

# AMBLE

Sup

4

26th OMPA MAILING

Perpetrated by ARCHIE MERCER of 434/4 Newark Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln, England. (E&OE) Emanating from within the Caravan in the Shadow of the Malleable Ironworks. A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION

Just in case anybody notices anything slightly different about the appearance of this, I'd better explain that it's being done on a sample typewriter. If it comes out all right on paper, then I'll probably settle for a similar model with elite (or possibly micro-pica) type. So at present there's a distinct possibility of parts of this effort done on three different machines - my old Oliver, the putative new machine, and this.

See how it goes, anyway. First, as usual, let's have

## THE SHAMBLES

and review the 25th Mailing, with sundry postmailings before and after, such as for instance

OFF TRAILS v7:1 (Daphne Buckmaster off to a goodly startly)

Ellis Mills isn't helping her any, though. His amendments as proposed look so utterly unworkable that I sincerely hope that, either by straightforward hostile vote or otherwise, THEY'LL get no further. For shame, Ellis! Voting is a right, not an obligation.

CYRILLE v1:2 (Bill Evans) Have I mentioned that the juxtaposition of title and perpetrator continually keeps reminding me of Manchester fan Cyril Evans? (It does, anyway).

The idea I had in mind was that the elephant could with comparative ease have been imported during its infancy. As for your controversial opinions re Tom Lehrer - the general idea is of course that he does it because he's disgusted with It All and wants to communicate his disgust (and incidentally it had better be admitted whip up some money at the same time). But now that you mention it (or something not dissimilar) it's certainly conceivable that a person could do that sort of thing, not because it disgusted him, but rather because it gave him kicks just to think about it. In either case, I find the stuff (on the whole) pretty superb.

FIX 3 (Ken Potter) And tower for the Special Legible Heading, Mate. Pity the blurb indicating said legible heading is itself the next thing to illegible.



Fab-  
ulous  
Fred



This "Wilberforce" Thing: the main thing wrong with it, I think, is that the gimmick has that familiar ring - either it's been used elsewhere, or its natural sibling has, or if not then it looks as if it OUGHT to have been by now. --- The "short stories" at the end more than compensate for any deficiencies in the lead novel though, they're hilarious.

OK, Ken - WHY are my reading habits so tremendously different from the ones you would have ascribed to me if I had not Confessed All?

TRANEX (Bob Madle) Of interest, certainly, though not comment-provoking after all these years.

ICE AGE 1 (Shaws) Sage title, yes. Cover - what's with this "Amis" business? First John Trimble called his FAPA(or something)zine same, now it turns up written on a bottle-stopper. Apart from being French for friends, pals, buddies or something, has the word any esoteric significance to transatlantic types? Or what?

Yes, but --- if I wasn't aware of the fact that Larry, at least, had an APasonality, I might've been excused for still not knowing this. I mean, Harry Warner is Superb (albeit he deals with matters of which I know not a sausage, including Peyton Place), Bloch wants EVERYTHING but wants it readably enow, Bulgis is interesting and confusing in turn, fine. Now bring on the Shaws.

AL'ABANDON 8 (Jim Caughran) "If there's a Nelson cartoon here it's by Ray Nelson" - glad you told me Jim, I'd never have known otherwise, because there wasn't. Glad to see you in the Mailings again anyway, likewise "Bonus" Donaho.

ATOZ 3 (Arthur Thomson) The covers and filloes herein represent (for me) a welcome reversion to the old and loved ATOM style of cartooning. I realise that this is the negation of progress and all that - I just happen to like it, that's all. Contents standard for interest.

CYRILLE vl:3 (Bill Evans) Oh that alphabet soup - for a short while you had me really worried over the prospect of "Budd Rural District Councils, in strings of from one to five units, under Musicians Union control".

I don't know - I PUT the words "Thorne Smith Tradition" in quotes, and still I get jumped on. What I meant was of course the "Thorne Smith Tradition" (still in quotes) as generally understood in the vernacular understanding. (Go on - tell me THAT'S incorrect usage). Namely, a story with a contemporary setting when written, with a strong element of free fantasy and played largely or mainly for laughs and sex together. I agree about the serious content of Thorne Smith's works, but the thing that particularly appeals to me in his works is the humour. It makes me howl with laughter at times as do few things.



ERG 5 (Terry Jeeves) Let's see - right now I'm a member to the best of my recollection of the BSFA, OMPA, Knights of St Fantony, and the Lincoln Interplanetary Society. I also have cards showing me as holding membership in Operation Fantast, the Rowley Fan Veterans, and Scottish Dancing Society, and the B.S.S., though the status of these last three organisations is doubtful these days. Oh yes - I'm also a certificated Goon operative. AND I've never formally resigned from the Teddy Tail League.

I think I've explained often enough by now just WHY that issue had two blank sides. (It was because the overlength side wouldn't fit on the back of what it was supposed to which had already been run, so had to go on foolscap instead, to refoolscap).

And in case the matter may not be as self-evident as it ought to be - ERG is pretty fabulous this time.

GLOOM 1 (Mike Deckinger) Consider yourself made welcome and not unlike that. But I'm warning you - if you start introducing the Prosser Illo into OMPA, there's going to be Prosser artwork in OMPA.

MARSOLO 7 (Art Hayes) I don't think I've ever thought of enquiring before - but does the word "marsolo" have any meaning apart from being the title of your OMPazine and if so what?

Hey, this is neat. Your new repro I mean. Don't look now, but the contents are looking up, too, even more than before. Apart from your own stuff (which, doubtless, improves by being easily legible) I definitely liked the Deckinger fragment. And the "Saturnalia" write-up at the back is FABULOUS - more of this, please!

MOBIUS STRIP (Daphne Buckmaster) Clever. Congratulations all round, Daphne Ron and Chris. (On a point of order, I don't think that umlaut belongs on the word "Mobius" though I stand subject to correction.)

SCOTTISHE 21 (Ethel Lindsay) Whaddya mean - "Off Tails" indeed! And I should imagine that the top of a steeple would be a MOST uncomfortable place to live. And not unlike that. Oh yes, and an exceedingly well-handled ATOM cover, too.

ZOUNDS! 3 (Bob Lichtman) Exclamation-mark, yes. As I've said, that was one of my reasons for abandoning ARCHIVE as a title, people would give all the letters equal value.

"E&OE" means "Errors and Omissions Excused". It's normally used in or with tabulated information, to serve as an excuse for possible incidental inaccuracy. I believe in actively discouraging the use of microelite because it's hard on the eyes - fair enough? The jump from Foster to McIntosh simply denoted that the Foster had been acquired since the Fs had been written up, so was stuck in at the beginning of the next section I did. Yngvi is a Louse. (Terry Jeeves please note).



THE SPOTLIGHT July 1960 (c/o Don Ford)

How many employees are there at your works, Don?

BIT OF CARD WITH HOLES IN IT (Jim Caughran)

-. --- - . ---

RANDOM 1 (Daphne Buckmaster)

Random used to be Chuck Harris's (or occasionally Walt Willis's)

column in HYPHEN But still.

Now THIS ATOM cover is the sort that I don't care for, in contradistinction to the ones he's done for ATOZ and SCOTTISHE in this Mailing.

The difference between a vice and a drug - I wasn't using the word "vice" correctly I know. I wanted a word that meant what I wanted to say, and "vice" seemed nearest, so I used it. As a result I don't get through. Ah me. What I really meant was to distinguish between two sorts of drug, harmless and harmful. Of course the difference is only one of degree in any case, not of kind, and I'm trying to establish where the boundary should be placed. Not, please note, where it IS (which is probably wherever the law puts it) but where it OUGHT reasonably to be.

This specimen probably makes history as being the first time the OE has included a zine of his or her own too late for listing in OT!

BURGESS'S LIGHTS 1 (Brian Burgess)

The number of fans, both before and after the fact as it were,

who have collaborated on this issue, could easily be some sort of a record. For instance, I typed a couple of the stencils myself. And Brian, you are to be commended for bringing this historical material to light. Not unlike it's interesting.

GRIFFIN 4 (George Spencer)

This is another type-face I don't care for (on the grounds that it makes the

stuff harder to read) but on the other hand I tend to care for the contents quite a bit. That "numbers" piece on the back page is a riot for instance, and the bit about the poor little ponies and the rest. The Civil War stuff was mainly lost on me, but I was amused to find that a place with a name like "Spotsylvania" can actually exist.

paraFANalia 6 (Bruce Burn)

As one who helped escort this item from Southampton Docks on the first stage of

its journey north some days after the official deadline, I'm particularly glad to see that it made it in time.

As for the contents --- fabulous Lynette cover --- interesting ramblings --- fabulous Art Wilson "judo" page --- the "Magic Stylus" has distinct possibilities, I hope you do follow this through Bruce --- --- uh-uh, I wouldn't know for sure just which "Green Hills" stanzas are Heinlein and which Burn, but I think I can guess, I mean some of them are better than others not unlike. And back to the fabulous Lynette cover again ---

UNICORN 2 (George Spencer)

No Mate - I do not jest. Microelite Must Go! It spoils good material hav-



ing to strain one's eyes to read it. You refer to "readable micro-elite" for instance - that, to my mind, is a contradiction in terms.

PHENOTYPE (Dick Eney) I don't know, it may be in yon smoke concealed, but I can't find even an Operation Crifanac number for this issue. Conrep, 14 pages of it, ENDING with the arrival at the Con hotel. There seems to be a sort of Movement afoot to condemn this sort of thing on the grounds that what people want to read about is the Con itself, not the trip there and/or back. My opinion is that it depends on how interesting the reporter makes the trip in question read. Nothing wrong with THIS specimen for instance.

Laney's "Syllabus for a Fanzine" - in one particular I'd like to dispute this. That's where it says that one should never, but never, solicit amateur material from a pro. This, surely, should be qualified in at least two particulars - (a) if the pro's a particular friend of yours, sharing to some extent your amateur hobby, it's perfectly legitimate to ask him for stuff, and (b) this particularly applies if it's something of a nature that he cannot normally expect to sell in the pro-market. Then there's the business of the extent to which it's legitimate to revise contributions editorially. Personally, I'd make my own "never" rule here, namely, never cut an item simply to make it fit the page. All cuts should be on artistic or taste grounds alone. (And, come to that, I'd tend to say don't ADD to what somebody else has written either, unless it's an obvious correction, or is clearly labelled as an editorial interjection.)

HUNGRY 3 (Alan Rispin) No, the repro isn't quite up to last time, particularly the stylus work (one cartoon is virtually lost altogether, the caption is unreadable) but the cover's come out well, hasn't it. Still on flaming foolscap I notice. Though the stencils seem to have been cut with quarto in mind - I've a good mind to guillotine the thing.

ON THE OTHER hand (it is now the 30th of October in case anybody's keeping a record of these things) it isn't necessary, because I seem to have solved my fanzine-filing problems. There exists a type of cardboard box that measures on the inside a shade over thirteen inches long, a shade over eight and a half inches wide, and a shade under four inches deep, with moreover a full-depth lid that in effect almost doubles the capacity of the box. The whole could perhaps, for absolute perfection, be made of a somewhat stronger cardboard, but it's still very nice as it is. I manage to acquire one from work every three weeks or so, and as the boxes will fit both British foolscap and American quarto without bending, my entire fanzine collection is gradually finding its way therein.

And as a subsidiary, I find that double-sheets of the new small size JAZZ NEWS make perfect folders for small bundles of fanzines.

This particular model is a Remington "Travel-riter de Luxe", which it looks as if I'll end up with, once a few of the auxiliary characters have been switched around to my satisfaction.

And so to our next, not unlike.



Our next being

# OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE

The column where, as the saying says, anything can happen but seldom if ever does

## REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF THE NEWS CHRONICLE

Less than a fortnight ago, on the Tuesday of the week before last, I called into the paper-shop on my way to work as usual and they insulted me. Not deliberately and specifically ME of course, but that was the effect it had. "It's no use

looking for the News Chronicle" said the man as he riffled through the regular-order stack, and he offered me instead a Daily Mail with a "combined with" headline formula.

Indignantly I told him to cancel. It had been bad enough when the News Chronicle had a few years ago taken over the Daily Dispatch, and its northern edition had promptly lost its soul to the latter accretion. The London edition had remained readable. But offering a News Chronicle reader of many years' standing the Daily Mail as an official substitute - - it's obscene. As were my thoughts at the time, and my language all but.

The thing about the News Chronicle, as British readers at least should be aware, was that it encouraged quality journalism in a popular format. Its writers were men and women of integrity and independent thought, who were allowed to express their own feelings whether or not they ran contrary to the paper's editorial policy (which they frequently did). Thus the specialist on "City" affairs tended to have right-wing type economic views, the specialist on trade union affairs tended to be a socialist, the man who was for several years principal foreign commentator (James Cameron) quite openly advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament, and so on.

And now it's all a thing of the past.

Suggestions as to why it happened, either at all or at any rate as abruptly as it did, have been flying thick and fast ever since. The fact that it had not the circulation to jack up the advertising revenue to the same extent as the more strictly popular papers is known and admitted. No doubt if it had sold its soul for a mass-circulation it could have survived - but that wouldn't have been much use to its basic readership (such as me), either. On the whole, I definitely incline to the view that modern newspapers are unhealthily dependant on advertising revenue. In fact, suppose the advertising profession got together, they could with-hold all advertising from the national press. Within weeks, the entire press would be bankrupt, the advertising profession could then step in and buy the papers outright, running them as they saw fit.

Of course, if this was to happen, then there'd be a big outcry and parliament would have to do something about it. The fact remains that the way newspapers depend on advertising revenue is (as I said back there) unhealthy. In fact, the advertisers can't have been sorry to see the comparatively small circulation of the News Chronicle disappear. If they'd wanted to keep it all that much, they'd have adjusted their rates accordingly. They can kill a paper thus negatively and get away with it - the next step is when they start killing papers POSITIVELY.

In the mean time, I have switched to the Times. There's a hell of a lot more bulk in the Times, and although much of it (speech reports in and out of parliament,



financial news, etc ad nauseam) is positively indigestible, when it does touch on a subject that interests one it goes into equal detail about it too. On the whole, it takes me about as long to read the Times selectively as it did to read the News Chronicle (apart from the sports and women's sections) fairly comprehensively.

The Times has its moments, too. There is a tradition of deadpan reporting (stiff upper lip and not unlike that) that still applies, with results such as this from the edition of October the 26th 1960. Reporting on Montreal's civic election, it concludes the item with the following paragraph:

"What surprised observers was the absence of the usual violence that occurs in the city on polling day. There were only 49 persons arrested, mostly for voting offences, and only one council candidate was pulled from his car and beaten over the head. For the first time in recent history none of the arrested persons carried knives or guns, and there was a marked absence of the traditional election weapon, the baseball bat." (E&OE)

I can just see them solemnly setting up the type for that paragraph, can't you?

There's even a wry deadpanliness about their declaration at the bottom of the back page: "Printed and Published by THE TIMES PUBLISHING COMPANY, LTD, at Printing House Square, in the Parish of St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe with St. Ann, Blackfriars, in the City of London, E.C.4, England".

In the mean time, there's talk of launching a new specifically-independent paper to replace the News Chronicle. I await developments with interest. Perhaps SKYRACK can go daily, Ron? Or ESPRIT Vol 2, Daphne? That'd help.

HOW TO MAKE A NAME It has often come to my notice that far too many characters in fiction (let alone in real life) have far too unlikely names. The ultimate in this was probably the time Mike Moorcock (so he informs me) was forbidden the use of some fan's actual name in one of his stories or scripts on the grounds that it was, not an actual name but an IMPOSSIBLE name.

However, a long time ago I formulated a system for the artificial construction of likely-sounding surnames. In the light of Mike's experience I promptly formulated an alternative system (for variety, if you like) and I propose here to give you all the benefit of my formulations.

Under my original system, one first of all takes an accepted suffix, either personal or geographical in nature. Man perhaps, or wright, or child, or field, stone, wood, church, bank, worth or worthy, hurst, dale, and so on. Then one takes an entirely arbitrary opening syllable, which may or may not make sense in its own right - just so long as it sounds English (or whatever language you happen to be working in) is all that matters. En perhaps, or An, or Lin, or Tod, or Sil, or Bem. Something like that. Now stick the prefix on to the suffix, and you come up with a row of names like Todchurch, Anfield, Bemworth, Linwood - all entirely artificial, but so natural-looking you'd almost expect to find them in any telephone directory.

For the alternative method, the procedure is simply to take an established name and knock off the opening letter or letters. This produces, as is to be expected, a name that sounds both vaguely familiar and vaguely different - and yet

utterly and completely natural. Hence it comes in very handy to label some character of distinction.

Such as? Oh, not exactly ANY old name, it's got to be suitably chosen. Try Brendan, Chancellor, Pennington, Blackwell, Stackpoole, Crispin - names beginning with double-consonants make particularly good specimens, because then you can drop the first letter and still begin with a consonant - Bradley, Spencer, Fletcher - no, on second thoughts I don't think we'd better have Fletcher. But you get the idea, I hope.

TRY THIS        Throughout business, it is supposed to be axiomatic that "the customer  
FOR SIZE        is always right". Which in turn is simply one aspect of a general  
                 psychological-type approach used by those with something to sell on  
those with something to buy. The seller normally goes out of his way to be polite to anybody who looks like buying something from him. The latter feels flattered, which puts him in a receptive mood for buying.

EXCEPT, 'twould seem, in the clothing industry.

Here the general rule is that the clothes - and hence their wearers - are graded according to size. Fair enough. I'm not sure how it works at the lower end, but it's all right in the middle. However, when the manufacturers get up to a certain number, they suddenly and arbitrarily call a halt. Anything, they decree, bigger than size so-and-so is Outsize.

Which, I suppose, is in turn all right for the manufacturers. But that leaves the retailers in a bit of a spot, because they now have the job of selling these "outsize" models to the people who fit 'em.

The salesman wouldn't dream, of course, of greeting his customer (unless they're personal friends perhaps) with "My, you ARE looking angry this morning", or "You're a bloody nuisance, you and your Small Eights". Not unlike, he's got to be polite in order to assist the sale. But when he offers the customer an outsize garment, he is saying in effect: "You're an overweight slob".

And still he makes the sale.

X This isn't fair. As an "Outsize" myself, I feel it keenly. Oh, I know that in my case I could probably alter things if I set out deliberately to do so. That doesn't alter the basic unfairness of the system, because there are plenty that couldn't. I wonder what happens at the other end - does anybody who falls below Size 1, or possibly some entirely arbitrary higher number, have to accept a "midget's size" or something? Or does the lower range of sizes slop over into decimals, or minus numbers?

This is only speculation. But so far as the higher reaches of the scale are concerned, the motto might well be: "It's all right to insult the customer as long as he's big enough".

End of column. I can see that Something Will Have To Be Done about this uneven grip.



AND TO FINISH, here's the Department I get the most pleasure out of doing:

# LAIR OF THE LEADEN-FOOTED FANCY

ANDERSON, OLIVER

Random Rapture

This is Bill Donaho's fault, his Habakkuk-type ramblings gave me this author's name, and now I've run something of his to earth - in a paperback, what's more. I like it. The story certainly isn't up to much, and even that fails to live up to its apparent promise, but it's the background that's everything. To my mind, the thing falls distinctly into the "fantasy" class, in the same sort of way as the Chestertonian extravaganzas. There are no out-of-the-ordinary physical assumptions, but the characters to a man (or woman) behave, not as they actually would, but as the author (and, I think I can safely say, his readers) would very much like them to. The result is great fun, I am now looking for more of this man's titles. (Oh yes - and from circumstantial evidence I'm not at all sure I haven't spotted an alternative byline).

BRUNNER, JOHN

Imprint of Chaos

From "Science-Fantasy" of course.

TUCKER, WILSON

To the Tombaugh Station

From "F&SF". I'd love to get hold of an uncut version of this.

(The above are all new acquisitions, I'll just mention in case anybody comes to the conclusion that the jump from "B" to "T" was a slip.)

TWAIN, MARK

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

This was filed behind "Vance", otherwise I wouldn't have made the rash remark last time that I was up to the "V"s. Some time during my teens I really lost myself in Huck's voyage down the Mississippi, and I bought this Puffin edition really for old time's sake. So far, I haven't dared re-read it.

VANCE, JACK

Big Planet

The Space Pirate

And here we ARE at "V". "Big Planet" is (of course) the much fuller magazine version. I'm not sure how and/or if the other volume's been cut since ITS mag version, but what the book publishers did to "Big Planet" is pure sacrilege.

van VOGT, A.E.

Slan

No comment required I believe.

VIVIAN, E. CHARLES

City of Wonder

Such an absorbing adventure that I can even tolerate the downbeat ending.

WALLACE, EDGAR

Sanders of the River

The People of the River

Bosambo of the River

Bones

Lieutenant Bones

Sandi the Kingmaker

I started collecting these in paperback for old time's sake, so they stopped issuing them in paperback. (It's easy if you're a publisher).



WALSH, MAURICE

The Small Dark Man  
 The Key Above the Door  
 Castle Gillian  
 The Road to Nowhere  
 And No Quarter

As I said before ( and Ethel nearly had me chloroformed for saying it if you remember), Maurice Walsh is one of my favourite authors, because although his ideal life is by no means MY ideal life, the way he writes of it makes me wish it was.

Now here's something that annoys me. The first two Walsh titles listed above are Penguins. The third title, a hard-cover, takes up about as much shelf-room as the two Penguins combined. The fourth and fifth titles are thicker still, yet the wordage of each of the five books is much the same. Which just goes to prove what an utter waste of shelf-space hard-cover books actually are.

WALTARI, MIKA

The Etruscan

WEST, WALLACE

The Dark Tower

From Startling - here's a story that could do with reprinting, if only somebody can be found who'll take it uncut. Not that they'd have any reason to cut it, but people seem to cut stories sort of on principle nowadays.

WHEATLEY, DENNIS

Uncharted Seas

Another one in the re-read-some-day-and-then-throw-out category I rather think.

WILKINS, VAUGHAN

Dangerous Exile (A King Reluctant)  
 Lady of Paris  
 Fanfare for a Witch  
 Crown Without Sceptre  
 And So - Victoria  
 Seven Tempest  
 Husband for Victoria

Here's one novelist whose works I CAN get lost in. All historical novels these, though I have read one set in the present day that had the same effect. His speciality, to my mind, a trick he adopts time and again, is assembling a group of characters into a confined space and keeping them there through several absorbing chapters - the tail-end of a great wagon, or the hold of a ship, and so on. But apart from that, he manages to grip this reader from start to finish. This is particularly true of the two giant stories, "And So - Victoria" and "Seven Tempest", but all his stories (except as we shall see in a minute) seem to have this gripping quality in no small measure.

When I first discovered Wilkins, and read several of his longer works practically nose-to-tail, I reflected what a good fantasy he ought to be able to turn out. Then he promptly started writing fantasies - and fell right down with an audible crash. I've read three, one an out-and-out juvenile (albeit it contains some first-rate wackitude worthy of "Unknown"), one a nominal "general" fantasy that is nevertheless slanted towards the juvenile, the third more strictly adult. None of them possesses the fire of the "mundane" books. A great disappointment.

Nevertheless, this doesn't affect the Wilkins historicals, which (too bulky though some of them are - see above under Maurice Walsh) I won't be getting rid of in a hurry.