

This fanzine is dedicated to anyone who has been to a pointillist exhibition and tried to see the picture.

Seriously, if you're one of those people who can never make out the 3-D images lurking behind the dots, or like me, are too lazy to want to concentrate while your friends are talking and your beer's getting warm, then you need to know that what you are holding in your hand is the Journal of the Bristol UFO Society. This issue our intrepid reporters cover the following sensational issues :

- * Aliens stole my things
the plight of old ladies when aliens invade their life
- * The WinCon Enigma
why are the guest of honour at this seemingly quiet South Coast convention being abducted and secretly debriefed by Martians? What is the secret that the Winchester SF group dare not tell us?
- * Rotten Apples
strange sightings round the cider makers of Somerset

We also have a report from our UFO watcher in China, letters from our eagle-eyed readers and a learned history of the first 50 years of our society, including the complete minutes from the 1888 meeting.

under fire

Tycoon is

TYCOON Richard Branson's balloon company has come under fierce criticism after a night-flight over Bristol was mistaken for a UFO - causing widespread panic.

The Virgin-airship and balloon company flew their special shaped Hutchinson Telecom balloon over Bristol in the early hours of the morning, on September 4th.

The craft was demonstrating its new lighting system, which flashes periodically from inside the balloon.

Lee Winterson of Bristol UFO research has called the flight 'irresponsible'.

The group and other UFO orientated bodies in the area received numerous phone calls from worried members of the public, who believed Earth was being invaded by extra terrestrials.

Upsets

"It should be stopped, it upsets too many people. It makes our work very difficult and as far as I'm concerned it's a pain in the Venus," said Mr Winterson.

The balloon company have taken similar night flights across the country - causing confusion and jamming police switch boards, he claims.

after city

However, group manager for the Virgin balloon company Michael Bolton has defended their right to fly at night.

"The company comply with all the regulations. They carry the required red light, the press and police are informed prior to the event.

"The balloons are perfectly safe to fly at night," he said.

"I'm concerned if people are upset by it, but at the end of the day we have complied with all the rules," he added.

UFO scare

HALFWAY UP THE STAIRS - THE MISS LEE LETTERS PART 1

*As I was going up the stairs,
I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today,
Oh, how I wish he'd go away.*

It's not until you hear your neighbour preparing a tape for a mobile disco that you realise just what the full brain damaging potential of pop music can be. It wasn't so much the noise, although that was beyond the acceptable (and I've witnessed how even normal levels of noise can drive some over the brink - but that's later in this saga), no, it was hearing the same banal song for the fourteenth or fifteenth time (I lost count) in the course of two hours that made trepanning seem like the soft option. Time and the mind's powerful natural defences make me unable to recall just what this particular hit of 1981 was, but I know that indifference to it turned to loathing that night.

I did think of going round to complain, but I decided to move house instead. I'd never liked the place - I'd been living there for over a year - and the more I thought about moving the nicer the idea seemed. I hated the house when I first went to view it. It was an ex-council house and as I walked along the road, not knowing which house it was, I saw one that stood out like a plot line in a Soap. The top half of the house had been painted in what can only be described as pollution blue. I thought *Oh, no. Don't let it be that one!* but it was, of course. The inside was even more horrific - every room decorated with wallpaper bearing a motif of circles. Except one of the bedrooms - this had wallpaper with a pattern of shocking pink flowers, just the thing for those hungover mornings.

I was desperate. I bought it. I'm lazy so I didn't redecorate. I let the circles remind me of where my life was going. After the disco incident I told myself I should never have bought a house on a council estate and should have expected that sort of neighbour. It may not be PC to think that way, but I spent the first eighteen years of my life in a council house and I remember the neighbours. I remember the water-pistol war.

When I was about seven I was occasionally friends with a lad next door of about my age. One day, one or other of us broke the other's ray-gun style water pistol and both went home in tears after a little attempt at fisticuffs. Next thing, a note is pushed through our letterbox and read as follows: TIME GOODRICK IS STUPID. Being only seven I assumed it was a simple misspelling of my name and should have read: TIMMY GOODRICK IS STUPID. Of course, I now realise it was probably deeply philosophical and just missing some punctuation; TIME, GOODRICK, IS STUPID. Whatever its meaning, my dad didn't like it and strong words were exchanged over the back fence. The escalation was quick and soon mud and stones were being thrown. Windows in both houses became the first casualties and I retreated to safety behind an armchair in the living room, wondering what sort of trouble I'd be in when they calmed down. As it was, no-

one seemed to remember what had caused the hostilities but we rarely spoke to our neighbours again after that.

I decided I wanted to move from the outskirts of Bristol to somewhere nearer the centre which meant finding a flat. After many months and many viewings I found what seemed like the ideal place. A quiet road with pretty gardens but only a couple of minutes from one of the main shopping streets. The flat had a hard standing for a car (not that I had one at that time but parking space being so precious in Bristol it was definitely a bonus). It was a split level flat with four large rooms plus kitchen and bathroom. A snip at £23000 (this was 1981) reduced from £27000 for a quick sale as the owner had already moved with his job.

I went round to the estate agents to say I'd take it but the agent was tied up with someone and I had to wait. It turned out that the someone was the owner, on a visit to Bristol, reducing the price by a further £1500. This, I told myself, was a sure sign that I was doing the right thing.

There were three other flats in the house, another one of which, the basement, was also up for sale. No-one believes me, but I didn't find out that the ground floor flat was occupied by someone from work until after contracts were exchanged. She was divorced with a son of about seven. The first floor flat was occupied by Miss Lee.

A note was left for me by the previous occupier of my flat, Dr. Howe, a lecturer, to the effect that Miss Lee usually communicated by notes left on the stairs, and not to worry about her. Naturally, I worried. I asked Philippa, the woman who owned the ground floor flat, about it and she said that Miss Lee was a little reclusive and she'd had to resort, quite frequently, to slipping notes under her door to communicate information about bills that needed paying by the management company, of which Philippa was the secretary.

So, I wrote her a note telling her I'd be having a flat-warming party and I hoped that the inevitable noise wouldn't disturb her unduly. This was her reply:

Dear Mr. Goodrick,

Thank you for your note & I hope you enjoy the party. I will not mind the noise! - You will be settling in these next few weeks - it takes some time! If you find my wireless too noisy at times ____ just stamp your feet and I will turn it down.

I use my hall very much as it is the warmest part of the flat ____ I am guarding against rheumatism ____ Prevention is better than cure!

Hoping you are pleased with the new home. With good wishes

*From
Miss Lee*

A friendly, neighbourly note and I felt slightly relieved. The party went ahead, though not without incident. Apparently, we were pogoing so hard at some point that the people in the house next door thought it was going to collapse. I got

a bit of an earful the next morning as I was filling a dustbin with bottles (this was before the greening of the supermarket car park) and I can't remember speaking to those particular neighbours again after that.

Miss Lee's next letter arrived a few days later.

Dear Mr. Goodrick

I keep the yellow paintwork clean to the top of the stairs ie to Mrs. Addisons door on the landing and I suggest that you do the stairs and sides down to the hall, and that Mrs. Addison should do the small amount of white paint work in the tiny square where the letter box is. Also that a char should come say once in 3 months or so, to do the lot that is - wash the floor of the hall passage and square where the letter box is, and do the tops of the doors especially the top of the front door which gets so dirty - my ladder is not really high enough

Yours sincerely

Miss Lee.

A little stranger than the first letter but not totally bizarre. The instructions were unsolicited and, I felt, more suited to a discussion at the meeting of the management company which was due in a few weeks. The door on the landing she speaks of led to a room belonging to Philippa Addison. It was entirely separate to the rest of her flat and she used it as a store room.

The meeting was held in Philippa's flat and Miss Lee turned up about a quarter of an hour late wearing her coat and with a shopping trolley. She said she couldn't leave anything valuable in the flat - there were so many thieves about. This was one of only two meetings she attended during my seven years in the flat. The cleaning of the stairwell didn't get discussed in the end.

Miss Lee began to reveal her true feelings towards me in her next letter. I am transcribing all these letters as accurately as possible, and lapses in grammar or spelling are in the originals.

Dear Mr. Goodrick

My light in hall was left on until the early hours of this morning. - If it was you who left it on - could you please switch it off as you leave. My electric bills are very high since you have taken the top flat. I am quite sure that you would not like it if I left your light on & would complain immediately - Please be more considerate

From

Miss Lee.

I was confused about whether I was supposed to have left the light on as I left the house or as I went into my flat. I knew that I hadn't because the positioning of the light switches meant that when I was coming in I had to climb a flight of stairs to switch my own lights on and come back down to turn the stair light off, a conscious act which it was impossible to forget. Likewise, the only time I left in the dark was when I went to work and then I had to carry my bicycle

downstairs. Once outside, I had to prop my bike against the wall and come back in to close the doors and turn the lights out. Again, not something you forget. It would be quite a few months before I saw Miss Lee come back from shopping and leave the stair light on after returning to her flat.

I'd been in the flat for about two months when the next letter arrived. With this one we had lost sight of the shores of the Land of Sanity and were adrift somewhere on the Sea of Perplexity, close to the Island of Hilarity.

Dear Mr. Goodrick,

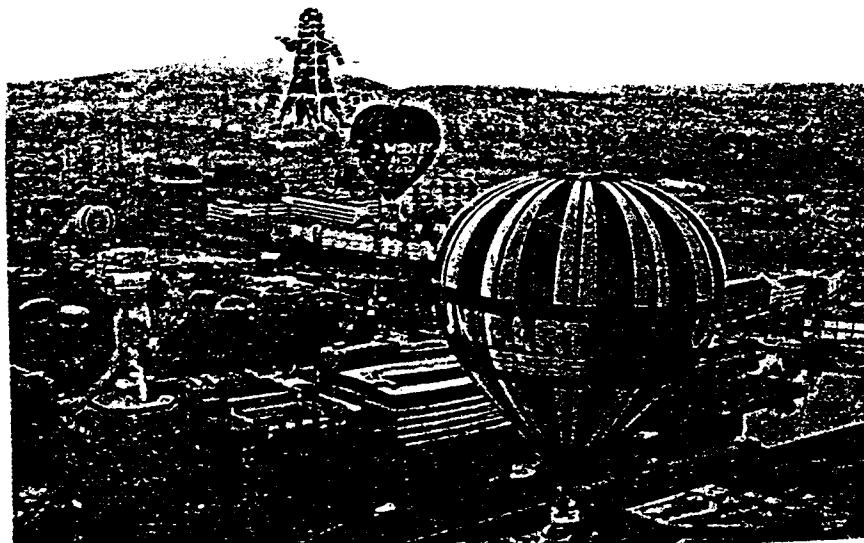
I brought these coupons up a few days ago with mine & was going to put them on your stairs, but somehow they got mixed up with other papers ____ I often left coupons for Dr. Howe (Dr. Howes lot) on his part of the stairs - as at that time we always had the front door open. An intruder came into my flat and stole a new hammer I was using, to hammer down a tea box, on Saturday November 7th. ____ I put it on my table in the hall and only left it for a few minutes, when I returned it had been taken. ____ My windows are screwed & the front door was bolted ____ I gave nearly £4-00 for this hammer and it is the second one that has been taken. Do you know anything about this? It must have been an inside job ____ When I first came a thief (probably the same one) took a merino wool blanket from the place on top of small cabinet cupboard where I had put it. Everything is so expensive. I resent having my things stolen. With so much unemployment it seems a lot of them are turning to stealing which is so evil. If you know anything about my hammer, could you please tell me.

From

Miss Lee.

Thus began the long list of Mysterious Disappearances. Next time we'll try to get to the bottom of the Hidden Dustbin Mystery and, if there is time, try to work out why there were no fish knives and forks in the hat box.

A footnote a spell check of the above stopped on the word TIMMY and suggested that it should be spelled TIME. The more things change.....



Peter-Fred in China

永安寺·白塔
北海公园

First it was Nixon, and John Adams wrote an opera about him. Then it was Peter-Fred. Well, I'm not musical enough to do an opera, so this epoch-making visit will have to be celebrated in the popular art form known as the interview, and carried out in the fine investigative tradition of our tabloid press.

Reporter: Christina Lake
Victim: Peter-Fred Thompson

C: You've been sent on a lot of business trips in the last year. Why does your company keep sending you away? Don't the people in your office like you?

P-F: No, though some of them must be wondering if I still work there! That's if they still remember who I am. You see, I helped design this product, and since I'm one of the few people who understand how it works I've been put in this role of travelling transputer salesman.

C: So, would it be fair to say that you didn't want to go to China?

P-F: Not at all. I would have preferred not to go to France and Italy in the week before, but I was pretty excited about China.

C: Even after India and Japan, to name but two of your destinations in the past 12 months.

P-F: Well, obviously Japan was a real thrill for me, being a Zen Buddhist and a black belt in Aikido. And as for India, what can I say?

C: Don't bother. I get enough of that stuff from "A Suitable Boy".

P-F: Haven't you finished it yet? Weren't you reading it back in August when I went to the West Coast?

C: Just because I'm the slowest reader in fandom, doesn't give you an excuse for name-dropping another of your destinations. Come on, this is about China.

P-F: Well, yes. I suppose I saw it as something of a culinary challenge. After all, I have made most of my reputation, such as it is, from cooking fabulously wonderful Chinese meals.

C: Anything would taste wonderful if it was served two hours late.

P-F: That's unfair. At most of our dinner parties you stuffed people so full of tortilla chips it's a wonder they had any room for my cooking.

C: Let's not rehash our marriage here. We're supposed to be talking about China.

P-F: Yes, as I was saying, I was seriously interested in the food. In fact, on my first night in China, my colleague and I ordered all sorts of things off the menu. This was a very bad idea. We'd eaten so much we could hardly move, when they brought in the Beijing Duck. Yes, a whole duck! Then, instead of leaving us to do our meagre best, the waiters started slicing off the skin and rolling it all up in pancakes. And then they asked if we would like a the meat fried up and a soup made from the rest! You can imagine. We just had to say no. But they would have done it.

C: Did they have any of those banana fritter things they serve in Chinese restaurants here?

P-F: No, of course not. So, on the next night I was more restrained. Well, actually, the next night I was back in Hong Kong, but my next night in China...

C: Can you give the readers some idea of your itinerary. I, for one, am losing track.

P-F: You never were much good at navigating.

C: Excuse me - for someone who can't tell her right from her left - or do I mean left from right? - I do extremely well!

P-F: Okay, have it your own way. Let's see, we started out in Hong Kong, went on a short trip to a Taiwan (which both sides agree is still a bit of China really) for a meeting, then back to Hong Kong, then over to Shekou for the Beijing Duck experience, back to Hong Kong and then on to Beijing.

C : What was it like, giving a lecture to a load of people who didn't speak English?

P-F : Rather difficult. I had prepared some visual aids but then I decided to give a different talk anyway. The interpreter for the first seminar couldn't really cope with the technical vocabulary, even though I went through it all with her in advance, so the whole event degenerated into something of a farce. But, at the session in Beijing, the interpreter turned out to be a famous professor in her own right. So, when I finished my talk, it was rather disconcerting to find everyone wanted to ask her questions instead of me. When I praised her afterwards on what a good job she had made of interpreting, she asked how I could know, not speaking Chinese. But it was obvious really. I didn't have to spend half my time stopping to explain all the concepts to her.

C: Was language a problem in general?

P-F: A bit. Particularly in taxis. The drivers tended simply to take you to where they thought you wanted to go. For example, in Hong Kong, we wanted to go to the railway station, but the taxi took us to the airport, because that's where all Western travellers go. If you wanted to go anywhere non-standard, you had to get the hotel to write it down to show to the taxi drivers, and then just hope.

C: Where was the best place you went?

P-F: The Great Wall of China, without a doubt. It was full of tourists, but if you walked far enough you could get beyond the crowds. What I never realised was that the wall goes up almost vertically in some places. I can show you a picture if you like. Several, actually.

C: Later maybe. Enough of this tourist stuff. What the readers really want to know is did you get off with any beautiful Chinese women while you were there?

P-F: There were lots of beautiful Chinese women in fact, but the police over there take a very dim view of that sort of thing. So, no, I didn't, but my colleague nearly got propositioned by a guy in the bar in Hong Kong! I did meet a ninety year old Kung Fu expert - not romantically I hasten to add - who could still out-manoeuvre his young Western pupil without even raising a sweat. That was an interesting evening, or rather an ill-fated one, since it was on my way back from that that I lost my passport.

C : That was pretty stupid. How did you manage that?

P-F : I don't know. It must have fallen out of my pocket in the taxi. I didn't realise till I had finished packing for travelling back to England the next morning, and checked through my documents, as one does - ticket, passport. Passport? I unpacked everything, tore the room apart. But eventually I had to accept that I'd lost it.

C: God, how awful. What did you do then?

P-F : I got the hotel to ring the airport to unbook my seat. Then I called the British embassy, who told me I had to make a report to the police. Here's a tip - if you ever lose your passport in China, don't tell the police that you think it was stolen. If I had, I reckon I would still be out there, helping them with their inquiries.

C: How long did it take the embassy to do you a new passport?

P-F : Well, I reported it missing on Monday, and it was due to be ready by Thursday, and I was going to fly back Friday. Though I was a bit concerned about this, because of course my new passport wouldn't have a visa in it, and the authorities might be a bit unhappy if there was no visa to cancel. You know how it is when you have a cancellation stamp all ready and nothing to stamp it on. Anyhow, I rang them on Wednesday to see how my passport was progressing, and they told me that my old passport had been handed in! Which was rather good as it meant I didn't have to worry about the visa after all and was in fact able to get out on Thursday.

C: Did you appreciate your extra stay in China?

P-F : Yes, in a way, apart from the frustration at not being able to get back. In fact, it gave me the chance to visit some rather interesting Buddhist temples. I took a few photos. Would you like to see them?

(Peter-Fred takes out four packs of photos from his bag)

C : (Backing away) Actually, I'm rather busy at the moment. I've got this fanzine to do!



Steve Brewster takes us on an impressionistic trip through :

WINCON III

The campus of King Alfred's College, Winchester, sprawls over a hilly landscape, or possibly a landscaped hill, and hence so do all Wincon's events. Careful study of the site plan and programme guide, and more than the usual forward planning, were necessary in order to avoid that sinking feeling of always following in the wake of the sex, drugs and rock-n-roll that (surely?) lurk beneath the surface of a respectable con. I didn't envy the gophers their fate of dashing up hill and down dale, dimdls flying, in order to force widely-scattered committee members to communicate with one another. The dealers' room suffered a poor showing: you've got to put such things Somewhere, but since most of us navigate by triangulation from the bar, Anywhere too far from the beer counts as Nowhere. So the Evolution committee and the paperback peddlars sat all forlorn, cold and alone in the vastness of sixties educational architecture, quailing at this vouchsafed vision of the Intersection Fan Fayre room. (Bright side: more bargains and elbow room for the rest of us). Still, a nice site : how can one not like a college with an interesting deserted graveyard next door?

Wincon III kept with tradition: the Guest of Honour was AWOL, albeit for a duller reason than those who remember Wincon I's Shoelace Incident might have hoped for. Algis Budrys was a victim of the US State Department's inability to promise to let him back into the Land of the Free after rubbing shoulders with the likes of us: hence a hat-trick of absences for the plucky South Hants lads (applause). The committee handed out pre-printed WhyOhWhyOhWhy letters to send to the Embassy, but deep down they knew that to try to get all of a Wincon's guests to a Wincon and keep them there is to fight Destiny.

Rooms were perfectly adequate, though at least one well-known fan made himself at home in the wrong one and wondered why he was unable to lock his door. He was finally put right at 4am on Sunday by the DrunkenRoomPartyGoers, which clan has a singular preternatural talent for finding correct rooms at 4am on Sundays. I was lucky enough to be in the accommodation block chosen to be the Happening one, dedicated after midnight to debauchery and Worldcon bids (which see).

Friday evening, and the hallowed fan tradition of En-Masse-Baffle-The-Restaurant. A nice but painfully pricey Chinese meal, at which Caroline Mullan, Brian Ameringen, John Bray et al told me that I had seen none of the Good Films and read none of the Good Books that Western Civilization (TM) regards as canonical. I complained feebly that in our house we'd never been allowed to waste our colour licence on black-and-white films (the Black and White Minstrel Show had some kind of exemption, though). Ethanophiles Steve Glover and Pat McMurray showed indictable lack of skill at pouring sake; I miserably salivated over the drips as the prescribed penicillin coursing through my veins cried 'Don't do it! Don't do it!'

Sobriety at conventions has its good points. I found hitherto-unknown vim and vigour at early-hours parties, being almost the last to bed. There wasn't much of a programme on Friday evening, so I talked naff Seventies songs with Graham Taylor. Like BaCon a few weeks before, WinCon had the benefit of good weather, so evening drinking sessions spilled out of the bar and into the landscape gardening.

Late Friday night: the 'Balton in '98' and 'Bostimore in '98' room parties were Jolly Good and lasted from Late to Well Past My Bedtime. I slumped on the floor and stroked Amanda Baker's rather-nice-silk clad torso. (Note: watch the punctuation dashes there. Not that AB's torso isn't nice; just that I wasn't stroking it, except through the rather-nice-silk). Dave

Clements told tales of the Wacky Life of a European Southern Astronomer. Steve Glover spilt a large drink down Rafe Culpin's back in an extremely amusing fashion. Colin Greenland wandered past wearing a T-shirt which bore the cover art of the -red-hot?-Dutch version of 'Take Back Plenty'. I said 'Oh, so you're Bernie A. Peek!' to Bernie A. Peek. Two bids, same year, indistinguishable except to the knowing, and parties in adjacent rooms: Tweedledum and Tweedledee of Worldcon bids.

I didn't attend the British Horror film-and-talk stream (except for a few minutes' worth when I went to the wrong room), so I missed The Complaint From The Floor. Neither I nor anyone else missed the aftermath, consisting of committee members looking very relieved as the clock ticked away minutes free from snap Vice Squad raids led by David Alton. Fear of the strong arm of the law stalked the land and one wondered why, since it was clear nothing illegal had gone on.

During a meal on the Saturday of BaCon, a several-way conversation between myself, Caroline Mullan, John Bray and others had died in confusion when each of us, on hearing the name 'JC', assumed a different 'JC' to be the object, and interpreted accordingly: John Clute, Jack Cohen, Jesus Christ... The second in this list led an entertaining panel item on Wincon's Saturday about 'The Collapse of Chaos,' by Cohen and Stewart, available at all good bookshops, et cetera. For someone just hailed by several reviewers as a co-harbinger of 21st-century science, JC made a pretty good job of not looking too smug. His co-panellists wisely kept their mouths shut and let him ramble intelligently. The discussion continued afterwards in the bar, where I learned from Real Scientists that the bit of Roger Penrose's 'The Emperor's New Mind' that I'd liked the best had been all wrong. Lacking the Dutch courage to argue with them, I just kept quiet while the discussion moved onto the way Bridget Hardcastle is a Good Thing because she raises male sperm levels.

Steve Green gave a very odd talk on Saturday about why he left fanzine fandom a while ago: people had sent him fanzines which he didn't like, and which had put him right off zines for ages. Crumbs. Late on Saturday, the South Hants Science Fiction Group laid on a spiffing party with lashings of ginger beer for the unfortunately sober like myself, and with proper drinks for everyone else. I soon fell into the company of the more militarily-minded fans, who were swapping increasingly outrageous stories about Armed Forces mishaps with weapons, jet fighters and machine guns. I'd repeat them, only I'd get all the names of the planes wrong, and mix up the gun calibres. That's the trouble with technically-oriented anecdotes: they don't travel well.

And so to that Sunday-of-a-con feeling; the feeling that one should be making a quick getaway, and that the train timetable might not be reliable. Perhaps the best bit of the winding-down session was the hilarious radio (BBC Hampshire?) article on WinCon, played back at the public-understanding of SF panel item, which was widely derided as horrible and twisted but very funny. Norman Spinrad said that the best way to prevent being quoted on radio was to say 'fuck' a lot. Indeed.



Cider Tasting III

by Brian Hooper



It seems from a limited acquaintance with science fiction fandom that little incentive is required to induce great feats of alcohol consumption (eg bar is open, off-licence is open, neither are open, but we had sufficient foresight to stock up earlier etc etc). All that is required is convivial company and the merest trace of an excuse. It is further gratifying to note that SF fans are sufficiently discerning drinkers to have taken up the cause of real beer with gusto (although disturbing intelligence in this respect has reached your correspondent's ears from a recent famous convention). Further to the interests of such good taste (if not always in the interest of faultless decorum) the Bristol SF group has in past years championed the cause of real cider.

Cider is available in most public houses and hotels, and the situation extant resembles the situation with beer twenty years ago, which is to say, most cider sold in pubs bears the same relationship to cider as Watney's Red Barrel does to beer. These substances (we forbear to mention any brand names for fear of the consequences) are manufactured by inserting vegetable matter (including but not limited to fruits of *Malus Pumila*) into one end of a chemical works. The finished product emerges from the other. The chief quality requirement is that the shelf-life be enormous and the product appear enticing on billboards, in TV commercials etc. Flavour is not considered necessary, but a selling prices of £1.75 per pint is de rigeur.

Your correspondent has no highly developed pretensions to refinement in many ways. He classes wines into 2 kinds, red and white, prefers processed peas to fresh ones and lives on an exclusive diet of commercial white bread. Nevertheless, the oily slime produced by the above mentioned process is rather too much to be borne. And although the fruits of the apple tree (the aforementioned *malus pumila*) have, in their native state, the most deplorable effect on your correspondent's digestion, he nevertheless prefers that a product ostensibly made from them should retain some trace of their original characteristics.

An alternative processing method springs to mind. In this, one takes the apples, and presses them to extract the juice. The juice is then allowed to ferment using natural yeasts (*Saccharomyces Cerivisae* and others), and after fermentation, left to mature for a suitable period. The result will be pleasantly flavoured, light and refreshing. Remarkably enough such a substance already exists, and has been made for hundreds of years.

In the South West we are fortunate in that many of the makers of cider are to be found here, and consequently it is also available in a number of pubs. However, the choice is still not large and for our cider tasting, we found it best to get the stuff directly from the makers. A guide to these is published by those awfully nice CAMRA people for a sum which depends on where you get it but not more than six quid in any event.

This lists all the cider pubs the editors could remember after a hard evening's research, and also a list of all the cider makers that produce the real thing (places that produce the unreal thing are hideous in aspect and clearly visible for miles around, as anyone who has driven along the M4 at Reading will realise). Your correspondent obtained a copy and has since been plying the Bristol SF Group with "Cider Tastings".

The foraging expedition for the IIIrd tasting departed Bristol at the unseemly hour of 8.00 am, to avoid Bank Holiday traffic, departing for Darkest East Somerset, arriving at the first target in Kingsbury Episcopi at 9.30 am after searching some time for a building determined to remain hidden. Cider farms are very liberal with the samples and a 9.30 start with ten places to visit may account for some inaccurate navigation later (the driver, fortunately, abstained). Burrow Hill also had a pile of junk out the back, "soon to become a cider museum". The prime exhibit was a mobile still, once horsedrawn, for the conversion of cider into applejack, a device combining the merits of convenience for the maker and the

impossibility of the Revenue Men finding out about it. The Highlands of Scotland have no monopoly of patriotic resistance to such exactions.

The next port of call was Perry's in Dowlish Wake, a picture postcard cider farm in a picture postcard village. Also sold were "farm produce" eg expensive plastic wrapped cheese and souvenirs. An actual museum of gaily-painted carts and twee things we ignored. Amazingly enough, the cider was quite good.

No twee-ness at Ashill, our next destination. A sign saying "hoot for Cider", with directions to the local boozier if this doesn't produce a response (presumably where the staff are to be found in emergencies).

While most cider farms with any kind of pretensions have a pile of junk which is "soon to become a cider museum", Vickerys at Hisbeers farm, attached to no village in particular, has what looks like quite a promising motor museum which has recently become a pile of junk. It must have been done recently since all the cider is buried under it. That which could be found, however, was excellent. They don't believe in "sweet, medium or dry" round here, preferring it "as it turns out". A sample of about 3/4 pint proved this to be an admirable philosophy. The wear-and-tear on the car caused by the half-mile driveway easily cost more than the cider.

A complicated journey through the Dark Forbidding Blackdown Hills brought us to Bradford-on-Tone, and Sheppy's, which has an actual rather than an intended museum, but where the business of making cider seems to have become subordinate to the separation of tourists from their money.

Whizzing round Taunton on the M5 we ignored the Taunton Cider Company, who produce, apparently, in addition to their more famous brands, three-quarters of a million gallons of real cider per annum. Not all of this is for me. Anyway, to Bathpool, and Henry's, boasting the pile of junk "soon to be...etc." Henry's Rocket Fuel may be had here, but being devoid of spacecraft we merely bought cider.

Lane's cider of West Monkton proved impossible to find partly because of the abstruse nature of the directions and partly because the navigator by this time was having difficulty with "right" and "left".

On to Watchfield and Rich's, which is always included as it is the navigator's favourite. Amazingly, Rich's has neither a museum nor a pile of junk, but it makes up for this by having cider which is sold as fast as it can be poured. Homeward bound to Hewish and Crossman's Cider which is easy to find but requires a hair-raising right turn across the A370. Nice cider, though, and worth it if it isn't your no-claims bonus. A nearby competitor has ceased cider making and opened a brewery. However, it would be churlish to complain about this.

Last stop was Richard's at Congresbury, which looks like an ordinary village shop, except it faces the back garden rather than the customary position of overlooking the road. No doubt someone can explain this bizarre marketing ploy. So with nine gallons joyously sloshing away in the back, off to the tasting.

Given all this dedicated work from Brian and his driver (David Moore, who judging from this article deserves a great deal of credit for the selfless sacrifice of his suspension in the cause of cider) it was pity that there were only eight of us present to enjoy the fruits of this mission. True, there was no danger of the booze running out, but how to do justice to fifteen varieties and several gallons of cider? Particularly when two of the party weren't even sure that they liked cider and somehow conned Richard into giving them champagne instead half way through the evening.

auditors came round. SEOs gibbering at each other, snatching at piles of paper to hide them in cupboards, so that the place looked tidy, regardless of whether or not anyone was actually working on aforesaid pile of paper... rainforests felled to produce bags of discarded prints that had to be re-printed time and time again because some small digit which was part of an incomprehensible quality reference number kept needing changing. The temperature in the photocopying room reaching "I'm gonna faint in a minute" levels as hordes of people crammed in there, all with equally urgent volumes of incomprehensible crap to reproduce. (The scribble on the previous page is something I did for the branch rag, which just about sums up the chaos.) We were of course still expected to keep to project deadlines during this.

((Of course, what really dates this paragraph is reference to BS 5750 which is being replaced by the really zany ISO BS EN 9000 series. No wonder BSI can afford an offensively large new headquarters building in Chiswick!))

I've been to Alton Towers. The log flume was one of the only two rides I went on that DIDN'T make me feel like throwing up. After the fiendish thing that shoots you above the height of tall oak trees, then drops you back down again in seconds (leaving you feeling your stomach is still up there somewhere), I gave up and walked round the gardens instead... I mean, imagine what would happen if you DID throw up on that thing.. the vomit would follow you down by a split-second delay, and you'd probably meet it again on the way back up...

((Clearly Lesley enjoyed the experience almost as much as I did. Now, I wonder if the following claim still holds true ?))

Jane Carnell, 1 FFR 63 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh, EH7 5HZ

All the zines I've locced over the past four years have been pornographic. Couldn't you have included just one smutty story so that I could cope? Oh, you did. Tangerine and whisky jelly. That's not just smutty, that's obscene. Can I borrow it for my next story?

((Please do, if you haven't already!))

I can't think of anything to say about the piece on fanzines. So instead I'll tell you about my first experience with Haagen Daz ice-cream. This stuff ought to be illegal (and probably is -there's still a law against adultery, and who can eat Haagen Daz without committing adultery in the heart?) and furthermore the H-G parlour had little red cardboard hearts advertising heart-shaped ice-cream cakes, large and small 'for those intimate moments'... what kind of intimate moment do they expect you to have with an ice-cream cake, I wonder? As a fellow-smut fan once remarked, love for chocolate ice-cream (or pecan-and-cream) is sincere but short-lived.

((This is the point in the proceedings when I need a letter about chocolate from Bridget Hardcastle. Why didn't you write, Bridget? Not having received the fanzine hardly constitutes an adequate excuse. Oh well, we'll just have to let Jane tell us what she thought of the articles...))

Peter-Fred's story about flying Concorde was obviously designed for no other purpose but to turn us all green with envy, and I don't like being a Vulcan (have you ever wondered

how much pink lipstick they use per seven years?) so I'm not going to comment on it. However, I liked Tim Goodrick's Star Trek story so much I decided to bore you with a Blake's 7 story in which Avon and Vila visit a Greek restaurant. But the prize of the fanzine was MF AND ME AND THE MARSH STREET TRANSMITTER. This had everything. Excitement... evil forces... death threats... locked doors... flu... and lots of toilets.

((Yes, what more could you ask for? Another of our Southend correspondents, agreed with you about Tony Walsh's piece, though he almost didn't get around to reading it!))

Dave Harwood, 20A Maldon Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5AZ

Trouble is it looked like a story, and I'm not fond of the short story form - especially not short short stories. Purely a prejudice, you understand, but sufficiently ingrained that I tend to avoid short story collections as a rule (unless they're by Eric Frank Russell or Cordwainer Smith). But anyway, I did eventually read Tony's piece and was muchly entertained by it.

((Dave goes on to give some thought to the whole process of writing locs...))

You may well be out of practice at producing fanzines, but you're nowhere near as out of practice as I am at responding to them. I mean, I rarely even write ordinary letters these days, while as far as locs go.. well, it's been a few years now. Actually, I'm so out of touch with things, I'm not even sure comics fandom exists any more; it certainly doesn't in the form that I used to know it. Mind, since I no longer buy comics (haven't for about 3 years), I wouldn't be able to relate closely with any fanzines that might exist anyway. And, as you know, I never did immerse myself very deeply in the sf fanzine world. But I do miss the fanzine scene, and I've lately been wishing I could somehow re-immerser myself in it, though I haven't a clue how I'd go about doing so.

((You could always try doing a cover for ATTITUDE))

With comics fanzines particularly, because I understood the subject matter, and had views I wanted to express, it was easy for me to get involved, and enjoyable too. The fairly standard long lettercols also allowed expression of virtually any subject you wanted to air and, at their best, became very 'interactive' affairs. At least, I thought so. I can see your point about non-subject-oriented fanzines allowing people to find and write to their own strengths, but it's a freedom I personally would find more inhibiting than helpful. I guess I never felt there was any event in my life that would interest others, except my friends, and I definitely had/have no intention of indulging in personal confessions to a bunch of strangers.

((It's all right, no personal confessions required for this fanzine - unless you have anything to say about UFOs.))

Actually, I think some of my best writing appeared in my locs. It was a form I felt very comfortable with, once I got the hang of it, since it gave me several concrete starting points and from there I could wander all over the place, without restriction. Formal articles were never really my forte, though one or two came out quite well (usually when I had a broad theme). But the point is that I needed those handles on which to drape the

rest of my writing. That was probably the main reason I never got more involved with sf fanzines, apart from the fact that comics fandom kept me pretty well occupied back then. I didn't feel I knew enough about sf and the art/craft of writing to offer meaningful comments in the critical journals, and the other stuff didn't really draw me in - or, perhaps, more accurately, didn't draw me out.

((For at least one reader, the arrival of Balloons Over Bristol turned out to be rather handy...))

Michael D. Glicksohn, 508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6S 3L6

I feel most definitely that the recent arrival of BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL #3 must have been an act of BF (that's Benevolent Fate that Tony Walsh mentions just briefly.) And I'll tell you why... You may or may not have heard that I more or less "retired" from loccing fanzines about nine months ago as a result of getting engaged and deciding that working to strengthen my relationship with my fiancee was more important and more enjoyable than reading and loccing fanzines. In the past nine months I've stayed in touch with a small handful of fanzine editors and written just a small handful of locs and the once steady stream of fanzines arriving here has started to dwindle to a mere trickle as more and more incoming issues are merely consigned to the boxes that house my collection without a serious reading and without any sort of response. However I did not treat BOB #3 in this cavalier fashion. I read the whole issue cover to cover, and enjoyed doing so, gaining particular enjoyment from the aforementioned Walsh article and Peter Fred's tale of life among the jet set. In fact, were I still Fandom's Second Most Famous Letterhack I'd have no trouble at all making this a pretty solid loc on the issue. Alas, I am not and so this is not and so it goes. Where BF steps in, however, is that my fiancee happens to be here this week and one of the things we're going to be doing is trying to rough out our plans for our honeymoon in July. Said honeymoon will take place in England and Wales (you're probably ahead of me already on this one) and I myself would like to include a day in Bristol. (I'm a big Brunel fan and want to show her the Clifton suspension bridge and see whichever of his ships has been rebuilt since the last time I was there in 1987.)

((On which note we can declare the letter column well and truly dated, if not obsolete, since Mike and Susan did indeed come to Bristol for their honeymoon - in July 1993!

WE ALSO HEARD FROM... well, no-one. Unless I lost the letters in the intervening years.

Tragically, the minutes for the 1888 meeting seem to be lost too. But no doubt they'll turn up in time for the next issue. Articles already on file for this Fortean feast include "Ectoplasm or Alien Spaghetti?" and "How My Bladder Saved Me From Alien Abduction." BY REPUTABLE WRITERS. Can you afford to miss it?

This month's UFOs were spotted by : Steve Brewster, Tim Goodrick, Richard Hewison, Brian Hooper, Christina Lake, David and Dalva Moore, Peter Thompson, Tony Walsh. Future sightings to be sent to 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA))

November 1994

