition was exceeded by 15% (the final visitor total was 114,878). The

public events programme was the second highest combined attendance for any events programme yet run in association with an exhibition, and comfortably in excess of its target.

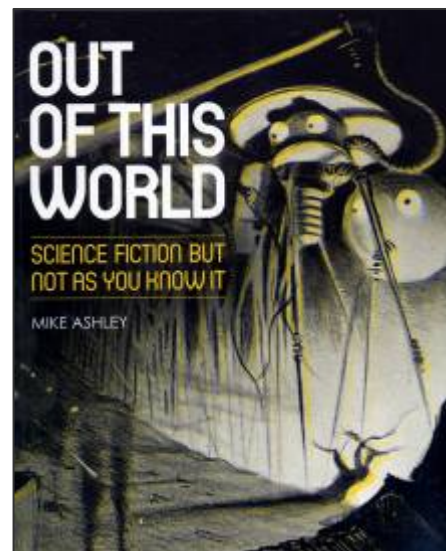
It was also the highest grossing of all exhibition events programmes to date, apparently boosted by a much higher than usual percentage paying full price for their tickets rather than concessions – so much for the greying of fandom! The events programme went through May-July and then there was something with Neil Gaiman in September. [Andy sent a list of some 27 separate events, with various guest speakers including Norman Spinrad and Niall Ferguson – pw]

We had a few reviews which made snide remarks about the fact that it appeared to be mostly about books (Hello? Yes, I went to an exhibition about symbolist art a few weeks back and it was full of bloody *paintings!*). But media stuff was secondary, partly because the focus was on the BL's resources (which of course were mostly print) and partly because there are plenty enough big exhibitions of film/TV things which would have done it better!

It must have been the first time the British Library got a special BSFA award . . .

Would I do it again? Ask me again in a few years time, perhaps. But I'm glad I did it, if only to get the opportunity to shake the hand of the man who made me a science fiction fan.

– Andy Sawyer, 2012



*In the last issue I suggested that the cover image on Mike's book sent out the killer-message that this was 'just more sci-fi', to which Andy replies... [pw]*

I'm not sure that I agree that the image sends the wrong idea. To be realistic about it, the words 'science fiction' would turn a lot of people away, whatever the image. I hoped, I think that 'British Library' might at least spark their curiosity as to what would actually be there.

Mike will know better than me, but the Correa image for *WAR OF THE WORLDS* – a very fine French edition published in Brussels in 1906 – was picked by the marketing team and put on all the publicity (posters, bookmarks) so I don't know how far there was a choice of it for the book. Thinking back, I don't know if I would have gone with it if it had been my own choice, but I think it's a mixture of familiarity (the Martian tripods) and strangeness (not the versions we usually see).

I can't say that the expression 'sci-fi' *wasn't* used in conversation during our meetings, but I did try (and I hope succeeded) not to have it anywhere in the exhibition unless it was *meant* to be there, if you see what I mean!



# THE REFERENCE LIBRARY

## BY P. SCHUYLER WESTON

### **BENCHMARKS CONTINUED**

**F&SF 'Books' Columns, 1975-1982**

**By Algis Budrys, 266 pages, soft cover.**

Published by Ansible Editions, 2012, £12.22

Available from: Lulu website.

What a massive labour of love, both by Budrys himself and by Greg Pickersgill and Dave Langford who've scanned 47 of his columns from *F&SF* for this book. It will be followed by two further volumes which will reprint all Budrys' reviews up to January 1993, following on from the original collection of columns from *Galaxy*, 1964-71.

It's been fifty years, almost exactly to the day since I discovered Damon Knight's *IN SEARCH OF WONDER*, a book which made such a deep impression on me that I was galvanised into starting a sercon fanzine at a time when this was a deeply unfashionable thing to do. Nothing remotely compared with that until Budrys came along.

He's not quite as incisive as Knight, more wordy, sometimes almost self-indulgent, but there were some great moments in the first book and his verdict on Ballard was a major comfort to me in the sixties; "A story by J. G. Ballard, as you know, calls for people who don't think.... characters who regard the physical universe as a mysterious and arbitrary place and who would not dream of trying to understand its actual laws." Exactly!

There's nothing quite as sharp as that in the new volume though I was pleased to see Budrys poking a sharp stick at Frank Herbert for *GOD EMPEROR OF DUNE* in particular and for all his other books in general. Herbert might be the best-selling SF writer in the world but that doesn't mean he was any good. (Page 211)

And I was amused by his scathing verdict on Judith Merril; "What Only a Mother' says about women is that the unique essence secreted by feminine intelligence under stress is paranoid schizophrenia" (Page 19).

Lots of other little gems in there, but stop and think about it for a minute; Budrys read and commented on SF books every month for 30 years, a task which would have driven lesser men mad! (Perhaps this is why, on the one occasion I visited him in Evanston in 1979, he would only talk about bicycles rather than science fiction!) It's an impressive record but I can't help feeling it's a pity Budrys didn't spend more time writing the stuff himself, since in his

prime he was one of the best writers around. Still, we do get a couple of pages on his own *MICHAELMAS* which explain some of the thought-processes that went into creating this less-than-satisfactory novel (sorry, Greg).

I enjoyed this new volume immensely, mainly because it covers probably the last period during which I can claim to have been reasonably *au fait* with new SF, having read roughly two-thirds of the titles covered as they came out (soon afterwards I got a life). Highly recommended.

### **STRANGE HIGHWAYS**

**Reading Science Fantasy, 1950-1967**

**By John Boston & Damien Broderick, 372 pages**

Published by Wildside Press, 2013

Available from Amazon on Kindle, £2.55 (and hard-copy?)

I can't help feeling slightly proprietorial about this one although its appearance did come as a complete surprise.

John Boston was of course a long-ago contributor to *Speculation* and I was pleased to find him alive and well on the e-lists when I joined electronic fandom sometime around the turn of the century. Quite soon afterwards he started his issue-by-issue reading of the British prozines – *New Worlds*, *Science Fantasy* & *SF Adventures*, writing-up his opinions as he went along. I was impressed enough to complete my own set of the magazines (via Bob Wardzinski) and for a time followed in his footsteps (reaching *NW* #41 and around *SF* #20 before being side-tracked). Soon afterwards John left the e-list of which I was a member.

But I didn't forget, and early last year, inspired by Dave Hodson's idea of doing a 'New Worlds' special issue, I asked John if he would write-up his postings as an article, or series of articles. In August he even sent me a draft – it ran to 38,000 words – but by then I was deep into my sabbatical and regrettably, did nothing with it.

So I was amazed when a few weeks ago John advised me that he'd completed three volumes, two on *New Worlds* (yet to appear) and this one on *Science Fantasy*. John quickly disabused me of any illusions, however, by telling me that it was "actually a long-standing project, done as a series of posts in the *Fictionmags* group from about 2003 to 2008, and what we were discussing a couple of years ago was "a whittled-down version of the early book ms. on *NW*'s beginnings."

But I still feel involved with the project, especially with his comments on early issues. It's always encouraging to see that someone else agrees with one's opinions (for instance, John says that J.T. McIntosh "grates" on his sensibilities and I know exactly what he means. McIntosh had the infuriating habit of writing glibly and entertainingly around some of the most utterly stupid plot-situations).

John works his way through issue after issue and only occasionally loses his patience with some particularly idiotic story. He's done his research, so there are plenty of interesting snippets along the way – for instance, he quotes a letter from Brian Aldiss that reveals the cavalier manner in which Ted Carnell accepted one of his best short stories, 'The Failed Men'. As Brian wrote, "One wants appreciation as well as money. Particularly money on Carnell's miniscule scale".

It's a fun-read, and though so many of the stories are unmemorable I found myself repeatedly going back to my shelves to look up some particularly intriguing-sounding item (or cover). In other words just like REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING. Now if this doesn't encourage Sandra Bond to finish her commentary on *Nebula*, nothing will!

### **VULTURES OF THE VOID – THE LEGACY**

**By Philip Harbottle, 410 pages, soft cover**

Published by Cosmos Books, 2011

Available from Amazon, £10.00

Good old Phil! For longer than I've known him (1964) he's been chugging away on his massive research project to find out just about everything about just about every SF book or magazine that appeared in Britain up to about 1960 or so. One would have to have a heart of stone not to observe that the vast majority of these titles were absolute rubbish, but then I think Phil knows that; his interest is of much the same kind as that of the intrepid botanist who crawls through the bushes to catalogue unknown specimens of butterflies (or someone who collects old photographs of SF fans for that matter) and who's to say which is the more worthy enterprise?

The present book is the result and it's a massive compilation, although after a while I found I was starting to skip the repeated stories of cynical publishing skulduggery which brought the reputation of SF to an all-time low in this country. But it also contains some absolutely fascinating accounts from people who were there at the time.

Phil kindly allowed me to run two excerpts from the book, from Chapters 3 (early fandom) & 13 (the hardcover explosion), in *Relapse* #17 & # 18 respectively, and these are worth reading in the full versions. There are also several long passages from Gordon Landsborough, one of the forgotten founding fathers of British magazine SF, which are absolutely required reading and all credit to Phil for finding Gordon in later years and getting him to tell his story.

There's a great deal more; the awful tale of the 'Prisoner in the Cellar'; a long piece about *Nebula* (are you taking note, Sandra?), and a sad account of Phil's own trials with *Vision of Tomorrow* from 1969 onwards, where he seems to have been the naïve young enthusiast up against a wicked world – a role with which I once had more than a little familiarity myself! Then there's the disaster of the VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, when once again someone took advantage of his generosity.

Finally, Phil has already accepted my explanation that *Speculation* was not 'against' *VoT* because of the minor incident noted on Pages 301-2. The truth is much simpler; at the time I too was an idealist, and just wanted his magazine to print better stories!

### **JOHN BRUNNER**

**By Jad Smith, 184 pages, soft cover**

Published by the University of Illinois Press in their 'Modern Masters of Science Fiction' series, \$21.95

If he were alive today John Brunner would absolutely *love* this book! To be called a 'modern master', to have his every story respectfully discussed and analysed, to be hailed by an associate professor of English as 'one of the most prolific and influential SF authors of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century'.... All his life he craved this sort of praise.

But 'influential'? I can't think of anyone who was 'influenced' by JB, except as an example of how *not* to do it! Time after time Prof. Smith says things like 'Brunner grounded his SF in craft and conscience, in concepts falling between oppositions such as art and commerce, and optimism and pessimism', and 'he wanted to raise the noise level of the genre through an infusion of topical and social themes, some drawn from the mainstream'.

Well, I'll leave that sort of judgment to Tom Shippey; I just read science fiction because I enjoy it (and I *don't* mean only for action-adventure but for the genuinely mind-stretching nature of the very best stories). So while this is a really fascinating study in lots of ways, my own perspective on Brunner is quite different.

His books were too much like hard work. What's wrong with his fiction is the same thing that was wrong with the man – too spiky, too in-your-face. You could never relax with John Brunner or with his books either, because they would keep on trying to demonstrate how much more clever than you they were.

I cringed at some of the plot-summaries of JB's later novels; who would ever want to read this stuff for pleasure? And that's the trouble, of course, no-one *did* want to read it. It's a mark of his complete failure as a commercial writer that he consistently failed to deliver what people actually wanted, at a time when SF/fantasy titles produced by much lesser intellects were selling in big numbers.

That doesn't mean he had to follow any particular 'formula' because the SF field has embraced all sorts of different approaches – the sincerity of LeGuin, the mad exuberance of Fritz Leiber, the inventiveness of Iain Banks, the sheer readability of vintage Heinlein and the magical charm of Jack Vance, to name but a few. But all Brunner gave us was a series of mechanical constructs, peopled with unlikeable and unsympathetic characters. Who would ever want to re-read a Brunner novel for fun? I only read them in the first place out of a misplaced sense of duty!

There's a good quote here from Terry Carr who said "relevant SF represented an updated form of 'Gernsback's delusion'. While it popularised ideas from the soft rather than the hard sciences, it appropriated SF for didactic ends, reduced the future to a metaphor for the present, and neglected entertainment value." Just so!

Then there's the matter of Brunner's 'difficult' personality, which is here partly excused by called him a 'perfectionist'. But he just couldn't help making enemies, generally without even realising he'd done so. Here's a silly little example from my own experience; in 1970 at *Sci-con* I held a small party in my (very small) hotel bedroom for people who had contributed to *Speculation*. Because it was early in the evening and (I admit it!) I wanted to be a bit more up-market than usual, I served sherry rather than beer. All very civilised, until as he was leaving John Brunner paused to say, "thank you for the cooking sherry".

He took me by surprise, but I was offended at his gratuitous rudeness. So, eventually, was just about everyone else in British SF fandom. [pw]

# The Melting Pot

Maybe Steve is suggesting that some of these letters are too hot to handle?

So don't let things get *too* heated or we'll have total meltdown! Irresistible editorial interjections in *italics* and *[brackets]* in the usual way.



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

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“I'm now aware that the problem with *Relapse* is that you pick it up, four hours go by, and you come back to awareness of the outside world.” – Bob Parkinson, LoC

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*[And we're away, with a great start by Charles. He paints a vivid image in this LoC, one that I wanted to use for the cover, but despite going through the best part of fifty Giles annuals I couldn't find a suitable cartoon. We shall just have to imagine that on-going Eternal Banquet of Relapsarians!]*

**Charles Platt**  
[plattland@gmail.com](mailto:plattland@gmail.com)



*Charles in 2011.  
His picture.*

Hello Peter,

I only pick up my mail once a week, out here in the wilderness, and today was the day when I found *Relapse-20* in my mail box. What a pleasure!

There is still something magical about a fanzine. The look of the ink on the page, the sharpness of the typesetting spread across two A4 sheets. I'm glad to have this little memorial to those confused years. I really like the way you assembled all the photographs *[in my article]*, including those that you found yourself. The one of Barry Bayley really disconcerted me. I remember him so well, looking like that.

I admire your dedication, Peter (twenty issues of this zine, so far!). You have performed a serious service, enabling people to contribute to this chronicle of British fandom. I mean that; it's remarkable. What a fine thing to do, for a subculture that otherwise would have been forgotten.

The trouble is, I have never been capable of dealing with the prospect of aging and death. I can only cope by pretending that it isn't really happening, and *Relapse* deprives me of that option. It's like a fictitious message from an alternate universe in which time accelerated and, as a result, everyone suddenly became horribly old. But no, it's worse, because I am *in* that alternate universe, and I cannot get out. The ending of this story is like one of those old EC horror comics, where a living, breathing corpse, with pieces falling off it, finally stops living and breathing.

I realize I am projecting my own neuroses onto the fanzine. In fact it is upbeat, all the way through. No one else seems to share my dismay at what has happened to us. People seem cheerful. But that's just a different kind of nightmare, where the people who have contracted some terrible disease and are somehow not aware of what has happened to them.

I imagine them all sitting around a big table, eating bad British food of the type we knew in the 1960s, drinking beer—and someone slips off his chair, and collapses onto the floor. His head breaks free from his body and rolls away across the floor. But no one even notices! They all continue chatting and eating and drinking!

The effect is accentuated for me because I haven't seen a lot of these people since the early 1970s. So, the way they look in the old photographs merely confirms my memory of them, and memories do not age. Those memories are in my head, right beside memories of what I ate for dinner yesterday. But then I see the photographs that were taken recently, and—my God, when did this all happen? Didn't I see Ian Watson at the Brighton Worldcon? Wasn't that just last year? No, some time around 1980, but it *feels* like last year.

I'm amazed that you can immerse yourself in all this. You always were a very cheerful person, with a great spirit. I guess you are the right man for the job, on this project. Well, thanks for doing it. I feel grateful to you for using my reminiscences and digging up all those additional photographs. But, I have to say, when I look at the pictures of people as they are today, I'm not sure how to deal with this painful reality. I have no problem reading (or writing) material about the past, because that still feels very much alive to me. But the recent photographs prove to me that I am in (as Greg Benford puts it) “the end game.”

*[Good of you to be so generous, Charles, I'm so pleased at our recent rapprochement!]*



*Sensitive fannish face? Charles in 1964, from an early cine film by Dick Howett [pw]*

[Here's an event; the first time fellow 'Ancient Brummie' (to use Darroll's term) Ed James has done a LoC for *Relapse*. But he was there, in those far-off times of long ago, and remembers Charles well ...]

**Edward James**  
edward.james  
@ucd.ie



Edward in 1964,  
from that same  
cine film by Dick  
Howett [pw]

Dear Peter,

I was fascinated to read Charles Platt's piece in *Relapse 20*. I had been sorting through my vague memories of Charles ever since last summer, when his daughter Rose Fox stayed with us for a few days in London. But seeing the events of the mid-1960s through Charles' eyes was enlightening. I had not realised, for instance, why when I talked to him at the Birmingham Eastercon in 1965, he had been so incredibly rude and negative about my intentions to study at Oxford. He made me feel as if I was about to commit a crime, or ruin my life, by wanting to be at such an elitist place. I see now that it was because he himself had been almost suicidally unhappy as a first year student at Cambridge. (Well, I had a great time myself at Oxford...)

I also remember the episode with the wardrobe, which was also at Birmingham (in the old Midland Hotel). I was one of those who witnessed him being shut in it. As I remember it (contrary to his own memory) the wardrobe was indeed turned on its face, while someone large (Moorcock?) danced on its back. I was there with Terry Pratchett, I think (we were inseparable at the time); I was only a spectator – the story of my life. I hadn't realised (if Charles's piece in *Relapse* can be trusted) that this temporary imprisonment was because of a bad review that he had written of Aldiss's book *EARTHWORKS*; I suspect I just thought that Charles was being obnoxious again. Which, as I remember it, he often was...

But, even so, when I talked to him I was in a state of some awe. I was seventeen then, and he was nineteen; he had been to university already, and left it (I think I was left with some vague feeling that it had all been beneath him; I certainly did not know about his extreme unhappiness). He was writing science fiction, and had even published it (although his first novel *GARBAGE WORLD* would not be out until 1967). And above all he was on close terms with people like Moorcock, and Aldiss, and Ballard, and Langdon Jones. I was in awe of all these *New Worlds* people even though, as I realised then, or a year or two later, I didn't actually enjoy most of what they were writing at the time. And I still don't-- although, come to think of it, *GARBAGE WORLD* was quite fun!

[A novel which quite explicitly depicted SF fans living among piles of festering junk and rubbish, neatly mirroring Charles' opinion of us at the time. And now here we are in the future, Edward, with him in Arizona, Terry is world-famous, you're a Professor in Dublin and I'm still doing fanzines! - pw.]

**Peter Nicholls**  
petenich@big  
pond.net.au



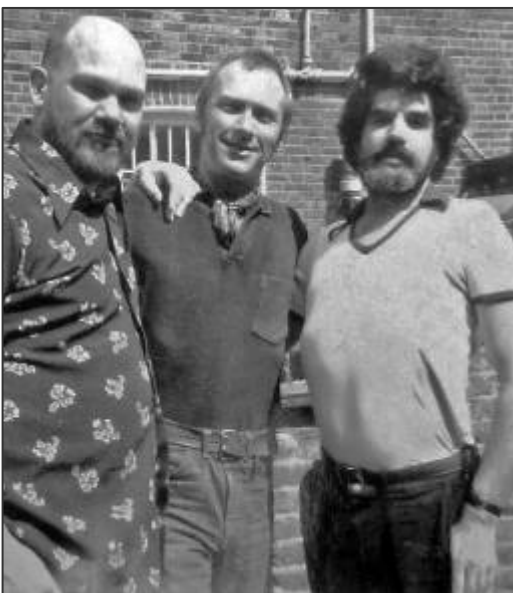
Peter from the  
1970s and in  
2012. See text

Dear Peter,

Once again you have seduced me into loccing you about life in a world long ago in a galaxy far, far away. I've now read *Relapse 20*, and the experience is not unlike pigging-out on a big bar of sweet dark chocolate, with just a dash of bitterness to keep it from being merely a sugar rush. Fan history is addictive to those who were actually there at the time. One of the things I like in *Relapse* is the way you use recent photographs of people I once knew well, and the deep satisfaction one gets from seeing that some of them have aged even faster than I have. Even the once baby-faced have aged into wrinkledom, such fine young chaps as Charles Platt and Rob Hansen. You, Peter, have survived less changed than many.

The picture of James Cawthorn, on the other hand, shows him looking rather younger than I remember, even though it was taken, you say, in 1989. (I was surprised to read that photos of Jim are hard to find. I saw a fair bit of him, because in the 70s he often popped round to visit Hilary Bailey, my then-girlfriend; he died not all that long ago, in December 2008. Hilary and her ex-husband Mike Moorcock would probably have photos of him).

You can judge of the way I looked in the past compared to now from the three photographs I attach, two from the mid-seventies (photos Judith Clute) featuring John Clute and myself with Tom Disch at John Clute's place in London, and one taken a month ago showing the me of the present day waiting for a geyser to go off in Rotorua, New Zealand, photo by Clare Coney.



There are dissatisfactions, too, in reading memoirs of a period when you were less than half your present age, one being the vivid feeling that even though we were once better-looking, we weren't better-behaving, and that during the 1970s in particular, in the world of SF at least, many of us were twats. Charles Platt's vivid reminiscences endorse that reaction, and I'm glad that he did not include me among the subjects he covers, though with typical in-your-face honesty, he includes a confession of his own arrogance at that time. I was pretty arrogant too, but I never dismissed Charles as merely malicious, as so many at the time did. I didn't know Charles well, but I did like him, and certainly enjoyed him; there was something almost Asperger's Syndrome-ish about the way he faced the world, calmly, and as if baffled at why people got so angry when they talked to him. In the pulp comic-strip world of the SF community, one was never quite sure which Charles was, Batman or the Joker. I found his reading of John Sladek's character touchingly accurate.

But as I said at the beginning, too much chocolate is involved in reading (as an old man) memoirs involving the world of one's youth. Naturally I had a much higher profile then than now, but I'm certain that I'm a better husband and father than I was way back when, so any regrets I harbour are mitigated by common sense.



Hilary Bailey,  
1963. Photo by  
Bruce Burn

I am not the aggressive entrepreneur I was during the period just after that covered by Charles. Good news that there might be more reminiscences from him. Glad to hear it. (Rather not be in them, of course, but prepared to sacrifice myself in the cause of art). I only came to London in 1970 (and stayed until 1988). So my immediate memories of the period begin immediately after the end of the period of the memoirs in *Relapse* 20.

Anyway, I enjoyed Charles' piece, though would have liked it even more if it had included my friends the Clutes, Hilary Bailey, Christopher Priest, Mike Harrison and Samuel Delany. Perhaps you should commission a follow-up article. But you will not be commissioning anything more from me.

That is because I have just begun the third year since I was officially diagnosed as having entered the state of Parkinson's Disease Dementia. I was able, starting from a bit of a plateau, to conceal this cognitive degeneration for the first year and a half, but there's no concealing it now. You can probably pick up on it just reading this loc. But I continue to be fascinated by the process. How successfully can one monitor one's own damaged brain, when the monitoring is done by this same brain? I can still follow the process a bit though, it's a little as if overhead, without any fuss, the brain cells are going out, each giving a small flash of light as it dies. I won't however, give up without a struggle and sink into the restful ending evoked in 'The Nine Billion Names of God' (copyright Arthur Clarke, who knew more about metaphor than he is often given credit for); and that is why I'm loccing you, at your request, instead of helping Clare dress the Christmas tree, which has a Tardis on top instead of an angel. One never really escapes that SF world.

[Thanks Peter, What can I say about your Parkinson's problem; it certainly isn't apparent from your letter, and I can only hope that this 'degeneration', as you put it, will be a slow one. Charles has talked about another article, loosely titled 'After the Wave', which I hope to publish here. -pw]

John Clute

[jclute@gmail.com](mailto:jclute@gmail.com)



John smiles  
benignly at  
LXcon, 2009.  
Photo by Ian  
Whates

Hi Peter,

First a comment on your Unanswered Questions from issue 20. I think it's pretty clear that Frank Arnold willed to the SF Foundation what remained to him after he had variously disposed of parts of his library. My copy of E. R. Eddison's THE WORM OUROBOROS, which I've had for 30 years or more, has two previous ownership markers: 1) the bookplate of 1920s cricketer S A P Kitcat; 2) the signature of Frank Arnold, dated 29 June 1971 (I'm assuming it's the same man, though his middle name is missing).

But I'm dropping you a note mainly about other things.

It wasn't until the late 1970s that I began to meet some of the people who'd been at the heart of UK SF in the previous decades, so I've been using *Relapse* to bone up on all sorts of stuff I missed during my first years here in London, when all I knew of the London scene was what I saw through the prism of *New Worlds*, which is to say through a glass, darkly. So I'd not commented on anything yet.

Issue 20 does contain, however, a couple of pieces I might add one or two bits to. Charles Platt's article on *New Worlds* is, as usual during these latter years when he's recollecting the past, concise, fair, clearer than glass. I've little to correct in his comments (and I've been told that Malcolm Edwards was far too young to be the unidentified figure in 'The Bellyflops' photo: though it certainly looks like Malcolm looking. . .). Should say though that I loved the Ballard anecdote -- accords with my slightly later sense of him as a hard benthos to plumb. And Judith Merrill made no bones about looking at men for their good bits as though she were a man clocking a woman; she did it to me, a few years later, when I was back in Toronto for a bit. With the same result: I was OK to help load the car, but not needed later. I thought she was superb.

Charles's long friendship with Tom Disch was difficult, as were most friendships with Tom; certainly as Tom saw every event (and every friendship) in his life in terms of theatre, and almost every sentence he uttered as a *line* to be understood dramaturgically, it could be exceedingly difficult to get a suss on what one might think of as the underlying reality of a situation or a scene. I know Charles got under his skin (Charles does not play reality games), and I think Tom responded to him at times the way white corpuscles respond to cold calls. Charles is convinced, and I suspect he's right, that Tom did not think highly of his fiction (his approbation range for potential rivals was narrow, hey), and I also suspect that his comments on Charles's fiction were taxidermical. In any case, if Tom 'is astonished' by something -- as per Charles's rendering of a typical moment of cruelty -- it is almost certain that he was playing at being astonished; and might even have rehearsed the put-down in advance.

A few further comments: Tom's nervous breakdown referred to by Charles was by no means his first. When he and Pamela Zoline and I were living together in New York in 1962-63, he went off the edge at least twice, disappearing on each occasion for some time (he always went to ground, I think, back in his old coldwater flat on Thompson Street, south of Greenwich Village, fount of his great early story, 'The Roaches'). He was already used to descending without brakes.

Charles's low estimate of CAMP CONCENTRATION is an arguable take, but is clearly predicated on his sense that *Faust* is 'archaic and irrelevant', and that Goethe's drama fatally scants the central value of science-based change; I think Charles may be missing here the Donald Trump side of Faust's insatiable consumption of the world, a side the young Marx cottoned onto, and so did Tom pretty clearly. (I think Charles, when he focuses on Tom's exterminating gloom, may also be scanting the long tradition in English fantastika of the Scientific Romance, which tends not to focus much on the transcending of 'limitations through technology'.)

My memory of being told about the actual writing of CAMP CONCENTRATION is that it was essentially laid down in the flat in Camden Town where Tom and Pamela Zoline and John Sladek lived together in 1967, and that Judith Clute and I moved into a few years later. I always understood that Pamela's illustrations for its *New Worlds* publication were done alongside the finishing of the manuscript,



Tom Disch  
outside the St  
Annes Hotel,  
Buxton, 1968.  
Photo by Stan  
Nicholls



Tom Disch, 2008.  
Photo from  
Wikipedia

just before the threesome trifurcated (but remained close for decades: John died in 2000, of a congenital lung condition; Tom killed himself in 2008; I talked to Pamela yesterday). Charles's description of his inking of Pamela's pencilled lines is purely hilarious. Main point here may be that the vertiginous half-year or so in Camden Town was an aliquot sample of the larger vortex of *New Worlds*: a cenacle filled with heat and hot air and genius; a seizing of the day with dusk falling pretty fast.

Mike Ashley's piece, on the long process of calibrating his book *OUT OF THIS WORLD* in tune with the British Library exhibition in 2011 it accompanied, is amused, amusing, good-tempered as Mike always is; but maybe a bit too kindly once or twice.

The British Library's decision, in the dawn of time, to discard dust-wrappers (i.e. actual wrappings which had to be undone before the book could be opened) may have been pragmatically sensible (though actual dust-jackets boasting typography and even graphics were clearly in existence by 1850), but the retention of this practice was conspicuously obtuse, even pig-headed; this is putting it gently. Mike's reference to the storing of these discarded jackets in the Victoria & Albert is too gentlemanly (but then Mike is a deeply decent guy): as far as I can tell, there never was (nor is there now) a BL policy of storing *all* dust-jackets at the V & A, or anywhere else.

The BL claims no more than that from an undetermined time (but certainly after the end of the nineteenth century) it 'tended' to send 'selected' jackets to the V & A, in very rough chronological order, with no criteria of selection made available to researchers, and neither catalogued nor sorted. *No records were kept: not a single title was ever listed.* The V & A would then store these jackets in vast piles. Nobody knew then, nobody knows now, what was saved from the shredder, and what was destroyed utterly; fortunately, after World War Two d-js are normally preserved by book owners, though this was only erratically the case before 1945. In earlier years, the destruction was total, and as only a tiny fraction of early d-js survive in private hands, it is impossible to get any sense of how much was lost forever in the first half century of their existence, how much information and context and design was shredded off the face of the earth. Between 1850 and now, literally millions of d-js have vanished, and continue to vanish *daily*, less serious than but not dissimilar to a daily *auto da fe* at the library at Alexandria.

But to return to topic: nobody, obviously, can *find* anything in the V & A tumuli without a great deal of luck. The two superb jackets that were recovered – Mike shows both of them in his *Relapse* piece – were those for Huxley's *BRAVE NEW WORLD* and (much scarcer) for Philip Wylie's *GLADIATOR*. These finds only underline the loss of everything else. The end result -- taking also into account the BL's use of some of the SF Foundation Collection's erratic holdings of twentieth century titles, many of which are mass market reprints, sometimes dating a decade or so later than the original release -- was that the *Out of this World* show was hugely impressive up to the end of the nineteenth century, as it could draw on the BL's incomparable holdings of books from incunabula on; but that the twentieth century sections were sadly short of representative images: sometimes (as in the over-egged Margaret Atwood case) late un-dust-jacketed 'special' editions; and sometimes images that slurrily failed to represent the publication-context of the book in question.

At one point Mike asked the BL staff doing the work – mainly the admirable Janet Benoy and Alan Sterenberg -- why they weren't drawing on my collection of twentieth century SF, mostly original editions in d-j, housed only ten minutes away from the Library. Unfortunately, they hadn't been told of this resource. But it was getting a bit late to do anything: the actual construction of exhibition cases has to begin very early in the game, and these were built specifically to fit the books to be exhibited, so Janet and Alan often had to stick with what they had on hand, as mass market paperbacks are of course almost always smaller than original editions.

They were able to borrow 45 or 50 books from me. Among them were Charles Chilton's three *Journey into Space* novels, which complemented the original script of the first episode of the first radio serial, never used after the first performance (Mike describes this fully). Chilton himself came to the opening. It was his last hurrah. He died this January, aged 95.

In the end, it all came together. The exhibition worked, raised the spirits, converted strangers. I think over 100,000 people attended the show. It was the last free exhibition the BL was ever to mount.

Dear Peter,

I was so pleased to see another *Relapse*. I thought you might have given up in gloom and despair. [*What, me John? I don't do 'gloom & despair' – 'distraction' was about the worst of it!*]

There's so much good stuff in this issue, but probably the stand-out is Charles Platt's evocation of the glory days of *New Worlds* in the Portobello Road. It had added significance for me just recently as Julia (Stone)'s mother Barbara, who lived around there since about 1970, died at the end of November, and Audrey and I have been making many trips up there in the aftermath.

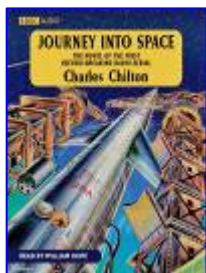
The Saturday after Xmas we were parked outside number 271, stuffing our faces with take-away from the excellent veggie joint that's now about three doors down from there. I have so many tangential memories of that scene, not just because many of the people Charles mentions (Chris Evans, Tom Disch, Fred Pohl) also showed up from time to time at John Brunner's gaff in Hampstead. Roy, Greg and I went to some sort of party at *New Worlds* in about 1971, although my faulty memory says this was not at 271 but somewhere up the street closer to the junction with Westbourne Grove – and it may have been a place Diane Lambert had at the time.

This was the notorious occasion when an old organ or harmonium that was in that gaff was partially disassembled by various folks, many of whom may well have been Rats – Roy [*Kettle*] had some of the



Above; Charles Chilton (recent photo)

Below: All 1950s British schoolboys listened to 'Journey into Space'!



John Hall  
[johnsila32@gmail.com](mailto:johnsila32@gmail.com)



John in 2008.  
Photo by Rob Jackson

stops in his collection somewhere – he may still have, for all I know. I also have vivid memories of Hawkwind gigs under the Westway flyover with the divine Stacia on stage. Usually Mike Moorcock and various folk who arrived in his entourage would be down the front getting an even better eyeful of her assets. I think Graham Charnock, sometime labourer at the *New Worlds* coalface and later in the Deep Fix with Mike, was there on some of these occasions. Two or three times I had conversations with another Moorcock collaborator, Robert Calvert.

*Another of Arthur Cruttenden's 1970s pictures outside the Globe – Brian Hampton & Jake Griggs, with Darroll & Rosemary Pardoe and an unknown.*

I say this although Bob's conversational style was to basically come up to you and start talking, leaving you to figure out what he was on about and then catch up sufficiently to go "yeah. Right. Eh? Really?" At other times he would ignore you – he was very self absorbed, to say the least. There's a whole book to be written by someone about Bob Calvert if they haven't already done so. The last time I saw him was on the plane back from *Tynecon* in 1974, when I found he was in the next seat to me. He was a bit less manic that time, but still talked non-stop for the whole 45 minutes or so of the flight.

Superficially, Portobello Road hasn't changed much, but it is of course now very expensive and gentrified. Gone are the days of freezing rooms and paraffin heaters. The upstairs flats above the shops go for six figures now and you bet they are centrally heated, double-glazed and possess designer kitchens that still look out on the Hammersmith & City trains lurching up the line between Ladbroke Grove and Westbourne Park.



Anyway, I am glad Charles wrote this piece and induced all this nostalgia, even though he is discussing a moment in time a little before I got there. My travels to and from Portobello are not done yet, so I guess I will be thinking about it for a while to come.

Still more stuff on poor John Brunner. Ian Watson's story was another good read. I only went to South Petherton the once, I think in the summer of 75, but I'm not sure, and I was but one among many, and my memory of it is coloured by what may have been, to use Ian's description, a minor JB strop – or possibly it was a major one – I found it hard to tell. It wasn't a very good weekend, and I found other things to do when I was invited again. I feel bad about that.

That is a very evocative picture of the exterior of The Globe on Page 33. It looks like a summer evening, given the light. You would walk up to the pub that way if you were coming from Faringdon tube. Plainly, that's Darroll Pardoe on the left, but could that be some visitors from Tyneside with him? Ian Williams kneeling on the pavement and Ian Maule on the right by the wall? No, since Arthur Cruttenden took it, it's likely to be some Hertsfen. I met Mary Peek at the Heathrow Eastercon last year (I was there briefly) and she had a stack of old photo's from the 70's with many people in I didn't know, but she did, and a very few I did know but she didn't, until I enlightened her anyhow. Even then fandom was expanding and some people's orbits did not intersect at all with others.

*[And still the old photographs keep appearing! I also saw Mary Peek at Heathrow and she was kind enough to let me copy her pictures; a couple from Heicon and the rest from Worcester (1971), including one that made me look about 14! - pw.]*

Dear Peter.

Thanks for the latest issue of *Relapse*. British SF always seems so much intertwined than American, though the New York scene may have been like that, and Charles Platt's fascinating account of the New Wave reminds me of the Futurians. But I am very fond of biographical accounts of transformative moments in SF history, like Fred Pohl's and Damon Knight's memories, Sam Moskowitz's *THE IMMORTAL STORM* and other fan histories, and the recent publication of the young John Campbell's 1930s letters before and during his oversight of the Golden Age. Maybe it's because, in the middle of this big country, I viewed everything from afar and only had my first encounter with other SF people in 1952, when I was working on Dell Books for Western Printing & Lithographing Company in Racine, Wisconsin, and got them to send me to the World SF Convention in Chicago. Now, at the age of 89, I'm revising my own memoirs.

Among my memories, recalled by Tom Shippey's account of Harry Harrison's last days and his burial service, and Harry's recollection of meeting John Brunner just before his death, was meeting John for the first time, strolling down the hall of the Claremont Hotel in Oakland at the 1968 World Con, this long-haired, ear-ringed dashing Britisher with a young woman on each arm; and my final meeting with John at the Science Fiction Research Association meeting in North Dakota, not too long before Harry's account, when John seemed pudgy, not in good health, and despondent about life, career, and marriage.

In between, we met at conferences and conventions, like the World Con in Boston (at which I met Bob Shaw) and he let us film him lecturing about "Science Fiction and the Mainstream," once when our paths crossed in New York and we went to breakfast with Chip Delany before he set off for a meeting with Alvin Toffler, and the time he came to the University of Kansas, at my invitation, as a writer-in-residence for a week (like Brian Aldiss), and astonished everyone by inviting fiction-writing students to individual counselling sessions at which he did a line-by-line discussion of their work.

**James E. Gunn**  
jgunn@ku.edu



*Jim Gunn, current photo from Wikipedia*

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



David in 2008.  
His picture.

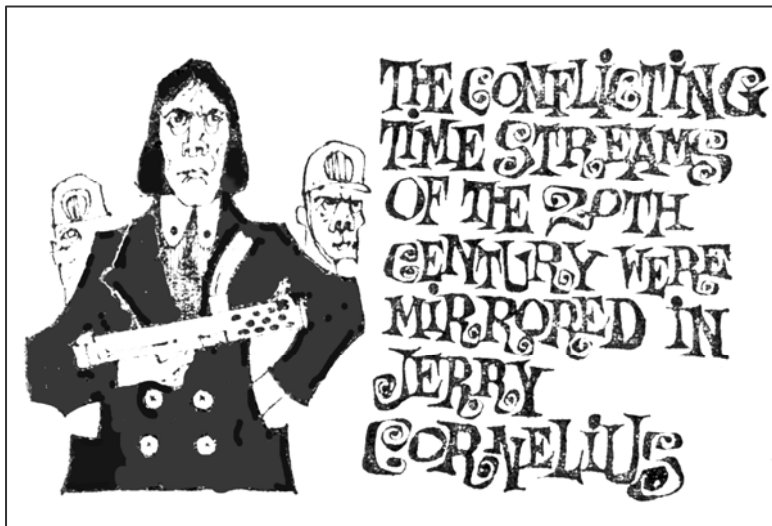
Dear Peter,

Excellent as Charles Platt's article was, especially for one such as myself still trying to join up everything that was going on around me, it had a flaw: should have been Chapter One of a serial. Charles has written elsewhere about the problems of typesetting and proofreading for *New Worlds*, but other more minor details of his life then should still be worth a few paragraphs for you, such as the mystery of how to get an outside line from his flat (his telephone system seemed designed by a Central American plumber). All good stuff and nostalgic, too.

More *New Worlds* memories from Harry Warren, a vital letter and one in which the name 'Douthwaite' really took me back. Now, I know Mal Dean was the ultimate Jerry Cornelius illustrator, but for me Douthwaite's heading for the first 'Final Programme' story set the tone for Jerry and indeed for the *New Worlds* to come. I recall a somewhat "Mick-as-Jerry" sketch with the hand-lettered legend 'THE CONFLICTING TIME STREAMS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WERE MIRRORED IN JERRY CORNELIUS.' I hope this isn't false memory syndrome on my part, because (unlike Dean's work) that illustration seemed to capture a cultural moment as perfectly as, say, Mel Brooks' *The Producers* captured the half-century from Belsen to the X-Factor. Anyway that was my feeling for years. The picture may have vanished but I'm glad Harry didn't. And I'm glad he told us what came next.

Like Mike Deckinger I too recall the "new Bradbury" Bryan Berry having "two or three items" in one *Planet Stories* – three actually, the kiss of death for any chance of Berry gaining a US reputation. The editor took some flak. But I shouldn't mock a magazine which published the *original* Ray Bradbury so often. I left reading the Harry Harrison tribute for last, but needn't have worried; Tom Shippey did a fine job, uplifting rather than upsetting. And did I tell you how much I appreciated the work of the two Watsons? Should have.

*[Harry was pleased that you remembered him David; his exact words were 'Blimey! To put it mildly. That's one of the best Christmas presents I've ever had, and I really appreciate it'. And now here's the man... He's asked me to point out that "the picture was taken on my retirement day, at the end of June 2011, and I've since lost a ton of weight. I can't say I'm the anorexic depicted in that 1980s shot you used last time, but - thank God - I'm not the porker I was in 2011 either!"] pw]*



Harry Warren  
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Harry in 2011  
(see above)

Hi Peter,

Given my own association with *New Worlds*, I thought Charles's extensive memoir was by far the most interesting thing in issue 20. I'm astonished that his memory of those events is so detailed, my own being generally pretty hazy. Luckily, I can still remember a few incidents quite vividly and I had the sense to hang on to all my incoming correspondence as well. I often kick myself for not having kept a diary during those years, which were also my art college years, but I didn't begin doing so till 1970.

Unlike Charles, I was based in Manchester during the period under review, and only met the few people who happened to be in Mike's flat whenever I paid him a visit. These included Langdon Jones and Barry Bayley initially – both of whom I liked - and J.G. Ballard, who I think I met twice. I was in awe of Ballard, and was impressed by the fact that he was so friendly and approachable. He professed to like my work, and wrote me some letters to that effect which I luckily still have. Sadly, in the summer of '66 I 'came down with' agoraphobia, and those infrequent visits to London became even more infrequent, and soon ceased altogether.

I wasn't aware that Charles was part of the *NW* crew – in fact I'd never heard of him as I hadn't been very active in fandom – until I received a letter from him out of the blue one day. It was dated 18 May 1966, and the address at the top was: Basement Flat, 6 Green Croft Gardens, NW6.

He introduced himself to me and explained that Mike had appointed him *NW*'s art editor about six weeks earlier, and that in future I'd be dealing with him rather than Mike. I felt disappointed by this, as I'd been in personal contact with Mike since 1962 and now, with no prior warning, that direct contact seemed to have been severed. I was also a bit dismayed by the fact that Charles immediately began to offer suggestions about what I should or shouldn't draw in future – "I think old bomber planes and Coca Cola signs have just about had it!" – for example. In retrospect, I can see that this was entirely fair – Mike had sometimes done the same, even drawing little sketches to show me what he had in mind – and he did emphasise that I could ignore these suggestions if I wished. The trouble was that all this happened at a time when I was stressed-out and miserable with the way things were developing at college, and in fact towards the end of July one of my tutors (who'd better remain nameless, unfortunately, because I think he's still alive) set me up for something he must have thought was a great jape, but which triggered some sort of breakdown that would affect the rest of my life.

Charles enclosed a new Ballard manuscript with the letter – 'The Atrocity Exhibition' – and suggested a few Ballardian 'coded' images that I might think about including in a full-page illo, such as "contour maps of spinal forms, architectural similarities, Atom-bomb fusing sequences". I had no idea what any of this meant and felt a bit intimidated. He seemed to be another of these people Mike had gathered around him who were a lot brighter than I was.



Jim Cawthorn, 1985. Photo by Harry Warren

As a humble art student, I felt a closer affinity with Jim Cawthorn than with any of the writers, and I still do, which is why I feel impelled to leap to his defence whenever I hear or read any criticism of him. That being said, I think a lot of his work for *New Worlds* was in fact disappointing.

After reading Charles's article, I dug out all my Compact Books-era *NW* (issues 142-172 inclusive - 31 issues in all) and went through them to refresh my memory. I found that Jim had done a total of 53 illos, and I tried to grade them from 'very good' to 'poor'. For what it's worth, I thought only 10 of them were VG; 19 I thought could be called 'poor'.

To my mind, his work started to go downhill from issue 156 onwards, and I'm curious about what might have been going on in his life at that time. The 'stiffness' Charles talks about - which I've heard other people refer to in relation to Jim's commercial work - is caused by a sort of stage fright which many illustrators feel, but looking at these illustrations again I don't think it was the main problem. My guess is that he hadn't much sympathy with the stuff he was illustrating; sword and sorcery was Jim's forte, and the sort of sci-fi published in Edwardian boys' magazines, not 'new wave' science fiction.

Towards the end of this period, he began drawing with a fibre-tip pen instead of his beloved steel nibs, and adopted a 'sketchy' style that I didn't like at all. I imagine this was the result of all the encouragement he was receiving to 'loosen up', and I wish I knew how he'd felt about it. Unfortunately, though we corresponded off and on for years, and I really loved his work, I never got to know him well enough to ask questions of that sort. Incidentally, I thought Jim's cover for Mike's second issue (143), which illustrated Hilary Bailey's 'The Fall of Frenchy Steiner', was one of the best illustrations he ever did, and by far the most interesting *NW* cover of that series.

I hope Charles is going to write a sequel; I'd love to hear him reminisce about the people he mentions at the end of the article, especially the ones I met (in some case not till years later) or whose work I admired.

*[No promises, Harry, but as I said earlier, Charles has shown some interest in a follow-up piece so we'll see what happens. I also have a Secret Plan (of which you're aware) to say more about Jim Cawthorn, whom I can't help regarding as one of the 'mystery men' of SF fandom. And now for the one we've been waiting for... (Mike took two months to type out this LoC) - pw]*

Mike Moorcock  
Texas



Mike in 2008.  
Photo by Steve Rogers

Dear Pete,

Charles was kind enough to send me a copy of his piece before he sent it to *Relapse* and, as I said to him at the time, I don't intend to quarrel with his interpretation or analysis. My version of events, naturally, is not the same. Mostly it's a matter of perspective but I wouldn't agree with everything Charles remembers.

As a professional editor (which was why Ted recommended me in the first place) I'd never produce a magazine without doing costings, talking to the major retailers and so on. Much of this, of course, was done before Charles joined the magazine. My training and instincts were often employed without my explaining everything, which probably gave Charles the impression of chaos. I remember one day I sat down with him and explained how I organised my own finances and how I had never been in debt (apart from a mortgage). He said it was a revelation to him, that he hadn't realised how conscious I was of what I was doing. I remember him suggesting the authors had been paid erratically. It's possible there were one or two glitches, as they always are when running a magazine, but I still have some of the issues I used to prepare payment - every piece in the issue was marked according to when and how much the contributor received.

I have always been very careful about how I handle other people's money and in fact still have a functioning *NW* bank account containing any money earned and not passed on to authors who have disappeared. I'm very disapproving of people who start treating other peoples' money as if it were their own. One of the times I was angriest was when I discovered that someone was using *NW* funds for their private use. I stopped this and the money was returned eventually. I also, as Charles knows, was personally responsible for all *NW* debt after we changed printers from Verstage's, and I paid off every penny of that debt. Without organisation of the most basic kind I could never have produced so many issues nor, for that matter, have written so many books.

Obviously, as I said I don't remember events in the same way as Charles. There are also one or two minor errors of fact I didn't pick up at the time, for which I apologise. I read the piece quickly while working on a book. I should have noted these, however, and apologise to Charles, to whom I'm sending a copy of this letter just in case!

Off the top of my head - Barry Bayley met and married (eloped with) Joan in Dublin at the tail end of his round the world hike. They stayed for us for a while in Ladbroke Grove then moved very reluctantly to Telford to look after his mother, dying of cancer. There was a period when he didn't contribute to *NW* but it had nothing to do with his reluctance on his part. He was doing a lot of commercial work for Fleetway and writing novels for DAW (Don Wollheim was a huge fan) and had gone off on a long journey around Europe, hitchhiking mostly, and simply wasn't writing at all. We're talking about one of my closest friends here and I think he'd have at least made a joke if he'd been reluctant to contribute.



Below; Mike & Barry Bayley, 1962. Photo by Bruce Burn

Below: Charles in 1967. Photo by Harry Bell



Above; Jim Sallis, around 1969. Photo from Charles

Below; Judy Merrill, 1965. Photo by Tom Schluck.



Above; J.G. Ballard, 1967. Photo origins unknown

Below: Mike in 1967. Photo by Mervyn Barrett



Barry was very depressed about his move to Telford, speaking often of the lack of intellectual stimulus there. After he was back and settled he wrote a set of brilliant stories as a 'tribute' to William Burroughs, whom he greatly admired. The admiration was in fact mutual. Burroughs borrowed, with Barry's permission, some of his strongest metaphors from Barry (see 'The Star Virus'). Barry's stories appeared in *NWQ*, which followed *NW 201*.

You'll find most of these in his collection *THE KNIGHTS OF THE LIMITS*. I'd guess readers would be interested in our 'Old Farts' Fireside Chat, reminiscences which should still be online at *Fantastic Metropolis*, the nearest thing to an online *NW* so far produced. Barry's stories for *Interzone*, readers will recall, weren't exactly conventional. Barry hugely admired Ballard, too. Barry got stuck in Telford and matters were made worse by Joan actually liking it and being reluctant to live in London. The terrible irony is that Barry's son Sean is now looking after Joan (who has Alzheimers). I am Barry's literary executor.

Charles was spot-on, I think, about Jim Sallis (author of *DRIVE* which became an excellent movie in 2011). Jim has changed a fair bit since then but he really was a bit of a shit-stirrer and Charles was always a better judge of his character, as was Hilary. Jim was a serial seducer and I was with him in the US when he tried to involve me, Christine, her friend and his (Jim's) wife Jane – and later Hilary – when Jane and Tom Disch were staying at Damon Knight's place in Milford. It became rather like a French farce. Thereafter Tom would have nothing to do with Jim (I think for good reason). For many years now Jim has been in a stable marriage and dealt with all that stuff. I remember, though, the urgency with which we packed him off to the US when he became convinced that Tom (gay) was having an affair with Jane. It turned out it was Tom's brother! French farce indeed!

Re Eduardo Paolozzi's cover, I asked Eduardo if we could cut-up his images and he was actually very enthusiastic. All part of the pop art process! Eduardo had also tried to persuade me to give him or sell him Jim Cawthorn's iconic Elric picture which I had on my wall. EP was as interested in generic art as we were in generic fiction and we were using it, I think, for similar reasons

Ballard and I were against rationalisations which actually detracted from the narrative possibilities of our images. I'm not sure Jim Sallis quite understood the point of mine and Jimmy's dislike of SF-style rationalisations. But I don't want to get into another boring discussion of all that.

Tom Disch didn't write *CAMP CONCENTRATION* on a summer retreat. I seem to remember he was living in North London at the time, sharing digs with Sladek. He delivered each episode as he wrote it ('Cure for Cancer' was written the same way) and said he wouldn't have written it so ambitiously had he not known he was doing it for *NW*. Disch was infamous for mysteriously falling-out with his friends. It happened to Charles, it happened to me. When I asked him what it was that had upset him he said airily 'Oh I forget!' We remained extremely close until he shot himself (mainly out of loneliness after Charlie, his partner of some 40 years, died.)

Chris Evans had worked on *Psychic News* before he got his doctorate and was in my view a careerist and not much of a scientist. I soon decided he was a bit of a charlatan and his career with *NW* didn't last too long. Charles shared my view. Jimmy seemed to like his peculiar macho attitude and they got on well, mainly because he didn't argue with Jimmy! Chris absorbed Jimmy's ideas faithfully and handed them back to him. He shone as a Ballard character, though!

Jimmy had a habit of pinching the names of friends and lovers for his stories, but there was nothing intentionally vindictive in that. After his affair with Judy Merrill, a few 'Judy's' turn up in his stories but they are just the usual Ballard characters. There was a hilariously symbolic moment when Judy tried to make off with his Parker pen and he tried to get me to get her to give it back before she left for Japan. I wouldn't get involved beyond asking her and she said he could have it back if he saw her off at the station, which he did. He told me a funny story. As the train pulled out he called after her 'Sayonara' – and she corrected his Japanese pronunciation – a man who was rather familiar with basic Japanese!

Jimmy was always open about his desire for admiration. Most of us could like him and admire his work but often disagreed with him. He had a better admirer in the likes of another *NW* contributor George MacBeth, poetry editor at the BBC when he did the interview appearing in *THE NEW SF*, (which one of your correspondents described so succinctly last time as 'tosh'). George was respectful but didn't entirely agree with Jimmy's 'vision'. At that time in Jimmy's life he needed the stability of old friends and family. Sadly, Evans encouraged all his most self-destructive traits and I still can't open *CRASH* without experiencing some sense of sadness. *CRASH* might be a work of genius but for me it represents Jimmy at his unhappiest. He himself considered the book something of an aberration in spite of its success.

It's true that, when I got into it, I found most SF semi-literate tosh. Remember, when I took over *NW* I thought I ought to read more SF so I bought a run of *Astounding* from the 30s more or less to the 60s and was astonished by how bad most of the fiction was and how semi-literate Campbell was. You could no doubt overlook this if you liked space stuff but the bottom line for me is that I just can't read most space fiction, no matter how well-written. (I don't for instance regard Iain Banks, whom I like personally, as much of a writer and for the record think most fantasy fiction even worse written than my own!)

But I thought some of it was wonderfully written – Leiber and Vance, for instance – and argued. My favourite magazine became *Galaxy*, with its emphasis on social issues. *Astounding*, for me, was unbelievably bad for the most part. I find it depressing that a few of your readers want to carry on an argument which is hardly worth maintaining since the likes of Disch, Ballard and most of the others mentioned by Charles are still being published in the wider market. Incidentally, I too supported Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, among others and on several occasions commissioned work or otherwise helped them get published.



Mike & Tom  
Disch, January  
2006.  
Photo by Linda  
Steele.

Below; the  
young Norman  
Spinrad in  
1966. Photo by  
Andrew Porter



Jim Linwood  
[jlinwood@  
aol.com](mailto:jlinwood@aol.com)



Jim in late  
1967. Photo  
by Mervyn  
Barrett

We (NW) didn't cut Norman's BUG JACK BARON under pressure from Smiths. The problem was I refused to do *anything* under pressure from Smiths -- that would be against our entire ethic! I don't think Charles attended any of my meetings with the Smiths periodical dept. They were as much offended by Lang Jones's 'The Great Clock'. I refused to cut BJB for them, and only cut the end, giving a *precis*, to get space enough for other fiction. It was a VERY long book! The pressure continued. Smiths took us back (or pretended to) after a campaign in the national press who were all on NW's side apart from the *Express* and the *Mail*, who kept to the hard-right Tory line about public money being spent on 'filth'.

John Sladek's ARACHNE:13<sup>TH</sup> SIGN OF THE ZODIAC actually did pretty well. John's plan was to do the hoax and then show how gullible people were by announcing it as a fake. He did that. He then received loads of letters from the general public telling him he was wrong, there really *was* a 13th sign... The book was pretty successful and he was asked for a sequel.

Many NW writers, including myself, Ballard, Delany, D.M. Thomas, etc, enjoyed best-sellers and the majority of my books remain in print. In fact pretty much the whole lot are just about to be reprinted in a new edition by Gollancz (Orion). According to Granada, our mutual publisher, I sold 'almost as well as Asimov' and had my name-tag in the Smiths racks (an irony I always enjoyed). Disch was published in the prestigious Vintage list, together with Phil Dick. And happily all the writers Charles mentions in his piece continue to remain popular with readers and are always being reprinted.

The argument was never about what SF was 'best'. My objective was to help produce a kind of fiction derived from SF which I'd like to read. I never begrudged Isaac, with whom I got on well, or any of the writers I regarded as friends as 'rivals'. In the end I got the audience I wanted and helped the writers I admired make a decent living. None of them died destitute. Ballard left an estate worth around \$7M, Disch also left a substantial estate and Sladek made a comfortable living most of his life. Similarly, most of the regular NW writers still going make very good livings. This suggests there was a large and appreciative audience for their work.

I miss Harry Harrison a lot. He was a complex, highly intelligent man who wrote some great stuff. This past year has been a bad one for missing good friends -- Harry, Sebastian Peake (a close friend), Huw Lloyd Langton (who played on the 'New Worlds Fair' album), Jon Finch (whom I played poker with in the late 50s and early 60s and who starred in 'Frenzy', 'Macbeth' and 'The Final Programme' as Jerry Cornelius). I had heard that Peter Phillips had died but was very saddened by John Burke's passing.

I'd better get back to work (ironically I'm working on my autobiographical SF/Fantasy novel THE WHISPERING SWARM which contains a lot of straightforward reminiscence, some of which is repeated here!). But I enjoyed the rest of the issue and am sorry I didn't have time (and I'm sure you don't have space) to comment on everything!

[I will never agree with you about *Astounding*, Mike, which created modern SF whether you like it or not. But you do make a good point about income, which is the ultimate test of any writer's success, *vide* John Brunner as I mentioned elsewhere. Shame we didn't hear from Norman Spinrad, though. -pw]

Dear Peter.

Many thanks for *Relapse* #20 – a welcome return. I loved Charles Platt's revealing memoirs of his *New Worlds* days and hope that there is more to come.

Bob Shaw was surely joking when he told his son Ian that he was flown from the airport to Kubrick's house in a private helicopter and met by black-clad bodyguards carrying sub-machine guns. BoSh told John Baxter for his Kubrick biography that a car picked him up at the nearest railway station and took him to the house in Childwick Bury, Hertfordshire where he had an amicable Chinese meal with Kubrick. They discussed story lines for what was to become A.I. directed by Spielberg after Kubrick's death. Unfortunately, the relationship later deteriorated and Ian Watson replaced BoSh.

Darroll Pardoe's letter reminds me of those SADO/Stourbridge events to which I was a frequent visitor. I've stayed in touch with Dave Hale and his wife Maggie since he went *gafia* in the mid-60s. Dave went on to lecture in Psychology at Queens University, Belfast, where he became a computer guru. After retirement, he and Maggie returned to the mainland and now live in Buxton where his main activity is photography. [Wish I could get him to respond to *Relapse*, though! -pw]

Robert Lichtman quotes John Baxter on pulp magazines being used as ballast on cargo ships. I think that this is a popular myth possibly first started by George Orwell in his 1944 essay "Raffles and Miss Blandish" where he wrote: "*They (Yank Mags) are said to have been imported into this country as ballast which accounted for their low price and crumpled appearance. Since the war the ships have been ballasted with something more useful, probably gravel.*" Ballast of some form has always been necessary for ships but from the 1880s rather than using solid materials, ships, began to use water pumped in and out of ballast tanks. I believe that pulp mags were used to "top up" cargo vessels to their full capacity so that their owners could maximise their income on the voyages.

I'm now passing the 'zine to Marion who has waited patiently for two days!

**Bob  
Parkinson**  
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*Bob on a 'dig'  
(but not in his  
office!).  
His photo.*

*Below; Bob at  
LXIcon, 1961.  
Photo by Keith  
Freeman*



Dear Peter,

I'm now aware that the problem with *Relapse* is that you pick it up, four hours go by, and you come back to awareness of the outside world (it would be unfair to say "come awake") to say "Oh \*expletive deleted\* – I was going to write a LoC and it's too late now!" It happens at the second reading as well!

But also strangely, since I was not a party to many of the reminiscences first time around, I am discovering that digging back into the memories of the '70s, etc., is like archaeology, it is not our world any longer. There is a quote "The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there" (L P Hartley) and that is how a lot of this seems to me now. I made an observation recently that it is interesting to realize that the 1984 we all worried about after Orwell's novel turned out to be just about the time that the world really did change in many ways – mobile phones, the internet, the breaking of the miners' union and so forth (make your own list). I remember that Mike Moorcock ran a special edition of *New Worlds* trying to see how it related to where we were, but mostly the world we live in was unforeseeable.

Talking of archaeology (which is how my office operates) – looking for a buried ESA document last week what should come to the surface but a 1972 issue of *Speculation* so I had a quick look at the contents and lo and behold in the middle is a transcript of a speech by one John Brunner (from *Chessmancon*).

Incidentally, in case you didn't catch it, the *Daily Telegraph* at the New Year ran a bit on "the best bit of advice you've been given," which included the following from Terry Pratchett: "The author John Brunner once told me: 'Remember nearly everything you are using to write a book is tax deductible.'"

But I'm supposed to be commenting on the more recent output of PRW! In *R19* I was interested in the article by Tom Shippey on Robert Conquest. Of course I knew that he was a trufan way back then, and I still have the Sphere paperback of *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE*. (I note that Tom Shippey refers to it as '1955, revised 1970'). I too had a distrust of "professional intellectuals in the humanities" having run into the post-modernist view of science on a number of occasions. There was a lot of talk back then (and it probably hasn't gone away) about whether SF should be trying to become 'literary-respectable' (I started by typing 'literally' but that wouldn't do at all) which didn't really seem to me to be an issue at all. The main question was whether it was well enough written to hold my attention. I liked *A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE* – it might not be the best SF story ever written but it was interestingly different and had some interesting thoughts behind it.

Reading the reminiscence by Charles Platt in *R20*, which kind of related to events I knew from a distance, I wondered whether this is another story where the past is a foreign country; was it really like that when we didn't know what was going to happen? It is too far away now to tell, and we would have to explain it all to the younger generation again anyway.

The continuing saga of John Brunner keeps bringing in interesting details. I met John on a number of occasions, and as I remember always found him interesting to talk to. *THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER* has of course left its imprint on the internet age, and I liked *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*, but then my son reminded me the other day of his lesser known *THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME*, and I agreed that anybody who can make a race of slugs into the heroes of a novel and make it fun can't be all bad!

I'm going to have to give up – the afternoon is nearly past and there are probably a dozen e-mails waiting for me already, but it has been an interesting afternoon and I assure you that I still enjoy *Relapse* even if it is going on about events of which I was never really a part.

*[But you were pretty deeply involved with the magic Cheltenham Circle, Bob, you lucky man! – pw]*

**Mark  
Plummer**  
[mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com](http://mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com)

*Gerry at  
LXcon, 2009.  
Photo by Ian  
Whates.*



Dear Peter,

Given the status of *Relapse* as British Fandom's Journal of Record it might be useful to note that Isaac Asimov's visit took place in 1974 and not, as Howard says, 1973. And while I'm sure it's useful to have a confirmation that it was indeed The Globe and not The One Tun, I didn't realise there was ever any doubt about it. The record seems pretty clear on the point. Also a little detail from *THEN* which seems particularly apposite given the general Relapsarian obsession with the man: apparently it was John Brunner who suggested The One Tun as a First Thursday venue.

And here's something which may be of interest to you on the general theme of London pub meetings; John Bray pointed out that as the earliest known Thursday meeting in London took place on 9th December 1937 -- as described by Sid Birchby in *THEN*, v1 ch1, – then the meeting on Thursday 6th December was pretty much the 75th anniversary. Personally I'd be more inclined to date the meetings from March or even April 1946 as that's the beginning of the uninterrupted run, but, you know, any excuse for a celebration. I decided that Gerry Webb should be Father of the House as ranking fan present on the evening – Arthur Cruttenden is a couple of years older but he didn't turn up until later – and he proposed a toast, and incidentally mentioned in passing that Asimov visit.

And as today is 9 December and so exactly the 75th anniversary of the day when Sid joined Eric Williams, Arthur Clarke, Bill Temple and Ted Carnell plus a couple of others in 'a Lyons' teashop [for] poached egg on toast and a jaw' I thought I'd better mention this now.

I'd heard about this 75th anniversary thing a couple of months ago but hadn't thought much of it initially because, as I said, the post-War meetings seem to me to be a more logical starting point. Roger Robinson decided that come the night somebody should make some sort of announcement and that that somebody should be me. So I got up at about 8pm and said a few words about the history. I was going to get my own back on Roger by calling on him to propose a toast, as the closest thing we had to somebody who was 75 (he'd turned 69 a couple of days before). But Gerry quickly volunteered the info that he's 71, and talking to Arthur later it turns out that he's 73.

*[Thanks Mark. The only doubts about Asimov's visit came from Rog Peyton some issues back –pw]*

## WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

**Jean Burke:** who suggested we might enjoy an anecdote about Sam [Youd]; “Before his big break-through Sam worked at The Diamond Corporation. One evening, working late, he saw a couple in an office opposite his having lively sex on the floor. The office had the occupant's phone numbers on the window so Sam rang, saw a hand pick up the receiver, and he said, in a portentous voice, ‘God is watching’ and put the phone down.” Next is **Bill Burns**, who wrote: “The cover is brilliant (even more striking in the PDF edition), and I very much enjoyed Charles Platt’s memoir – we were contemporaries but how different our upbringings and lives were! Despite his living not all that far from here when he was in New York, our paths never crossed and he seems to have had very little involvement with NY fandom – not that we do these days.” [*You’ll relate to Ed James’ memory of Bruncon this time, Bill.*]

**Brad Foster** boggled, “I was fascinated to see Mike Ashley’s mention of ‘The Codex Seriphinianus’. I stumbled across a copy by accident in a used book store something like 25 or more years back. Had no idea what it was, and seem to recall it was just a few bucks, so had to take it home. I’ve shown it to visitors now and then as one of the most wonderfully odd books I’ve ever seen. No one had ever seen it before. Then just two months ago I was at a local SF con and a friend was negotiating with a book dealer for, you guessed it, a copy of that book. They ended up agreeing on something like \$500, which blew me away. Even more so when I got home and thought to look it up on line, and found out copies can go for much more than even that! How in the world did I end up with something that was worth more than I paid for it? Of course, the trouble is it is so wonderful, it would be one of the last of the books I have that I would want to let go! And now, here comes *Relapse*, and another mention. Is it a sign of something?” [*Undoubtedly!*]

**Chris Garcia** received the issue and replied 20 minutes later: “I don’t think I agree with your take on the matter of the book cover for the ‘Out of This World’ exhibition. It’s got every marker of science fiction, recognisable characters in a recognisable setting, but it’s also got a touch of the abstract. Is it screaming ‘That Crazy Buck Rogers Stuff’? I don’t think so. I think it’s showing that SF is both involved in the less-serious side of the Literature of the Fantastic, while at the same time having an artistic sense in its portrayal. It speaks to my desire for both the Deadly Serious and the Big Fun. That’s what makes SF so awesome.” **Steve Jeffery** was also thinking about covers; “Judy Watson’s painting of John, Ian and Marjorie at a CND march is a real find. I wonder how many other actual paintings there are of authors and fans? Sad news recently is of Alan Hunter’s death. He was probably one of the first artists whose work I saw in fanzines along with that from Harry Turner (also sadly no longer with us). I hadn’t realised Alan’s work went right back to the 50s and covers for pro-zines such as *Nebula*. I think I admired Alan’s technique as much if not more than the subject matter itself, but then I can, and have, stared for hours at Durer’s engraving of a hare just for the sheer artistry of the penmanship. Only Don West and perhaps Brad Foster seem to have that sort of patience for fine detail anymore.”

**Jay Kinney** thought it was “Interesting to learn that John Lennon was a PKD fan – but somehow that doesn’t surprise me. Michael Ashley’s article reminds me that he was still active in fandom at the time that I entered SF fandom (c.1966-7), when my first British fannish pen-pal was one Mary Reed. Now, I keep running into Ashley as the editor of Mammoth Books of this and that, among other things.” While newcomer **Justin Marriott** wrote; “Just discovered your zine by happy accident whilst googling for information on Alistair Durie. Much as I have enjoyed scanning the pdfs at e-zines, I still crave a hard copy to read in the bath/at bedtime. I publish a fanzine called *The Paperback Fanatic* which is devoted to genre fiction of the 60s/70s, so I have some idea as to the huge amount of research that must go into each of your issues. They truly are incredible in their detail. So although I am not a SF nut, and my tastes are more to later decades, I still find much to enjoy and admire in your mag.” [*Justin, yours is quite amazing!*]

Ace investigator **Ian Millsted** noted, “Ian Watson mentions the taker of the photo on which the cover painting is based as Allan Boyd-Newton who was mentioned in a LoC from Doug Bell in *Relapse 16*. Incidentally, as they are both mentioned in this issue, both John Brunner and John Burke have ‘new’ stories in a horror anthology released in 2012 by small press Screaming Dreams. I imagine the editor plundered the archives at Liverpool Uni for the Brunner story which probably comes from the early 90s when he was seemingly having more luck placing horror stories than SF. When I had a brief look it was clear there was plenty of stuff there.” And **Joe Patrizio** flattered, “You always generate a lot of interest in your own editorial, or whatever you want to call it. It’s so sad and frustrating that Wally Gillings’ collection is lost. I’ve just found a letter that Bill wrote to Wally, dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 79; Bill has noted, in hand, that Wally had died a month previously. I suppose the most important stuff I have is Bill’s diaries, although I think I still have a file of letters somewhere. I’ve told my children that there are some quite valuable books and mags on the shelves, but I haven’t told them which they are – that should keep them busy for a while.” [*Won’t work, Joe; they’re all playing computer games!*]

**Lloyd Penney** marvelled, “I don’t think I’d ever seen such a young picture of Judith Merrill. She spent her later years living in Toronto, working as a critic and at some point, making commentary on TVOntario, the provincial educational channel, as the Undoctor, after TVO broadcast episodes of Doctor Who. I had my own confrontations with her here and there in local fandom; I did not mourn her passing. However, Emily Pohl-Weary lives here, she’s a local SF writer, and you can see Judith in Emily’s face.” While **Philip Turner** commented, “Charles Platt’s highly interesting article confirmed what I suspected about the New Wave – the perpetrators were intent on changing the world but they didn’t know how to go about it, so no surprise that taking the SF out of an established SF magazine (and giving the readers no reason to keep on buying it) didn’t make the world a new and better place. The piece about Harry Harrison, one of my favourite authors, was a welcome return to reality after Mr. Platt’s contribution. There was an impressive cast of characters on your letters page. I take it Mr. Brian Aldiss, O.B.E., doesn’t share the late Michael Winner’s opinion that an O.B.E. is what you get for services to cleaning toilets.” And finally, **Harry Warren** remembered, “I was thinking about Jim Cawthorne today, when I was looking at CDs on Amazon. He told me, his favourite music was 1930s dance band music. It wasn’t until a few years later – probably in 1989 – that I fell in love with the same sort of music through listening to a radio show the late, lamented Benny Green used to host on Sunday afternoons. I’ve been wondering what other sort of music Jim liked. I get the impression he was a bit old fashioned, like me.” [*And me, Harry. I loved Benny’s programme! – pw*]

**Response** was also received from Don Allen, Peter Crowther, Alistair Durie, Chris Fowler, Rob Hansen, Pat Kearney, Earl Kemp, Dave Langford, George Locke, Sam Long, Murray Moore, Greg Pickersgill, Robert Silverberg & Colin Steele. Thanks, all!

All together now, “*Relapse is nothing without Response*”; without your input it just won’t happen, so do please keep sending your anecdotes, memories and insights about past times in British SF fandom (and don’t forget the old photographs). You can receive the pdf as issued (just ask) or read issues on the *eFanzines* site four weeks after publication day (in this case 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013).

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## BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT:

I still have a small number of copies of the exclusive paper edition, issues 16,17,18,19, & 20. They’re available at £5.00 each including postage, payable through PayPal. The main object isn’t to get my money back so much as to get the magazines out of my cupboard and into the hands of people who might appreciate them. Let me know what you want and I’ll advise if they’re still available, and how much it will cost you (combined postage on multiple orders of course). [pr.weston@btinternet.com](mailto:pr.weston@btinternet.com)