



Being a Purr-zine from Al & Al, with no help at all from Ruddles and Tanglefoot

Helicon 93 - the unofficial version

Most con reports tell it like it is. But not in this case. after all, who wants to hear about the program items they missed? (That's a rhetorical question by the way¹)

On arrival, the tales of people's travel traumas was beginning to sound like a Monty Python sketch. "24 hours late? I used to *dream* of being only 24 hours late..." I mean, we thought we would be in the top ten of interesting stories by saying how the flight pushed back from the gate ("Oh look, we're leaving exactly on time!" — famous last words there) hung about a bit, developed a fear of flying and decided to return to the gate². We were only a mere $\frac{1}{2}$ hour late.

George R R Martin commented that it was strange to be opening the con when he had already been partying for two days...

Strangely, a Con report from the year 2093 has drifted through the worm holes of reality. An extract follows:

...guests were seen to be sneaking out after only fifteen weeks, claiming "I need to work for a few days to pay for my bar bill". Meanwhile, with festivities in full swing, it was announced that, due to an excess of room parties, the actual programmed items would be cut down to half a day. This did not bother people unduly, although a Committee member was heard to say "A temporary set-back, but with a 100 stream real programme, something had to go."

Consecutive, 2093

Artistic licence notwithstanding, the pages of the *Heliograph*³ were full of references to Fakefans, who

¹As opposed to *By the Wey*, which runs through Guildford.

²Maybe that wasn't the reason, but who knows?

³I always thought it was a signalling mirror. How can a mirror have pages?

were, according to Chris Bell, anyone who went to bed before she did. Nah! In a random discussion, probably while eating out, it was decided that a Fakefan is someone who doesn't agree with you. This, of course, is an amazingly fluid definition; depending on which kind of agreement is required, it can apply to almost anyone at any time⁴.

Speaking of people, and how to recognise them... here is a quick guide to would be Conrunners:

How do you recognise Allison Ewing?

A. Allison is Scottish.

Also, we'd have to be pretty bitter and twisted to vote against having a convention almost on our doorstep, especially as we like the hotel⁵.

And now, the truly bizarre. At late 'o clock, a fan came up to the Voodoo board and wanted to know how it worked. A willing victim explained the bits about putting in pins and leaving messages in the box. "Do you put the message in under your membership number?" "No, they're sorted alphabetically" "That seems far to simple. I'm sure it was more complicated than that at *Confiction*" "No, really, it is that simple" "OK, I'll leave a message to test it out"

{Two minutes later}

"Ah, I've got a pin next to my name. Where do I find the message?" "In the box — look for it alphabetically" "Oh, that's amazing! What a great system! It works!"

I'm sure there are easier ways to leave messages to yourself... like writing on the back of your hand with a Biro™⁶

Writing... after the newsletter that wouldn't die⁷, the

⁴"This person doesn't agree with me." "Well eat what you can, and leave the rest"

⁵*Confabulation*, Eastercon 95 in Docklands, if you hadn't already guessed.

⁶I kid you not! Ladislav Biro invented the ball point pen and trademarked the name. Another amazing factoid.

convention that wouldn't die. Well almost. We've hired a car, and we **want** to get our money's worth for the petrol. So we set off to see some rocks...⁸

first stop was La Haugue Bie, which would confuse future archeologists, as it manages to combine several **totally** separate functions, and several totally separate time periods (from Iron Age to Second World War), all on the same site⁹.

On a clear day, you can see all of Jersey, and also across to France, said the guidebook. The low cloud base meant that we had difficulty seeing 2 miles, so we had to take that one on trust.

Next on the Grand Tour: Mont Orgueil Castle¹⁰, where, not totally surprisingly, we first met other fans¹¹, who were also catching up on the island's culture¹². Climb the towers because they are there, and then go down when "up" is no longer a viable option.

At Bonne Nuit, a quick walk down the cliff path was decided on as being good for the spirit. This of course meant a corresponding climb back up again, which was distinctly less good for the spirit...

At Wolf's Caves, the path was officially closed, and those ignoring the notice did so at their own peril. Feeling in the mood for a spot of life imperilment, we ignored the notice.

⁷*Heliograph* - the Undead Dog Bulletin came out on Tuesday.

⁸A quick plug for Ryan Johnson's treatment of *Star Trek V*—wonderful stuff.

⁹Actually, the Germans probably did *less* harm to the Iron Age site than those before them, who built a church on the mound.

¹⁰One of the ones used as a "typical" Jersey backdrop for *Bergerac*

¹¹Which isn't quite true. We first met other fen at the Zoo, which was the previous day.

But why let accuracy get in the way of a good story.

¹²"When I hear the word 'Gun', I reach for my culture" — I can't remember who first said that.

About half way down, the slope steepened to near vertical; even mountain goats would have had a tough time. The path was marked out by a series of zig-zag stakes. About, oh, along way down, there were already some people, so we went. Not surprisingly, they were fans. Comment: "I knew this Con was cheap, but this is one hell of a Gopher Hole"

Climb up, escape the bad jokes and press on to Devil's Hole. More long pathway, although paved
"Ah, this must be for the mass market", says I
"Which means that Wolf's Cave must be for the masochist market", said Allison. Very true.

Surprise, surprise, there were the same fen we had seen at the Wolf's Caves. This time they reckoned that we were in the Green Room¹³. It was at this point that we picked up two extra passengers, as it was easier than waiting for a bus¹⁴. Still, we pressed on round the island. At another castle (ruined), we stopped for a quick photo session. The doorway of the castle was one of the only things left standing. "Why are you all going the long way round to the gate?" "Because there's no drawbridge. Only a large gap!"

Food seemed to be the next requirement¹⁵, which brings us nicely to a closing quote from Allison, taken, like all the best quotes, completely out of context¹⁶:

"I find that the tongue isn't quite long enough, so you have to use your fingers instead"

¹³Green Room — a resource consumer. Quite a good analogy, I suppose...

¹⁴Although an awfully long way round for a shortcut — the bus would have got them back to the hotel the quick way...

¹⁵Actually the main requirement was a pub, but we ate there anyway.

¹⁶Mind you, even in context it was an unusual thing to say.

This has been the first edition of *Beer Cat Scratchings*, produced by Alasdair Hepburn and proof read by Allison Ewing. The Beer Cats were played by themselves, and Arnie did the printing. ©1993 for all the original bits...