

ERG 160

QUARTERLY

JANUARY 2003



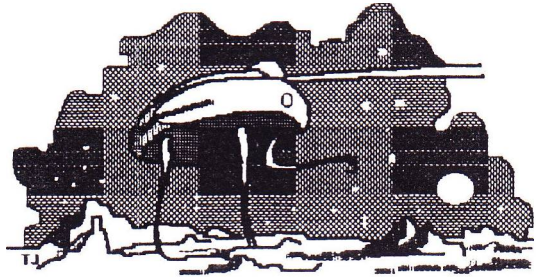
"Welcome to Saturn"

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ERG 160

January 2003

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Greetings Ergbods,

I recently thought I'd encountered a time-warp. From Tim Gadd in Tasmania came a small package which on opening produced a fanzine with a note, "I think this might be yours.". Nothing unusual about that - until I add the wrapper bore my address of three moves ago and was dated 1953! The zine had QWERTYUIOP, an early piece of mine. Now how did a fanzine addressed to me get to Tasmania and what had it been doing for 49 years? Answers on a plain postcard, please.

Conventions were always dear to me, but of recent years they have got even dearer. In the late forties and early fifties, it cost 5 shillings to register for a three day event. That was 1/120 of my monthly salary as a newly qualified teacher. Looking at current Con prices I see most are around £40, with the World Fantasy Con demanding a whacking £70 and Noreascon comes in at £80! Multiplying them by 120 gives £8400 and £9600 respectively as the hike for Con prices. Nowadays a teacher starts at £1500 a month (I think) which is a long way behind current Con costs, dividing that £1500 should give a Con fee of £12..50, have you seen many around at that price lately?

In 1940, I bought a pushbike for £12.00, today it would cost about £150m just over a twelve times increase. Posting a fanzine back then cost 2d (less than a modern penny) whereas today it is about 57p or a hundred fold increase - still, inside that 1/120 ratio. A b&b hotel cost me £1.00 then, today, probably less than a hundred. Train fare to London was about £2.00, today, £60 or £70. I could go on, but the point is clear, modern Cons have well exceeded inflation rates.

On a more cheerful note, my thanks to all those good people who continue to send me used (and mint) US potage stamps. I still have gaps in my collection, so more are always welcome.

And of course, Paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines, aircraft and non-fiction all going cheap. Send SAE for whichever list interests you. A great chance to increase your collection. Instead of rising, my prices have gone down.

Bestest, Terry

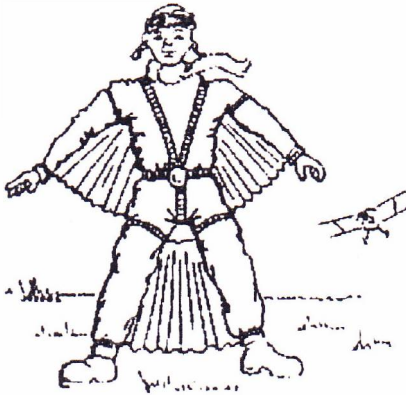
UP IN THE AIR

A little further away from home, but still within cycling distance, was Kebble's Column between Shiregreen and Barnsley. This was one of those follies which people with highly original architectural ideas used to scatter in prominent places. Set tastefully in a grove of trees, it took the form of a high tower, akin to a lampless lighthouse or a de-sailed windmill. One paid an entrance fee of 2d to a sleepy old codger seated by the door at the bottom, then climbed the spiral stairway to the observation platform at the top. A flimsy iron railing, some three feet high was the only safeguard to prevent one falling or diving off the tower. In those halcyon days nobody worried about hazards to children and as far as I know, nobody ever fell or jumped off the thing. Apart from the magnificent view of the local scenery, the tower top gave us an excellent base for another activity. When going there, we always took along a pad or two of paper. Once at the summit, the sheets were soon converted into paper aeroplanes. It was great fun launching them to see whose model could travel the greatest distance.



I visited the place decades later. The column was still there, but it was now surrounded by a housing estate, the trees had gone and a sign told all and sundry that the tower was unsafe. It didn't say if this was because of crumbling masonry or because modern children must be kept away from such a dangerous place.

In the pre-war years, 'Flying Circuses' were often found touring around Britain, chief among them being Sir Alan Cobham's. I never missed one when it came to Sheffield's Norton Aerodrome - a posh name for a large grassy field on the city's outskirts. In addition to flying displays by sundry antiquated aircraft, there were 'wing walkers' who actually did crawl to and fro along the wings as their aeroplane swooped around above us. None of this modern strapped to a frame 'wing walking' for them. Their only support was the strength of their grip. Much more spectacular was the performance in which a biplane with a hook attached to the tip of its lower wing, flew down low and picked up a small handkerchief from the ground. No doubt umpteen regulations permit such activities nowadays as they never seem to appear at air shows. Gliders performed aerobatics and on one occasion, a 'Flying Flea' buzzed angrily up and down the field in a vain attempt to get airborne. This was a weird little biplane designed to put everyman into the air, this one couldn't even get its pilot there. Strangely enough, when some time later I made a model 'Flea', it flew beautifully. Maybe I used better rubber for the motor.



I also saw performances by the two 'bird men', the American Clem Sohn and his English counterpart, Harry Ward. These daredevils had small wings strapped between their legs and from arms to waist. So equipped, they would leap from high-flying aircraft and zoom to and from before finishing their descent by parachute.. The swoop was little more than a guided fall, but from the ground it looked terrific.

It was at one of these displays that I was sitting with a friend who rejoiced in the name of John Pittock Trussler. His father strolled up and offered to take him for a five bob flight. I donned the sophisticated air of someone who

couldn't care less that his friend was about to go up in an aeroplane. Not easy when you're turning green with envy. Then the miracle happened, Trussler Senior invited me to come along as well. I moved so fast I nearly went out through the other side of the Fokker (or was it a Ford?) trimotor which was to take us to Paradise. After bumping across the grass field, we staggered into the air and I viewed Sheffield from a totally new angle. I still recall the wonder of looking down on that tiny field and wondering how the pilot would ever manage to get us back down there. Happily, he did and life was never quite the same after that. I never noticed the wiggling I got on getting home, "How dare I go up in one of those dangerous things without getting permission?" Presumably that would have made it perfectly safe. Not to worry, I had FLOWN! that was all that mattered.

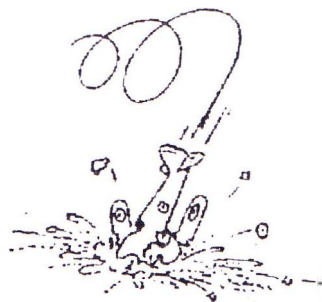
After the glorious rapture of that first flight, it was a long time before I got near a real aircraft again. Instead I built umpteen models, both solid and flying. This taught me one indisputable fact - the most dangerous force known to model aircraft was (and no doubt still is), the common household duster wielded in the hands of a skilled operator. One deft flick when wielded in the hands of an expert can reduce a whole shelf of models to rubble in less time than it takes to say 'Jack Thingummy'. I often wondered why, during the war, they didn't scale up dusters to king-size and fire 'em out of anti-aircraft gun. The Luftwaffe wouldn't have stood a chance.

I made a superb Hart Hindland which amazed me by flying perfectly at its first try - straight across the back yard and into a brick wall. This was followed by a Fairey 'Battle' and a Hawker Hurricane. My Battle was, like its real life counterpart, woefully underpowered, a single elastic band wouldn't even taxi the thing. As for my Hurricane, a slight hiccup in the building gave its wings a pronounced anhedral. Imagine, with enough elastic it might have gone supersonic!

The aforementioned Pittock Trussler had his own unusual method for beating the combined menaces of dusters and brick walls. On finishing a model he would douse it with lighter fluid, apply a match and launch it in flames from his bedroom window. Spectacular, but tough on the models.

Flying model kits are still with us today, but though of higher price, they are lower in quality. My intricately detailed 'Aeromodels' cost around five shillings each. All wings ribs, fuselage formers, fairings etc had to be laboriously cut out from printed balsa sheets and cemented together. Propellers had to be carved from solid blocks. Apart from the hazard to fingers when using unshielded razor blades, I had an additional problem to contend with. We had a budgerigar called Pip. He was let out of his cage every morning and had the full run of the living room. As a result, he became incredibly tame and would ride on my Hornby train, or land on a tin whistle when I was trying to play it. These tricks were harmless enough, but the really off-putting ones were Pip's mealtime habit of trying to take a bath in a salad bowl of lettuce and his habit of landing on the table as I was cutting out wing ribs for a model. If this didn't scatter pieces in all directions, he would then begin to chew up the soft balsa parts. I'll add budgerigars to those dusters and brick walls as model hazards.

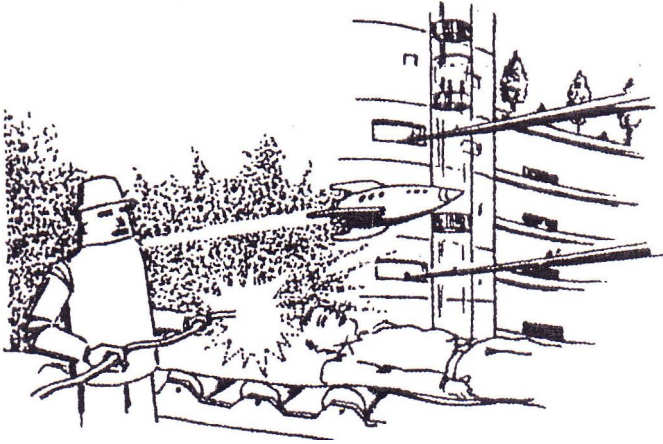
Then came the best model of them all, a F.R.O.G. metal-fuselaged monoplane. In those days they cost 7/-6d or about 37p in modern lolly. They boasted wooden propellers and high-speed gearboxes with a geared winder built into the box. I discovered that with maximum boost on the rubber motor and full UP elevator my model could do three consecutive loops. A wonderful trick, naturally I overdid it and tried for four. Halfway through the third loop whilst pulling maximum g, both wings folded back along the fuselage and my pride and joy dug into the ground as if heading for Australia. New wings cost 9d each, so I scrubbed that trick from my repertoire.



The cinema was a happy youthful pastime. Twice a week, I would be trundled along to the Coliseum. It didn't matter whatever the film or the weather, there we were in the same balcony seats. I have vague memories of seeing the black and white versions of 'Ben Hur', Rider Haggard's 'She' or Frank Buck's 'Bring 'em Back Alive' films showing how he trapped animals. Jimmy Cagney and Edward G Robinson regularly shot each other to pieces and Harold Loyd defied death on some skyscraper. As for the Tarzan films, emulating Johnny Weismuller's cry gave me a sore throat.

Such films were incidentals, the real highlight of my film diet was the children's matinee. Every Saturday afternoon. A howling mass of young monsters would converge on the Coliseum. I was given 3d to go in the balcony with the upper class hooligans, but occasionally, would blow a penny of this on sweets, and have to get a 2d seat downstairs.

The great advantage of sitting up in the balcony was not because the kids were more refined, but simply it was an excellent vantage point from which one could hurl apple cores, toffee papers, orange peel and other missiles down on the lesser fry below. Throwing them back up again was much harder. One summer saw oranges selling for four a penny! That was a really cheap source of ammunition.



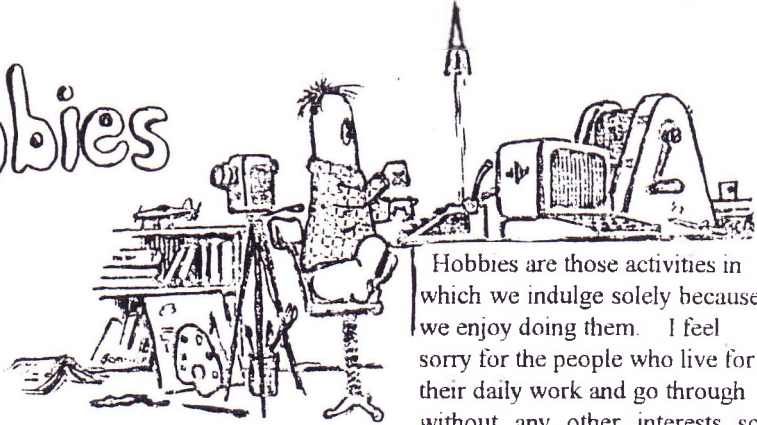
Alongside all this innocent childish revelry, one could watch the cinematic entertainment which usually consisted of an assortment of 'shorts', Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keeton, Charlie Chase, maybe a Laurel and Hardy, and a cartoon or two. Some of these films were produced by a company titled, 'Educational Films'. I never did work out where the education crept in, unless it taught how to lose one's trousers in some perfectly innocent manner, or the best way to escape a mob of pursuing policemen. Then there was the 'Phantom Empire' serial.

The plot was (fairly) simple, Gene Autry ran the dude Radio Ranch which happened to have been built on the land above a secret underground city. His contract called for him to put out a regular radio program which involved singing to his guests (poor blighters). The inhabitants of the city spent all their time trying to stop Autry getting to the microphone to sing, (an aim I fully supported), so that he would lose the radio contract, go bankrupt and move elsewhere. Each episode followed the formula:-

1. Autry would escape from last week's peril.
2. The Masked Riders would emerge from their secret trap door
3. Several quick shots of the futuristic city with robots creaking arthritically about.
4. Autry would sing, get trapped, and about to be mishandled by a robot.

Each week's ending had some such sequence as seeing our hero knocked unconscious, then dumped on a conveyor belt taking him under a robot's welding torch. as it descended to give him a warm welcome, up would come 'The End' titles followed by, 'Will our hero escape?' Don't miss next week's thrilling episode' Naturally, we went - only to see that Autry had awakened during the week and had jumped off the moving belt before he got spot welded. Just once, why couldn't they have let the robot succeed?

Hobbies



Hobbies are those activities in which we indulge solely because we enjoy doing them. I feel sorry for the people who live for their daily work and go through without any other interests so

that on retirement they find themselves bored and don't know how to fill their time. Casting my mind back down the years, I always seem to have had plenty of hobbies such as the fun I got from chemistry and electrical sets. Using the former I made invisible ink which only showed up when you heated the paper. Fire ink, a solution of Potassium Nitrate could be ignited by a glowing splint of wood or piece of string whereupon a trail of burning sparks wriggled along the paper and exploded a percussion cap stock on the reverse side. The electrical set led me to fitting a telephone system up to a bedroom but would not allow extension to the attic - thus making me aware of voltage dropping. I also had an induction coil which increased the power of a 4.5volt battery and fed it to a pair of metal handgrips. A shocking device, probably outlawed today. By the age of twelve I was collecting foreign stamps as well as making and flying balsa wood model aircraft and carving 'solids' out of chunks of wood, an activity I still pursue except I now make up plastic kits.

Roller skating was also fun and once we all went to the local rink where, eager to show my prowess, I did a neat reverse turn to end sitting on a bench - a performance marred by the lack of fastening on the bench which allowed me to sail over backwards. Most undignified. Cycling was a lot safer, I started with a 'fairy cycle' and graduated to a full size size bike when I was ten. With my friends we roamed the countryside for miles around and I kept on cycling right up until the age of forty when the bike was replaced by a Ford Anglia.

Time passed and after five and a half years in the RAF I took to electronics and built several superhet radios. I also bought a Government surplus radar unit which I stripped down, added a 2,5KV power back and rebuilt into a 6" oscilloscope. This had one minor snag in that when I wound a filament isolating transformer for the CRT, I didn't fully insulate the two windings with the result that damp got in and the first five minutes of use went on the windings frying dry, whereupon all was well. I still have the occasional dabble with the odd gadget such as a drill speed controller and a 0 to 30 volt, power pack but I'm afraid solid state components have me beat as far as designing with them goes.

Val and I took up Latin American dancing, we even gained our bronze and silver medals, but such frenzied activity is now beyond me I'm afraid. I turned to photography, both still and cine. The former helped to record my models and paintings whilst cine was devoted mainly to animation work. My films 'The Burglar' and '2001, A Space Oddity' actually won Delta Awards at a couple of Cons. Sadly, with the advent of video cameras, cine film vanished from sight and even my tape recording activities which had added sound to my films also suffered as tape recording lapsed from the popular ken. When my reel to reel machine packed up, I was unable to find a repairer. Happily, I still have two cassette recorders with which I maintain a regular tapespondence with Alan Burns which has lasted some forty years.

Now, 80 years later which hobbies remain? Well I still make model aircraft but nowadays they are from plastic kits and I recently completed a rubber powered 'Hurricane' which has yet to make its maiden flight, otherwise I seldom make a flying model. Stamp collecting continues but I no longer add to my albums of British and World stamps, concentrating on space related issues and stamps of the USA. Thanks largely to generous help by Michael Waite and others, I am now on my fifth.

I've always been keen on painting and drawing and I had thirty years of pro cartooning for a wide assortment of magazine, but gave that up when one publication went bust owing me £130. I also sold several stories and articles, but decided the hassle with Income Tax forms wasn't worth the bother.

Photography is still a regular hobby, largely of models, table top scenes, or paintings and ERG covers for filing. For 43 years I have got a kick out of publishing ERG. The first 97 copies were done on a hand-cranked mimeo before the advent of a PC when all issues were produced via word processor. A current project is compiling my autobiography and running it in a series of instalments in ER.

Another hobby is bookbinding (which is why I seek Linsen paper) and I regularly bind ten copies of ERG at a time into hardcover volumes. I also have made photo albums of models, my paintings and numerous SF files. I love driving and have recently bought a new Astra 'Club' with power steering, air conditioning, central locking and all sort of other bells and whistles. Val is a keen gardener, but my own activities in that line are limited to tending a vine of Black Homburg grapes, a run of tomatoes, beans, onions and a couple of apple trees.

I sometimes wonder how people can retire and mope around with 'nothing to do' and why so many teenagers have the same moan about their existence. My own pastimes are just a fraction of the things waiting to keep idle hands busy. It seems a shame not to tackle them.

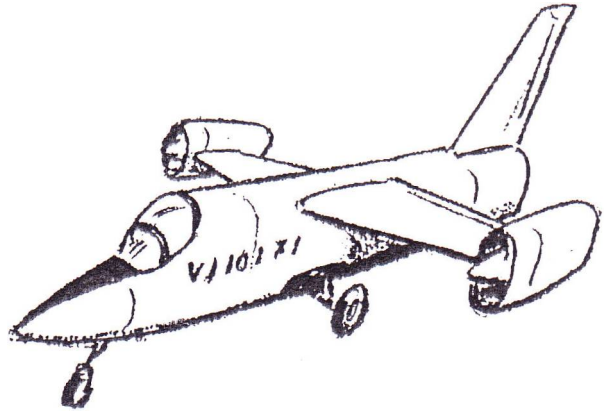
As I said, hobbies should be for fun.

The

VJ 101C

The West German EWP Sud's VJ 101C boasted no less than six Rolls Royce RB 145 turbojets, each of 2750lbs thrust. Rotatable wing tip pods held two each and a further two were in the fuselage just behind the pilot.

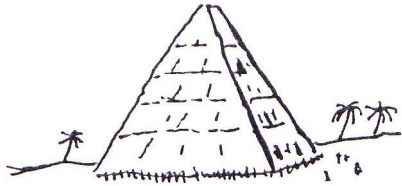
For a vertical take off the pods were turned into upright position and lift was aided by the central pair which were turned off once the wing pods had been gradually rotated to power normal flight.



A combined production by Heinkel, Bolkow and Messerschmitt, it was designed as a Mach 2.0 VTOL interceptor. Two machines were built, the first X-1 making its maiden flight in April 1963 and its first transitional flight the following September. Sadly, it was destroyed in a crash during 1964. The X-2 followed with more powerful engine of 3550 thrust in the wing pods and first flew in 1965. It was expected to reach Mach 1.08. However, as so often happens with promising designs, the production order was cancelled and the remain 101C must have mouldered away in some forgotten hangar.

No performance figures are available, but one obvious drawback when compared with the successful, single lift and thrust engine of the Harrier is the weight penalty of carrying two unused engines during horizontal flight. A further point of possible difficulty is the case of malfunction by one of the lift engines causing an asymmetric balance during take off or landing. But then any engine malfunction is something to be avoided. On the other hand, the wide spread of the engines during the lift phase could be adjusted to maintain balance without the need of wing and tail tip 'puffer' jets. It seems a promising design and worthy of a better fate.

CORN
IN
EGYPT



The saloon bar of the Wye Tart was filled with the usual crowd of SF writers, artists, fans and other bums attracted by a common interest in the outre, the off-trail and the downright stupid. Smoke curled lazily upwards from a score of cigarettes whilst beer glasses clinked a cheerful counterpoint to the background hum of chatter and the asthmatic wheeze of the beer pumps. Wedged securely in his corner seat from which it was almost impossible for him to order a round, Ponsonby took a deep draught of ale before stepping flat-footedly into a highly intellectual discussion on Bridey Murphy and the possibility of racial memories.

“Did I ever tell you chaps of a funny thing which happened to me when I was in Egypt with the 18th. Army?” he asked

“Frequently”, grunted Sydney Leeps, through a barrage of pipe smoke.

“No he didn’t,” contradicted young Blummer, “You’re just trying to put him off.” He smiled at Ponsonby, “What sort of a funny thing?” he asked.

“Well it happened shortly after I landed in Alex,” began Ponsonby. “I was posted to a unit near a place called Footique, right in the desert, hot as hell and twice as dusty. Not a drop of beer within miles”. He paused and pointedly eyed the empty glass before him. Blummer co-operated with the inevitable and signalled Drew, the landlord for refills. Ponsonby took a long draught and resumed his narrative before anyone else could grab the conversational ball.

“I had turned in early for a good night’s kip”, he rumbled. “As usual, I reached for a final cigarette before dopping off to sleep. To my annoyance the packet was empty, I didn’t have a darned thing to smoke”. He paused and looked meditatively at the ceiling. Young Bentrag took the hint, shrugged resignedly and proffered a crumpled pack of Woodbines. Ponsonby took one and absentmindedly slipped the rest into his top pocket. He lit up, puffed out a cloud of second-user cancer rations and resumed his story.

“I hunted through my pockets and couldn’t find a fag. I was just about to hike over to the NAAFI, when I noticed my native bearer’s bag of tricks in the corner of the tent. He kept metal polish, show polish, needle and cotton and Ghu knows what else in there. Surely there’d be a fag or two. My luck was in. Among the rubbish was a pile of native fags, oddly scented, but better than nothing. I took one, scrambled into bed and lit up. The first puff was heady and strange, the second made

me feel giddy and with the third I began to drift off into a beautiful golden haze. Around me the tent, mozzie net and even my hand holding the cigarette faded from sight. For a while I seemed to float in that golden cloud, but gradually it cleared. To my surprise I found myself clothed in an ancient Egyptian costume of the kind you see in the movies. I seemed to be sitting in a room hung with rich tapestries. Around the walls were old and silver statues. Obviously I had moved back in time and become a man of considerable substance."

"You still are", grunted old Church, eyeing Ponsonby's ample waistline.

Our hero absent-mindedly drained Church's glass before continuing.

"I didn't have much time to look around as a terrified servant ran in. It seems he had been walking home past the Great Pyramid when he saw the wraith-like figure of a small child wailing broken-heartedly "

"Probably looking for his mummy", quipped Butt who thought himself a wit and was right about half the time.

Our great traveller withered him with a look, "The servant wouldn't come with me, so I set off on my own to investigate. The walk to the Great Pyramid seemed to take much longer than usual and by the time I got there I had formed a theory. As I skirted the base, a diminutive figure in white drifted out, raised its arms and began to wail piteously. Undaunted, I continued to advance. A second figure joined the first, then more and more appeared, all clad in white and wailing fit to burst. My theory was gaining strength. I stood my ground until scores of the figures were around me and their wailing was chipping bits off the pyramid - then I acted! Somehow my Service revolver had accompanied me into the past. I drew it and fired all six shots over the heads of the mob. As one man they turned tails and fled, dropping their dirty white bed sheets as they ran. They had obviously been a gang of robbers masquerading as ghosts to scare people away while they lifted the Great Pyramid and made off with it. Fearlessly I gave chase but in the dark I tripped over a cast-off bed sheet. I fell, struck my head and when I regained consciousness I was back in my bed in Footique."

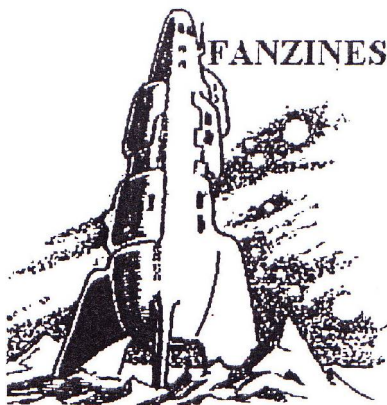
"All very interesting," drawled Church, "But there's one little flaw in your story."

"Oh yes," said Ponsonby stiffly, "And what might that be?"

"Quite elementary," smiled Church. "You mentioned the Great Pyramid being at Footique. It happens to be in Gizeh, not Footique".

"Oh that," laughed Ponsonby. He got to his feet, drained Blummer's beer and headed for the door.

"I thought you would realise. The thieves had carried the pyramid as far as Gizeh before I frightened them, and made them drop it. That's why it's still there." He turned back to the door and vanished into the night."



THE KNARLEY KNEWS. 95 Henry Welch, 1525 16th Ave., Grafton, WI 53024-2017, USA 22 pages of personal doings, travel report, memories of past events, fanzine comment and capsule reviews plus a hefty LOCcol. Nice, friendly zine, highly readable. Get it for the usual. **N0.96** just arrived, house renovation, water trouble, capsule fanzines and LOCs. Still a good read. **PLOKTA**, locs@plokta.com Comes in two parts, Financial Plokta has esoterica on such as computers, Viewmaster and a Con Rep. The normal Plokta has a super full colour cover,

loads of artwork, umpteen photos, pet news, light chatter, comment and LOCs. For the not so serious and will seriously damage your funny bone.

TRIAL & AIR 10/11, Michael Waite, 105 W. Ainsworth, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-5336/ 70 pages, crammed with colour art including the Paul cover. Aussie Convention reports, articles on A. Merritt, loads of photographs, a page of Queen Mum photos, excellent fanzine reviews complete with cover reproductions, and a host of LOCs. Basically a FAPA issue, but a nice bit of faunching plus a couple of dollars may get you a copy

NO AWARD, Marty Cantor, 11825 Gilmore St., #8105, N. Hollywood, CA 91606, USA 32pp, nice covers, two sets of Con Memories, a multiple choice letter form to save you time, a great article on Babbage's Difference engine, Howard de Vore on ditching cold callers, a one fanzine review and lots of LOCs. Also on the net.

HIDALGO.63 Brian E. Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA Mainly an apazine devoted to the pulps. Good illos but overblacked, Excellent article on a long journey, computer natter, pulp and book reviews in depth, and lots of LOCs. Nice one.

BANANA WINGS.18 Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Rd., Croydon, Surrey CRO 6JE 48 pages absolutely crammed (small print, narrow margins) with goodies - Fanzines at Cons, fmz reviews, believing in something, a dialogue, ageing fandom, new peers, music, a cartoon strip, library foibles, Fannish publications, Dragondreck, LOCs. and nice Egyptian artwork unifying the lot. A great effort, get it for the usual

MORE BOOKS see page 14 for details

OTHERSYDE J.M. Straczynski Persecuted teenagers contact an evil force £2.00

WULF Steve Harris Strange events in a village when 'God's Teardrop' calls. £3.00

THE FORGE IN THE FOREST M.Scott Rohan £3.00

ALBION John Grant . Pub'd at £14.95, my price £4.00

THE ELF QUEEN OF SHANNARA Terry Brooks 'Heritage of Shannara 3' £3.00

THE TALISMANS OF SHANNARA Terry Brooks Bk.4 of series £3.00

THE TANGLE BOX Terry Brooks, a 'Magic Kingdom novel. £3.00

THE HAND OF CHAOS Weis & Hickman Death Gate Cycle.5 £3.00

ERGMAIL



ERIC LINDSAY, PO Box 640, Airfie Beach, QLD 4802, AUSTRALIA I remember those feedback radios. Used a super-regenerative circuit, with a second

coil wrapped around the aerial coil, fed back from the first (often only) amplifier stage. *[or simply a tapped on the coil]* I made a transistor version when I was young. Superhets were a great leap forward. I also recall seeing some mention of the Schneider trophy, and particularly the Supermarine S6. That was probably in some war history for children I read in the early 1950's. The local barber has a sign saying "Bring your children in for a clip qaround the ears". There was a bicycle shop called "Cycology".

DAVE ROWE, 8288 W. Shelby State Rd., 44, Franklin, IN 46131-9211, USA

The Old Mill Stream mention of comic signs and names brings to mind one Carolyn noticed during her first visit to London back in 1980. It read "Drop your trousers here for best results" (the establishment was a dry cleaners). 'Penelope Fandergaste' is spot on for noting hairdressers' preferences for puns as shop names, locally there's A Cut Above, Ahead of Times, Cookie Cutters (for children), Curl Up & Dye, Cut Loose, The Cutting Edge, The Cutting Room, Hair It Is, The Head Quarters, et al. *[We had a local one called, "Cuts Of Glass" a very strained pun.]*

ALAN SULLIVAN, 26 Thornford Rd., Lewisham, LONDON SE13 6SG Funnily enough, I can remember when TV was still a bit of a rarity - that was in the sixties, though. We had bikes and places to go, scrapes to get into (not to mention mud, water and so forth). Strange how quickly the home entertainments business grew up - the consumer boom and then the micro electronics 'revolution' that put computers in the home - usually of those that didn't need them. The public use of the Internet, grown from the academic development of the original military system. It's quite sobering to look back and see how fast it happened - not to mention how it has been accelerating over the last few years. *[and bids fair to go even faster than consumers can consume.]*

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton YO17 9ES On 'You Don't Say'. I suspect that SF must always be up against the immovable barrier of

"The universe is not only stranger than we imagine: it is stranger than we can possibly imagine". Alien communication must follow the same path. How can we describe encounters with the truly alien or their language without alienating most of your readers? We have to depend on cliches but then we also have to move the story along. In fact, has there ever been a successful, truly alien story since *"A Martian Odyssey"*? Here's one at least who will go on reading in hope. *[How about Hal Clements "Mission Of Gravity?"]*

STEVE SNEYD, 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield HD5 8PB Is Alan Burns in Time Warp horror shock? British Rail ceased to exist way back, when John Major decided to play trains and created a chaotic jig-saw of separate privatised companies, though as none of them ever saw a profit in taking down the old British Rail arrow logo off stations, bridges etc., that might explain AB's state of confusion.

JOSEPH MAJOR 1409 Christy Ave, Louisville, KY 40204-2040, USA

You Don't Say There was a story in ANALOG back in the seventies about a space expedition stranded on a planet and a rescue team was trying to find them. The planet had a number of languages. The rescue team was more than slightly handicapped by the fact that they had no translator of their own, so they had to use a local who did not know the local language himself, but he had found someone else . . . they had to work through a string of three or four translators to get to someone who could speak the local language. None of the translators was as good as he had advertised himself, and all of them felt the need to make his own deductions as to what was actually being said. The result was that by the time a statement emerged from the other end of this remarkable team, any resemblance to the original was pure happenstance. The statements tended to end up concentrating on food, which led one member of the rescue team to wonder if the explorers had been eaten. [*Sounds as if they all needed eating*]

TED HUGHES, 10 Kenmore Rd., Whitefield, Manchester M45 8ER I liked the cover. I think you were better with a pencil when you drew it than you are now. [*Ouch!*] 'Fun And Games', Great stuff, I read it saying to myself, "Yes, that's how it was - even to the solemn Sundays. Although we didn't have a radio, we kids solved the problem by going round to my Auntie Tess, who had a radio tuned to Radio Luxembourg. 'Vengeance' had a nice twist in the tail besides being full of Jeeves' off-beat humour. Letters were interesting as usual, but I refuse to wade through 'The Old Mill Stream'.

HENRY WELCH, 1525 16th. Ave., Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA Thanks for Erg 159. How do you remember all the trivialities from your formative years such as what you listened to on the radio. Sure I might be able to recall a few items from my past, but not such an extensive list. [*Some things just stick in the memory.*] Kick the can still survives today. I played it as a child and my children play and I never taught them how or mentioned the game. It was quite a lot of fun in the old neighborhood.

BRIAN TAWN, 27 Burdett Rd., Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 2PR Youthful days, simple pleasures... yo yos, conkers, spinning tops and marbles of course. Catching newts in the dykes... they escaped each night and had to be caught again. The quest for tadpoles and tiddlers caught with jars on lengths of string. Pea shooters and catapults too. Football and cricket in an unmown field occupied by bullocks. That could be a messy game. You could hit a fairly short ball and still score a six because the fielder wasn't too keen to dig the ball out of a cowpat (bullockpat?).

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd. Etobicoke, ON, CANADA M9C 2B2 Before finding fandom, I was a shortwave listener and DXer, and I'm sure I reduced my hearing by turning the volume of my shortwave radio all the way up to hear those distant stations that usually got me the best response. I still have my collection of QSL cards and letters, and it was my first method of taking part in something from all over the world. Fandom didn't come about for about another five years. Today, with the right computer, I can listen to just about any service of the BBC. Back then, I was lucky to find the BBC World Service on about 5975 kHz or so. I remember Radio Luxembourg, as they played popular music while most other SW services had spoken programmes. [*Happy Days*]

Chester D Cuthbert, 1104 Mulvey Ave., Winnipeg, Man/Canada R3M 1J5 You cast doubt on telepathy as a means of communicating between intelligent beings. I am a life member of the Society for Psychical Research which Hereward Carrington named The Coming Science as the title of one of his many books. I am thoroughly convinced of the reality of psychic phenomena, even of foreknowledge which suggests that we must revise our ideas about linear time because knowledge of future events precedes their occurrence. *[My point was that telepathy between us and aliens would fail because both sides would be thinking in their own languages and still not understand each other. I didn't cast doubt on telepathy as is, only on its use with aliens.]*

ROBERT LICHTMAN, PO BOX 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA In your article, "Fun and Games," you list a bunch of "essentials" the local shops carried at Whitsuntide, and some of them are unfamiliar to me: "cinder toffee," "bullseyes" and "lucky bags." This article was fun to read, reminding me of some of my own childhood. *[Cinder toffee was a yellowish, crunchy comestible, bull's eyes were marble-sized sweets which changed colour as they shrank. Lucky bags were small bags filled with small toys and sweets.]* Penelope's mention of the sign, "Call in at your earliest inconvenience." reminds me of similar wording I put in e-mails to fellow workers asking for their input into various reports I compile and maintain. As for Wok Away, the name of that Chinese take-out place in Otley, it reminded me of a Jewish delicatessen I once saw in the Studio City part of Los Angeles. It was called Kosherama. *[In Boston, I saw a sign saying, "Chinese Spaghetti House"]*

GEOFF BARKER, 19 Oldfield Grove, Sheffield S6 6DR Apologies for my late reply, *[Not to worry, better late than never.]* Schneider Trophy - Planes aren't really my scene, although I do like the strange/unusual designs. Old Mill Stream - one day this will grow on me. Today may be that day. This particular "edition" is better than usual. You Don't Say - Surely if Johnny Foreigner (or alien, or whatever) doesn't speak/understand English, then just SHOUT LOUDER!! Tales From The Wye Tart - I like it, more please. *[Corn in Egypt, for your request item. I hope you like it.]*

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