

TREASURE 4

October 2016

In this issue:

Mervyn Barrett
Jennifer Bryce
Don Collins
Robert Day
Bruce Gillespie
Robert Lichtman
Gail Reynolds
Robyn Whiteley

and

John Baxter
William Breiding
Damien Broderick
Leigh Edmonds
Rob Gerrand
John Hertz
Steve Jeffery
Jerry Kaufman
Fred Lerner
John Litchen
Patrick McGuire
DJ Frederick Moe
Lloyd Penney
Andy Robson
Yvonne Rousseau
David Russell
Steve Sneyd
Casey Wolf
and others



TREASURE

No. 4 October 2016 52 pages

A fanzine published for the October 2016 mailing of ANZAPA and a few others
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Illustrations

Front cover: Dennis Oppenheim: 'Trotters'. Photo: E. G. Schempe, found on Facebook.

Photographs: Robyn Whiteley, Jennifer Bryce, Robert Day, Casey Wolf, Leigh Edmonds.

Mervyn Barrett

The night the Melbourne SF Club (almost) burnt down

Mervyn Barrett migrated from New Zealand to Melbourne in the early 1960s, and became a leading figure in the Melbourne SF Club until he migrated to Britain in the late 1960s. After living there for many years, he returned to New Zealand, where he lives with his wife Janet Horncy. This article was originally published in Sam Long's *QWERTYUIOP* 8. Reprinted from the *Aussiecon Worldcon Program Book* 1975, pages 54–6. The first Aussiecon was held at the Southern Cross hotel in Melbourne.

When I lived in Melbourne, Captain Cook's Cottage was where the Myer Music Bowl is now, and if you wanted to go out to Coburg by tram via Hawthorn, the journey could take you several days, and even then you mightn't get there. The Melbourne Science Fiction club was in Somerset Place, a narrow back alley which in those days walked (a quieter time, when streets never ran anywhere) fifty yards in from Little Bourke Street and then stopped. Mervyn Binns had talked McGill's bookstore into giving us the top floor of their warehouse and we had, and had room for, a duplicator, bookshelves, a home-made non-regulation sized ping-pong table (an ideal collating surface), a few rows of old cinema seats, and lots of science fiction fans. On a mezzanine floor up above the rafters was a room containing three toilet cubicles and a washbasin.

In those days the Crown and all things best and British were revered. That a Union Jack, which we found in the rafters, was hung from a clubroom window for the duration of a visit by Queen Elizabeth even though we knew that Somerset Place wasn't one of the streets chosen for the royal procession is, I think, a fair indication of our loyalty and the strength of our patriotic feelings.

There was more law and order in those days, too. The State's Attorney General practically worked himself to death keeping everything pure and upright by suppressing any book or film he thought might outrage public decency or damage public morals, even though anything that reached Victoria had already passed through the fine net of Commonwealth censorship. 'Victoria has certain standards,' he would say. This, of course, was before his wife died in mysterious circumstances and he went off to Sydney after deciding quite objectively he was in charge of the police and public prosecutor's office — that there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding his wife's death and therefore no need for an autopsy or an investigation.

Some time earlier, long before I went to live there and long before the Melbourne Science Fiction Club nearly burnt down, they'd cut Moorabbin Airport in half and put half of it down by Albert Lake with the idea that an airport with seaplane facilities close to a major city would put them so far ahead in the aviation game that they'd probably get a lot of business then going to Orly or Croydon. World War II interfered with this project, though, and so in order to recoup some of their money the western runway was sold for housing lots and became the suburbs of Prahran and St Kilda. What was left was grassed over and called Albert Park, and the main hangar was filled with ping-pong tables one could rent by the hour — still can, I would think — and there my girlfriend Jill and I would go sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, stopping first at the truck that retailed freshly cooked hot donuts which we'd eat and wash down with coffee from the ping-pongery buffet before touching bat to ball. Sometimes John Foyster came with us, and once or twice Dick Jenssen.

Dick Jenssen considered himself club champion at ping-pong, chess, and just about everything else, but I think that John Foyster could have, and probably did, in fact legitimately dispute this. And besides John had status as a *Publishing Giant*. Dick, though, always bought two copies of books and magazines, one to read and one for his shelves (often rebinding the shelf volume, which is a one-up thing to do).

The clubroom was on the top floor, and in those days it was reached by a hydraulic lift one worked by pulling on a rope. (McGill's didn't like us tracking through their offices on the in-between floors.) It was a fairly rudimentary kind of lift, with no cage door, back wall, or roof: just a floor, two sides and a beam across the top to which the cables were attached. Don Lattimer had a good trick he would play with this lift. When someone below called out for the lift, Don would get in it, start it down, then cling to the side of the lift shaft

and let the cage go down without him. The unsuspecting fan would get into the lift, start it up, and be surprised in mid-journey by a great shrieking thing dropping from nowhere onto the floor beside him.

Besides being able to play jokes in lift shafts, Don's more significant claim to fame was being an original member of the MSFC and in being the club's bookbinder. He bound the library's paperbacks into hard bindings and bound volumes of SF magazines. He bound books for members too, to order, rebinding Pogo or Oz books in elegant new bindings with exotic endpapers to suit the tastes of their owners.

If you walked at dusk from Jolimont up to Spring Street through the Fitzroy Gardens, the possums, coming down from their trees to begin their night's work of staring at people, would come over to eat off your hand (if you weren't careful) and then, if instead of continuing up Spring Street toward the Scientology Centre or the Exhibition Building, you turned left at the Treasury buildings and walked down Collins Street, with a bit of luck you'd get to Exhibition Street and the Southern Cross Hotel, which is where the 1975 Worldcon was held.

The Southern Cross had a bowling alley, and Alan Perry was probably the first person to get his thumb stuck in one of their bowling balls. ('Mervyn, I've got my thumb caught in the bowling ball.') Alan Perry's connection with fandom is that he is the friend of a fan and he stopped at the Southern Cross soon after it opened. He didn't think much of the breakfasts.

One of the Southern Cross's greatest assets used to be that it was only a five-minute walk from the Mee Wah cafe. The Mee Wah had the greatest Chinese food outside of Hong Kong that I've ever eaten. (We loved the Chinese sausage, the scallops cooked in batter and served in sweet and sour sauce, the sliced steak in black bean sauce.) There was one trouble, though. If the sight of men wielding large sharp knives made you nervous, you didn't go to the toilet there. To get to the toilet you had to pass through the kitchen, where a kitchen staff of unemployed dacoits, resting up between assassinations, kept themselves in practice by whittling slivers from the sides of beef at a frightening speed and with deadly accuracy.

There was one friend of ours, not a fan, who used to come to the film shows in the club because they were fun. (We'd drag along as many as possible and charge them admission to defray the expense of renting films.) It was a semi-party-ish atmosphere. Most everyone would bring a bottle, and drinks were traded and shared while the movies played. She even discharged herself from the hospital one night to come over to one of our screenings. She just put a coat on over her nightgown and walked out. We were screening *Metropolis* that night. Some time later she told me that while the movie was going on, her boyfriend — another non-fan we'd roped in — had taken her

upstairs into one of the toilet cubicles for some fast vertical sex. No one disturbed them. Us true fans were all downstairs watching a robot that looked like Brigitte Helm being cooked up inside a glass tube! I don't want you to think from all this that the MSFC was made up of a bunch of debauched alcoholics or sex fiends — it wasn't. What I'm trying to point out is that in those days in Melbourne, when the pubs still closed at 6 p.m., people were more prepared to make their own amusements.

Anyhow, it was because of the activities of the film group that the Melbourne Science Fiction Club almost burnt down. I'd started the group and used to run it: hustling films and running the little Ampro 16 mm projector. When I left, Paul Stevens took over the group and did all sorts of enterprising things like renting proper cinemas so that 35 mm films could be shown and stuff like that. Then, some time later, when an enthusiast who happened to own a couple of 35 mm film projectors joined the club, they installed these in the clubroom and started showing classic old movies — some of them on nitrate film. Mervyn Binns had complete confidence in the projectionist and the equipment. 'This guy really knew what he was doing,' he told me, but the introduction of nitrate film into the clubroom was just too much for one of the members, who had the clubroom inspected by the Health Department and closed down as a fire hazard. Admittedly nitrate film has one or two unfortunate characteristics like becoming unstable with age and being just plain highly inflammable and becoming downright explosive. But even when this is coupled with the fact that the clubroom was on the top floor of a 90-year-old brick building with wooden floors, roof, ceilings, and staircases, that it had no fire escape and that its only entrance was through a narrow wooden staircase (which McGill's grudgingly allowed to be used when the lift was finally taken out of commission when the Melbourne Water Board decided it was no longer an economical proposition to go to the trouble of supplying compressed water for it) one still has difficulty seeing the reason for his excessive nervousness.

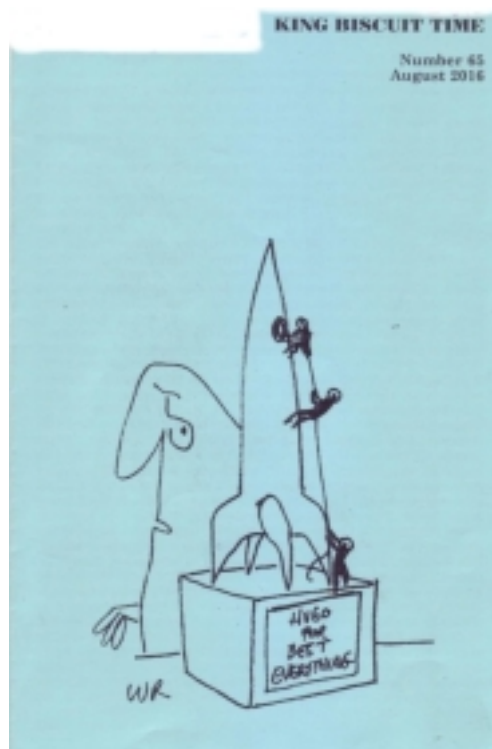
Soon after this, Mervyn Binns left McGill's and opened Space Age Books in Swanston Street, but that's another story and someone else can tell you that one. What I've tried to do is tell you something about Melbourne as it was then. Before I started writing this, I went along to Oz House here in London and got a pamphlet titled *Interesting Facts about Victoria* (which I suspect and hope must have a companion volume title *Boring Facts about Victoria*) and a map. The map just made me more confused. Melbourne doesn't seem to look the way it used to at all. So, when you see me at the Worldcon in Melbourne, buy me a drink and say 'hullo' and I'll buy you a drink and say 'hullo', but if you want to get anywhere, don't ask me for directions: ask a policeman.

— **Mervyn Barrett**

Robert Lichtman

My life and FAPA

Robert Lichtman is a Big Name Fan in the USA — perhaps the best of them all. His annual fanzine *Trap Door* is worth seeking out. The following article first appeared in *King Biscuit Time* 65, for the August 2016 mailing of **FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Publishing Association)**. Quite a few ANZAPA members have been members of FAPA over the last 50 years.



As perhaps not everyone reading this knows, FAPA (Fantasy Amateur Publishing Association) is not just the oldest SF fandom apa but also the oldest continuously operating fannish organisation, having started in August 1937 — nearly four years before the runner-up, the National Fantasy Fan Federation, which was founded in April 1941 and is also still around. FAPA's official publication, *The Fantasy Amateur*, commenced publication with the third mailing — before that, co-founder Don Wollheim's *The FAPA Fan*, served in a semi-official way — and is fandom's longest-running fanzine title, albeit with numerous editors. (The record for a fanzine published under a single editorship is Robert and Juanita Coulson's *Yandro*, with 259 issues between 1953 and 1985.

Harry Warner Jr's FAPAzine *Horizons*, which had 252 issues between October 1939 and his death following the February 2003 issue, is the runner-up. The newszine, *Fantasy Times/Science Fiction Times*, had considerably more issues but operated under a variety of editors.)

The original membership limit was 50, set to allow the possibility of producing one's zine using a hectograph, and was raised to 65 in 1943. At the time of the first mailing, there were 21 members; it took two years for the roster to fill to capacity. There was a brief time in the late '40s when there were a few open membership slots and no waiting list, but by the '50s this no longer happened — and by the '60s membership in the group was considered so desirable that for a few years there were more people on the waiting list than on the membership roster. In order to manage the cost of sending copies of *The Fantasy Amateur* to so many, a subscription fee was instituted and acknowledgment of their receipt by waitlisters was required every other issue. Those were the glory days!

By the late '80s the glut of applicants had abated, and for the first time in decades the August 1989 membership report had no one waiting in the wings. This state of affairs didn't last long, thankfully, and through the first years of the '90s there were always some people on the list having short waits for membership. But by the mid '90s two things happened that marked the start of a long-term trend we are still experiencing. First, the waiting list disappeared forever — the last time there was one was 20 years ago, in May 1996. Second, and more significantly, our numbers began dropping below the constitutionally ordained 65 and have never returned. We are now down to 21.

My own FAPA adventure began with the 87th mailing (May 1959), where I first appeared on the waiting list. I was #32 in the long line, which got even longer during my wait. By the time I became

a member with the 101st mailing (November 1962), there were 57 people behind me. I replaced Bill Danner, which made me sad because I was a big fan of *Stefantasy*, the fanzine he produced using handset type and a printing press that lived in his basement. But this experience was an instance of living up to the FAPA 'tradition' that by the time you become a member many of those whose work you enjoyed will have left. Along the way I published two minor zines for the 'Shadow FAPA' that sprung up as a way for frustrated waiting listers to reach out to actual members: *Amnesia* #1 in August 1961 and *Grok Around The Clock* in May 1962.

Once a member, I revived my genzine title, *Psi-Phi*, for two issues in 1963 that had considerable distribution outside the confines of the mailings. These were ambitious publications with a lot of my writing and outside contributions from Gary Deindorfer and Ray Nelson. My humorous article, 'A Child's Garden of Scientology', in the first of those issues drew a deadly serious response, which I published, from a Berkeley Scientologist friend to whom I'd given a copy of the issue. After that initial burst of energy, however, my time and energy for FAPA began to taper off after I graduated from UCLA and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area just in time for 'the Sixties'. I waited until May 1965 to publish again, co-editing a fanzine with Miriam Knight entitled *100% Whole Wheat* (which was rendered in Hebrew on the cover) in which we had contributions from Redd Boggs, John Champion, and Ray Nelson in addition to our own.

For the final years of my first FAPA membership, I reduced my activity to annual minac, always in the August mailing — that being the end of my 'membership year' — and with a unique title for every outing: *Lundy's Lane* (1966 — named after the street in San Francisco on which I lived), *Foggy Day* (1967 — a nod to SF weather), *Purple Haze* (1968 — Jimi and my ditto repro), and finally the first issue of *King Biscuit Time* in 1969. Where did that title come from? you might wonder. As I wrote in #2 back in 1985, it 'refers to a very unusual cover I was sent on ditto master by Jay Kinney which depicted (with photographic clarity) Sonny Boy Williamson and his group performing for a radio show sponsored by King Biscuit Self-Raising Flour'. These zines were entirely my writing on subjects (some of them pretty trivial) that had varying degrees of interest to me at the time: the expansive view from my house perched on the side of Bernal Heights; the antiquarian methods of garbage collection in San Francisco; the fire that destroyed the venerable Sutro Baths; the 'hippies' — from their genesis in 1964 through the 'Summer of Love'; musical influences and interests, including a diverse list of what I liked at the time; and how I got into the Beach Boys (beyond their surf music) thanks to meeting and hanging with Paul Williams.

After the last of those zines, I got caught up in the group head that had at its core the 'hippie guru' Stephen Gaskin — eventually moving, as at least some of you know, to Tennessee and becoming a founding member of the Farm commune — so I let my FAPA membership lapse with the August 1970 mailing.

Fast forward to November 1984, when I found myself invited to rejoin after only two mailings on the waiting list. How times had changed! The title of my first FAPazine of my new membership reflected my shock and awe at being back in so quickly: *Not Ready For Prime Time FAPazine*. That was quite a mouthful, but in casting about for something with more zip I ran up against a creative wall. Shrugging my mental shoulders, I decided what-the-hell and revived *King Biscuit Time* with the following mailing.

The Secretary-Treasurer at the time I rejoined was San Francisco fan Shay Barsabe. And a unique thing happened with her in 1986 — she resigned her membership but kept on preparing the quarterly membership reports. I ran to replace her in the August 1986 officers elections and, being unopposed, became Secretary-Treasurer with the November 1986 mailing.

And here I am, still on the job. In fact, with this August mailing I complete my 30th year sitting in this chair. And what a long, strange trip it's been. Along the way I've been involved in a number of revisions to the FAPA constitution that have streamlined it to reflect changing conditions and to clarify things you'd think would be obvious and unneeded (such as what is a 'page' for activity purposes and the requirement that contributions be in the English language) but which were being abused. But I've unfortunately also presided over the gradual thinning of our numbers — taking the job when we had a full 65-member roster and watching us shrink to less than a third of that.

I've done my best to recruit new members along the way, and had some small success with that. Sadly, all but one of them have fallen by the wayside. I 'met' the exception on eBay back in the early 2000s, when he was buying things from me and occasionally outbidding me on items we both wanted (fanzines in both cases). We became friends, and he became a member of FAPA in 2003. It's a good thing he's stuck around because together with his wife they're our present OEs. (Hi, Steve and Vicki!)

So how low can we go, and still remain viable? Our sister apa, SAPS (Spectator Amateur Publishing Association), with a membership limit of 25, is still getting by with only nine members, and their mailings are comparable in size to ours (FAPA, 92 pages in May; SAPS, 97 pages in July). What does anyone think? Does anyone care, or are we just coasting to an uncertain future? Discuss?

— **Robert Lichtman**, August 2016

Farewell to John Collins

On 20 July 2016, my friend Robyn Whiteley sent an email to many friends: 'John Collins died this morning in St Vincent's Private Hospital in Melbourne.

'It is a great relief for John, who was quite lucid to the end, but very distressed. At the hospital last night his son Don said, "I'll see you tomorrow." "No," said John, "I won't be here." "Well, in that case," said Don, "I'll see you but you won't see me." Thank you to all of you who have been praying and sending positive thoughts.

'John donated his body to the University of Melbourne and he didn't want a funeral, he wanted a party. He actually wanted to be at the party, but I vetoed that.

'Thank you again for all your caring love and support of John and me, both over the years we have known you and especially in this last two weeks.'

On 25 July Robyn emailed: 'John's farewell party will begin at 11.30 on Monday, 1 August at Leonda, 2 Wallen Road, Hawthorn. If you are able to be there we will be very happy to see you.'

Few if any readers of this issue of *Treasure* will have met John Collins. However, his wife Robyn has contributed to *Treasure* letters over the years, and in *Treasure 2* she wrote a recent article about a journey that she and John made to Europe. The photos reproduced here are from that article.

It tells you much about John Collins that he asked for a party, not a funeral. The party did take place at Leonda, a mansion-like reception centre in Hawthorn. 200 people, at least. Many stories of John were told; great food was eaten; there were unexpected meetings with old friends. The feeling was one of celebration, although some speakers had great trouble speaking through their tears.

Over the years I have had much less to do with John than with Robyn, but I met them both at the same time.

It was 1971, my first year at Publications Branch of the Education Department of



Victoria. It was also Robyn's first year there. I had already met Robyn, both during my Arts degree and while doing Dip. Ed., but Robyn doesn't remember those meetings.

Publications Branch was part of the Department's Special Services Division, which was dismantled in the early 1990s. In 1971 it boasted many branches. John Collins was the Assistant to the Director of Special Services, which occupied an entire building in Carlton, including a huge cafeteria, where we had morning and afternoon tea as well as lunch. John Collins joined us (Publications) regularly for morning tea, when he wasn't gabbing with members of other branches. He seemed very jolly, but gave away little about himself.

He also seemed to be in his late forties or early fifties, but he wasn't. He was 43. He had lost his hair in his late twenties, so looked much the same in 1971 as he did when I met him again in 1996. He still looked much the same during his last few years and months.

I lost track of John, but Robyn did not lose track of me. We corresponded occasionally during the 1970s and 1980s, and I sent Robyn my magazines. While I had been freelance editing, Publications Branch had grown somewhat, then shrunk a lot, then been demolished by the Kirner Government in 1991 or 1992. At Robyn's fiftieth birthday, to which she invited me in 1996, I discovered that she and John had got together in the 1980s, and were now married. I also discovered that members of the branch had all been forced to 'go freelance', most of them with great success. At about that time I was invited to the annual Publications Branch reunions, which year after year remain very enjoyable, although most of the people who still attend joined the branch long after I left in the middle of 1973.

During the last 20 years, I have corresponded with Robyn (and she has sent Elaine and me concert programs, concert tickets, and many emails), and nattered with John from time to time. However, at no time have I become aware of any of the following information about the life and times of John Collins. As you can see, John was both 'a bit of a lad' and a man deeply committed to many educational and social enterprises.

He was also a science fiction reader! But he never pinned me down for a discussion about science fiction. Or have I have forgotten some long-ago conversation when we did indeed discuss the Good Stuff?

John Collins was 88 when he died of asbestosis. He seemed very healthy to me when I met him during the last 10 years, but obviously he knew what was coming. He led such an amazing life that I feel privileged that Robyn and the family have allowed me to reprint these fragments from his life — a life encapsulated in the following tributes delivered at the Leonda Party on 1 August 2016.

— **Bruce Gillespie**, September 2010



Don Collins

John Collins, lifelong learner

My father John remained the epitome of the phrase 'life long learner'. John delighted in learning new things — sometimes the hard way no doubt — but he valued education in its many forms and saw infinite value in being curious, in gaining new understanding, and in sharing knowledge with others.

A difficult childhood and an abruptly terminated schooling experience mid way through Form 1 led to a somewhat misspent youth that had him working on many low-end jobs. However, each experience added to what became a vast body of knowledge, skills and understanding.

He worked as a projectionist for Hoyts in Melbourne during the 1940s, drove Pict Peas delivery trucks, and spent time as a wedding photographer in the 1950s, while he studied at night school in order to better his seventh grade education. At 32 years of age, he was the oldest student at Teachers College in his year.

John loved a wide variety of music and was always looking to fill in gaps in his knowledge. He loved to discuss structure, instrumentation, and melodic elements in classical music with my wife Anne, and our childhood was peppered with classical music, firstly on the stereogram and later on the Yamaha hifi system.

Perhaps the 'Switched On Bach' phase that was Bach played on a Moog synthesiser may not have been the finest moment in classical music history ... but, hey, it was the seventies.

John and Rob were regular patrons at the Melbourne Recital Centre and Hamer Hall for all manner of performances. John had a preference for the Australian Chamber Orchestra rather than the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, but would attend anything of interest to him. Few can top my surprise 50th birthday where John, Rob, and Anne conspired to have the band The Blue Grassy Knoll perform live to my favourite Buster Keaton film *The General*.

John's days working for Hoyts on Swanston St established a lifelong love of film, and always an interest in what was happening in the bio box, back in the days when film was still reel to reel and not digital. As children, we were taught to look for the 'pineapple ring' on the screen image that would signal to the projectionist the upcoming need to change reels.

His splicing skills, developed during the days working at 'the flicks', were transferrable when in, the pre-stereo recording days, John painstakingly spliced a mono track of *Under Milk Wood* into a stereo format so the play for voices alternated out

of the left and right speakers. This was at the time when John was also instrumental in developing nascent teleconferencing capacity when working for the Council of Adult Education in the 1970s.

World films, action, sci-fi, Aussie productions (Sorry John, I still think *Red Dog* was a shocker of a film), silent films ... it didn't matter, so many genres were of interest to John.

I shared John's love of science fiction, a broad church of styles and themes, we pretty much liked them all, but definitely had our favourites Very early Isaac Asimov, and Robert Heinlein are in our collections along with the more well-known classics. Only a fortnight before his death, we were reminiscing on the qualities of Ann McCaffrey's *The Ship that Sang* and the influence it may have had on Kubrick's *2001 A Space Odyssey*.

As a family we went to the theatre. It was considered essential for our learning and understanding. We attended local productions at the 1812 theatre in Upper Ferntree Gully, and Ringwood High School musical productions.

Professional shows featured with some regularity. I remember being seriously narked at being declared too young to see *Hair*, but a few years later went to *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Palais. I can still feel the overload of the senses and elation your first full-blown professional production can give. Topol in his prime as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof ...?* Of course. *Man of La Mancha*, for sure. Gilbert and Sullivan ... absolutely.

Live performance experiences continued across the years: Classic theatre, Burlesque at 45 Downstairs, Spanish Baroque music at the Melbourne Recital Centre, *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek* with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra ... we shared these experiences with John and Rob, mostly at his expense. Shakespeare in the Botanical Gardens was an event the wider family attended each December for quite a few years. Four generations enjoyed the Bard's fine work. Porn star Annie Sprinkle did a show at the 1996 Comedy Festival. John thought it was so good, he rang us all and then bought tickets for the next available night. The same with the Demon Drummers of Japan ... and indeed the Taiko drummers were exceptional. He felt we all needed to have the experience.

We grew up on a diet of *The Goons*. It seemed that every Sunday lunch we listened to *Blue Hills* 'by Gwen Meredith' followed by an episode of *The Goons*. Throw in compulsory viewing of *The Aunty Jack Show*, *The Goodies*, *Blazing Saddles*, and

other Mel Brooks films etc ... it all explains my own slightly warped sense of humour.

John rode motor bikes in his youth and even raced sidecars for a while. The Indian and the BSA that once hung around the family home should have been stored and then restored. But alas, some gems are not recognised at the time. Both Geoff and I ride, and if John had been a little more nimble I am sure he would have swung his leg over the Harley — even if only as a pillion passenger.

A love of camping was deeply ingrained in John. Gail and Geoff shared some of this earlier. After a brief dalliance with semi-serious bush-walking, John and Rob founded the Bush Bludgers: the Downhill Walkers ... which was quickly shortened to The Bludgers, as even downhill walking got in the way of backgammon, mah jong or cards. The times shared at Fireman's Bend in the Kulkynne Forest and other spots along the Murray remain strong in my memory.

I remain fortunate to have taken long service leave earlier in 2016, which meant I could drop by for a chat and to pass the time in companionable silence between wideranging discussions nearly every day in the three months before his death. We would watch episodes of *The Chaser* (British and Australian versions), testing our general knowledge and handle on trivia ... always learning something new. Of course the episodes were recorded on the DVR — John always delighting in fast forward through the ads. Rrex the wonder dog loved keeping John company, especially when the electric throw rug was in play. Rrex is living out his days with best friends Murray and Jane at Barwite near Mansfield.

John and I discussed his impending death. He was matter of fact. 'It's obvious that my time is limited,' he said to me. 'Now China ... you are not to come back. It's a waste of money.' 'Hmm,' I said. 'You don't get a vote. You won't be there.'

It became known as 'the lecture' as he tried the same line of argument on Anne. He received the same answer.

In his last weeks John loved having his two sons visit together at St Vincent's, so whenever we could Geoff and I organised to be there together, sending each other simple texts to confirm departure and predicted time of arrival. As they say, when death is staring directly at you, family is what is important.

John was so lucky to have Robyn in his life on

so many levels, but none more so than the 24-hour care she provided in the last weeks of his life. As I said, come the end, family matters.

It seems he got his wish. Because of the complex requirements of the getting a Z class working visa for China, Anne and I can't be at the wake. We are unable to leave Beijing until the single entry visa is converted into a multiple entry visa — a process that takes some 30 days. We left on 21 July, knowing this might well be the case, but hoped there would be a solution that could be worked out at the Beijing end. But no.

A few days before he went into hospital John and I sat at Brady St and spoke about process of looking back on one's life. The highlights in some detail and the lowlights ... We agreed the not-so-glorious moments should stay where they were — each a learning experience that, whilst not to be ignored, need not be dragged out for close inspection. As Tom Waits says, 'We all develop ways about ourselves that aren't quite right.'

When Anne spent two hours with John on Monday night, he so enjoyed listening to the conversation between Anne and Rob, signalling when he wanted to join into the conversation about Sam D'Astiani, Pauline Hanson, Shorten, and Turnbull ... but struggled to get the words out between laboured breaths. Though fighting for every breath, he insisted on been given his glasses, and he rallied enough energy to smile. It must have been so tiring. 'Enjoy China,' he said. 'I won't see you tomorrow. I won't be here.'

And he was true to his word. Selfishly I want to believe he hung on until the day of our departure for a new life in Beijing to maximise the opportunities to spend some more time with Anne and myself. But in reality, the struggle became too much. The rapid three-week decline from the 2016 Brady Street Christmas-in-July that, for once, we actually held in July, to his death on 21 July was rapid. I don't blame him for having decided he had done enough.

I will miss him. and in ways I am yet to fathom. As the tears stream down my face as I write this, I know he made the world a better place.

For those who gave up your busy days to come to this wake, thank you for coming along and for the support you offer Robyn in doing so. Wakes are for the dead but also for the living. Drink, eat, and if you wish, sing in celebration of a life well lived and a man who loved people and of course, learning until his dying day.

Gail Reynolds

A tribute to my father

My father must have been about 26 when I was born. He had some hair then. My earliest memories involve John leading singing at parties, lots of singing, toddling around at the youth camps (more singing), riding on a tractor and in the tray of a station wagon while he earned much needed cash hay baling. He ran a successful rag-recycling business and he worked on the wharves; wherever he went he was always the larrikin at the centre of the party. I am told that one of the favourite pastimes on the wharves was to bombard each other with the loose asbestos which lay in open bags on the wharf. That ultimately came back to haunt him or maybe the asbestosis arose because of the house that he built at Ferntree Gully, with its half asbestos walls and asbestos roof, cut with a handsaw. No masks in those days.

I remember when I was aged about three going to collect my brother Geoff. My father drove the dilapidated A-model Ford known as the Blue Bomb. On the way home, I took my nap on the broad parcel shelf behind the only interior seat, away from that squalling baby, the one I hadn't wanted to take home, while my parents laughed at me. It had been a huge fight to adopt Geoff: meetings, paperwork, and people inspecting our living conditions, but Dad doggedly persisted, enlisting the support of Sir William Angliss and his wife Bena, until eventually the system agreed. From day one Geoff was told he was special

because they had chosen him.

Don was born some four years later, a miracle of modern medicine, overcoming the RH incompatibility that had blighted previous attempts to add to their family. I had only survived with timely blood transfusions. Baby Donald and I were paraded in front of medical conferences as examples of RH survivors. My parents were always willing to aid education of anyone.

Life in the house that Dad built was always social. People came and went. Christmas morning or Christmas Eve, local people congregated there. This of course demanded the grand clean-up of the often untidy house, and every year Dad suddenly decided that the window sills (or something else) needed painting. I was always left with cleaning up the paint brushes, a job that he didn't like, and neither did I — ah, the petty grudges we hold!

Family circumstances meant my father went to 14 primary schools, a situation that created yawning holes in his education. He took great pride in the fact that he overcame this lack of education as an adult. He struggled through night school, gaining enough credits to undertake teacher training. His first appointment was Norwood High School. I remember when we set off to see the school. We arrived at the address and found an orchard. Not a building in sight. We drove around searching and eventually came back. Unsurprisingly it was still an orchard. Consternation. It turned out the school was yet to be built and classes were held elsewhere. He did have a job after all.

As a boy, John remembers being incensed when his teachers set a question that involved petrol being $1/6$. He walked past the petrol station every morning and it was one and nine. A literal boy, he argued, long and loud, about the price. The discrepancy made no sense to him, but the teachers couldn't see his problem. Incidents like this shaped his teaching style, and, contrary to the methods of the day, many of his lessons were grounded in the reality of the students' lives, keeping them actively involved in their learning.

He was determined that we children would have access to the best state education he could arrange. He became president of the primary school committee, and he convinced them that the school should have a more books than the standard *John and Betty* and *Peter and Susan*. We did have those readers, and the Victorian School Readers, but because of him we had so much more. Cutting edge for their day, graded readers were introduced, and eventually a school library,



taken for granted today but a rarity then. These things helped turn me into a voracious reader. John was a great believer in books. He always said his real early education was the *Arthur Mee's Encyclopedia*, which he read cover to cover, volume by volume.

I believe one of his greatest prides was that two of his children hold Masters degrees, as he did himself. My brother Geoff is the odd one out here. All he wanted to do was work in the bank, and with Dad's philosophy that 'if you bring your children up to make choices, you can't complain when they make them', he supported Geoff's decision. Of course the laugh is on Don and me, who followed our parents into teaching, as before he abandoned his banking career, Geoff earned a salary no teacher dared dream of.

Dad was a great advocate for State education. My oldest friend Katrine Hoggart, now Kate Serurier, was offered a studentship that entailed a commitment to teach in a state school for three years and which required a guarantor. Her father refused to sign it. Risking a long-term friendship, John signed. Kate spent 22 years teaching in the State system as a result of that signature. Kate says she is sure that our fathers are singing together in the afterlife now with extraordinary abandon — my father in tune and her father very out of tune!! 'Twas ever thus.

Summer holidays and Wye River were synonymous. In the days when Christmas school holidays were six weeks long, we spent four or five of them at Wye River, first year camping, then, when our tent irredeemably leaked, in a caravan and in later years in the one-roomed cabins that encircled the campsite. It might have been Ron Crawley

who found Wye and invited us to join them. Faye and Bill and Sharon Gerrard dropped in on their way to Apollo Bay but stayed at Wye. It became a tradition. Each year other families joined us, and soon we took over a sizable proportion of the camp. There were two campgrounds at Wye, one right on the beach front, but ours nestled in the valley straddling the river. Sounds reverberated against the hills; my sound track of Wye at night is the arrival of the boys from the Wye Lifesaving Club, and the whole camp resounding with rousing (and perhaps increasingly inebriated) choruses of 'Cigareets and Whusky' and various folk songs, all led by John, whose instructions could be heard from my bunk in the cabin where I was meant to be sleeping.

Days were spent snorkelling rock pools and body surfing the long waves and eating sandy sandwiches for lunch. Once, my larrikin father convinced Faye to hide a spare swim suit around her middle under her costume. We swam out deep, away from my mother, who was under the beach umbrella keeping an eye on three-year-old Don. Faye handed over the hidden cossie and Dad and the other men emerged from the water triumphantly twirling the bathers in the air and tossing it between them as though Faye had been left naked in the drink. I think Faye was shouting words of indignation in dulcet tones as only Faye can, but I may be making that part up. They had fun, but as I recall it, my mother was not amused.

As we became adults, Dad was there as a backstop, never short of advice (wanted or unwanted!) ready with small loans in times of need, ready to pick up the pieces if need be. What more can one ask of a father?

Robyn Whiteley

'If you'll play, I'll sing!'

Robyn's tribute to John

Don said in his presentation that John left school in Form 1, but John always said he left school 'failed form 2', because he didn't understand school. As Don also said, John had an amazing array of jobs before he realised that, to get on in life, you need 'a piece of paper'. That's when he started his night school studies for Leaving and Matric., while delivering frozen vegetables and picking up his own variety of the Italian language. In 1957, with a wife and two children to support, he took up an offer from the Education Department for a one-year Trained Primary Teachers Certificate, the best of his education qualifications, he always said. Because mature male teachers were in short supply in 1958 he was sent

to Norwood High School, which Gail has described so graphically.

Not one to let the grass grow under his feet, John progressed reasonably quickly to other high schools and to Senior Master status and he then started looking for other opportunities. At a time when television was new to schools he was seconded to the ABC as a liaison officer between the ABC and the Secondary Schools Division. The job involved lots of visits to schools and plenty of driving around the countryside. Everywhere he went, he gathered friends, and some of them are here today.

But three years of that was about enough, and he moved on to become Assistant to the Director

of Special Services. When a young teacher from Brighton Technical School applied for a job in the Publications Branch, she was interviewed by 'three old bald men'. That was the first time I saw John, and he was all of 42. He always said he had been bald since he was 29 and he never worried about it at all. 'You can't have hair and be virile too,' he used to say.

From Special Services he went to the Council of Adult Education as Assistant Director, with a remit to strengthen links with the adult education centres in the country — Wangaratta, Wodonga, Mildura, Warragul etc. Yes, lots more country driving and lots more friends. While he stayed at CAE from 1974 until he retired in 1987, he changed his job within the organisation every two years or so, and the last job was a secondment to Richard Pratt's Visy Board, to set up a management training program for employees across Australia. More travel, more friends.

John retired from government at the best time for him financially. We set up our own business, The WC Company (W for Whiteley, C for Collins). On good days we were 'flushed with success'. On bad days we were 'chained to the desk'. We offered consultancy services in education, training, publishing, curriculum, and building design. We took on any project that looked like it would be fun and might make a bit of money. I took a year's leave from the Education Department to see if we could work together as well as live together and when we found we could, we ran the company for 15 years, until GST came in and John said it was all too hard. He turned to the stock market, and he claimed recently that he made more money after he turned 80 than at any other time during his life.

Later today you may hear the strains of 'Tom Dooley' coming from a spot by the balcony door where our friend Danny Spooner will be playing some of John's favourite songs so that those who would care to can sing along. 'Tom Dooley' was the song that brought me to his notice, I believe. He said one day at afternoon tea in the Special Services building that he played the guitar. I

scoffed, polite little person that I am. I said, 'If you play, I'll sing.' The next day he appeared with his guitar — and I sang. Maybe I can say the rest is history. In 1982 we moved into our house in Richmond, the one he designed. In 1985 we were married in our own courtyard (in August!) amidst so many of the friends we had amassed from our various jobs that they had to have name tags. From 1988 until Wednesday, 20 July 2016 we spent most of our time together. We ran the business, we walked our dogs, we entertained, we had wonderful open-house parties, we took on a big building project next door, and we travelled — around the state, around the country, and around the world. Most of you have kept up with our travels in recent years through the diaries I have emailed. You know that what we were doing was what we did from the very first — we had fun.

It was a privilege to be John's partner. He taught me much. He shared his family and friends with me. He shared his love of music, his passion for games, and his thirst for knowledge. He tried hard to pass on his deep interest in gardening, cooking, and the share market. In return, he said I did what my mother had told me that she had done with my father, who was 13 years older than she was. 'I ran him around, Rob, to keep him young. I didn't let him snooze by the fire', and John said that was what I did to him. At 88, he suggested a road trip from Melbourne to Townsville and back, and we did it in March this year, more than 7000 kilometres in over a month. How much that took out of him we'll never know, but he was determined to do it and we did it. We were a good team.

Thank you all for coming today. Thank you for your love and support of John and me over all the years that we have known you. Thank you for sticking with us through thick and thin. When your glass is filled today, raise it in the memory of a man who loved life, John Collins.

— **Don Collins, Gail Reynolds, Robyn Whiteley,**
August 2016

I first met **Jennifer Bryce** in 1975, when she was working for ACER (Australian Council for Education Research). She worked for other organisations, and for herself, and moved up the country for some years, but we still kept in touch. The most successful meetings of the Nova Mob took place at the house she and John Foyster shared in St Kilda in the 1980s. She returned to ACER, where her work was so appreciated that they tried to stop her retiring. Now she has finally succeeded in retiring. She can now write regularly and enjoy her life. Elaine and I just keep meeting up with her, most recently at a meeting of the Nova Mob.

Jennifer Bryce

Travels in the UK, 2014 and 2015

Photographs by Jennifer Bryce

Glimpses of Scotland, 2014

In August 2014 I was staying in Edinburgh — the start of a holiday in Scotland with two dear friends to celebrate a significant birthday. Compared to Melbourne it seemed a monocultural population of Anglo Saxons in tweeds and twinsets that reminded me of my 1950s childhood when people spoke of going ‘home’ — and this was home. I warmed to a kind of nostalgia as I walked around the place I’d imagined through the eyes of my grandparents when, as a seven-year-old, I wore a Macdonald tartan kilt and listened to tales of Bonny Prince Charlie.



The rubbish bin man, Edinburgh.



Music-making at Queens Hall, Edinburgh.



The looming Edinburgh Castle.

We had an apartment in a well-to-do suburb. Nearby lived an enterprising chap — not so well-to-do. His home for the moment was a garbage disposal bin. We chatted to him although some of the neighbours showed their disapproval at such communication. He said he was an out-of-work actor. At night he took the garbage bags out of the bin so that there was room for him. He said that in winter he used them for insulation. He mostly remembered to put the garbage bags back in the morning.

We went to a number of events at the Edinburgh Festival — mainly concerts — and when we needed to fill in time there was a book fair. My first taste of the 2014 Edinburgh Festival was a concert by the Hebrides Ensemble. It was held in the Queen's Hall, a former church that dates back to 1823. The church was converted to a concert hall in the early 1930s. I sat there on a solid, sky blue pew, imagining congregational church services with people shouting 'alleluia' from amphitheatre-style seating facing what is now a stage. The Hebrides Ensemble is described as 'a collective of musicians' who play a wide variety of chamber music. Part of the program included Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* played by violin, double

bass, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, piano, percussion, and a narrator. A soldier, home on leave, unwisely sells his violin (and thus his soul) to an old man (the devil) in exchange for a book of stock exchange prices. The story is a kind of morality play. Throughout the 'play' the devil keeps appearing in various guises, and at the end



Granddad's plaque, Broughty Ferry.



Granddad's birthplace, Broughty Ferry.

the soldier discovers that he can't have a beautiful princess as well as the contentment of living in his own country. It was just a month before the Referendum that might have given Scotland independence from England, and the script had been adapted somewhat to remind us of this. The soldier found a 'bonny' spot to rest. He had a clear Scottish accent, whereas the devil was English.

In between Festival treats we wandered along the Golden Mile, visited the new parliament building, went to Holyrood Palace where Mary Queen of Scots was forced to abdicate from the throne, and tried to avoid eating Scottish scones and Victoria sponge. Over everything looms Edinburgh Castle.

My grandfather was born in Broughty Ferry, once a fishing village on the River Tay, now a suburb of Dundee. I knew that a plaque had been placed outside his birthplace to commemorate his rugby playing. We travelled to Broughty Ferry so that I could see it, and found the house easily, a solid middle-class terrace looking onto gardens where Granddad may have kicked his first football. There is a very active rugby following, and Granddad was one of their heroes. I was met by some of the enthusiasts who had also roped in a photographer and journalist — so I ended up in the local newspaper. While staying there one cold, wet day we went for a drive in the hilly Cairngorms and just missed seeing the Queen returning from

church — she was staying at Balmoral.

Then to Stirling, where we stayed in a university college. Stirling Castle was so crowded with tourists that we didn't visit it — and likewise, Loch Lomond was a disappointment. However, we did go to a museum that had an excellent display about the Battle of Bannockburn, where Edward II of England was defeated by Scottish Robert the Bruce. I had been rather skeptical about observing a 3D video reenactment of the battle, but it was surprisingly realistic. You could walk into the centre of the battle, with horses charging from both sides and soldiers being speared and falling to the ground. Even so, I preferred to wander around the campsite and 'talk' to some of the women and young messengers.

Then over the sea to Skye — by means of a bridge. Summer on Skye was rather like winter in Woodend — I bought some locally knitted mittens and ski socks. It was a great place for walking, to the Bay of Slea (appropriately named, if not spelled), to a hide for viewing otters (we didn't see any) and to castles in various states of disrepair. The castle of Clan Macleod is beautifully preserved and still in use. I was pleased to see that in recent times the head of the clan had been a woman. Most of the castle, including the gardens, was open to tourists, and you could take a boat trip to see the resident seals.

Through Plonkton to Inverness. All the way massive, stony mountains towered over us, and from time to time we drove next to the River Ness that feeds into the home of the famous Monster. Our accommodation in Inverness would have made a good setting for a *Midsomer Murder*. We didn't see any other guests, but the floorboards

'People Make Glasgow' banner.



creaked and the plumbing groaned. In the main reception room stuffed deer heads leered at us from dusty baronial walls; there was a leopard skin hearth rug and what seemed to be a live cat. The proprietor, a woman of a certain age, who I thought might have inherited the mansion, didn't live on the premises. She had the upper middle-class vagueness of a lady who lunches quite a bit. It took her a couple of goes to bring us provisions for breakfast — food not at all in keeping with the substantial residence: frozen croissants, bottles of sweetened orange drink, and perhaps some milk enabled her to advertise the place as 'bed and breakfast'. We had a lovely dinner at a nearby restaurant, walked along the Ness, looking, unsuccessfully, for red squirrels, and survived the night.

On a Sunday we pulled into a parking lot in Glasgow where a sign said: 'Monday to Friday only'. The weather-beaten manager approached us. He was tinkering with a sports car this sunny afternoon. 'Och noo,' he said, 'your wee car will be all right here', or something like that, his eyes twinkling. I melted because his accent was exactly like that of my Glasgow-born paternal grandfather (not the rugby-playing one). That's Glasgow: warm, friendly, generous. Around the streets are signs, 'People make Glasgow', and they do. Many things are free, particularly museums. There's a People's Palace, built for the people in about 1901 with a huge winter garden and café and several

floors of a local history museum. At the wonderful Kelvin Grove Art Gallery we saw the extraordinary Dali painting, *Christ of St John of the Cross*. The perspective is from above the crucifix, Christ's head bent down, surveying the world, exuding tremendous energy and power. I learnt of the Scottish Colourists and The Glasgow Boys. Almost every day there is a free lunch-time recital on the gallery's magnificent organ. Benevolence breeds benevolence. But a hundred or so years ago, when my paternal grandparents were growing up here, things were not as rosy. There was unremitting poverty in areas such as the Gorbals, and life must have been bleak in the industrial housing along the River Clyde, where drunkenness and crime were rife in the dank unsanitary tenements.

We stayed at Pipers' Tryst on the edge of the CBD. It was described as attached to the national piping centre, and I had expected to be kept awake by a whining drone and wheezing Scottish melodies. We were attracted by 'free breakfast' — probably lumpy porridge and instant coffee, I thought. We never did get to see the bagpipe display. Our room was quiet, and for breakfast there was the best espresso coffee in Scotland.

One of the more recent famous Glaswegians is the architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. I love his style: simple Japanese lines, blended with a kind of exaggerated Art Nouveau. His high-backed chairs in particular seem to be alive, and his spacious, light-filled buildings must have helped to bring some optimism to the drab industrial city that was early twentieth-century Glasgow. We had high tea at the Willow Tearooms, designed by him, and visited a school and library of his and the sparkling white interior of a house he shared with his wife, Margaret Macdonald.

I wish I could remember the frivolous jokes and ditties that were a part of my paternal grandparents' life, because in this Glasgow that had just hosted the Commonwealth Games we kept noticing an element of whimsy; the statue of Wellington in the main square had been crowned with a roadworks witch's hat. Along the streets of the CBD are blue *Dr Who* style tardises that I kept expecting to levitate. They are, however, shelters for traffic police during the icy winters.

After two days in Glasgow we were hurtling down the east coast to London, trying to use main roads rather than the straightforward M1. Much of my time was spent looking at a map instead of out of the widow (no Satnav). My attempts to help with the negotiation of roundabouts were pathetic: 'Go round again, I think that sign might have pointed to Whitby.' This, with 60 mph lorries glowering behind our tentative Citroen. Almouth seemed to me typically British; people sitting on the beach in deck chairs bracing themselves against biting wind, pretending it was warm, while their children built medieval-looking sand castles.

Durham Cathedral was glorious. It rises above



Tardis ready to levitate in Glasgow.



Cutty Sark pub.

a large city that has the feel of a university town. We climbed up a narrow, winding walkway to reach the vast edifice that, in spite of hundreds of tourists, purveyed blessed tranquillity. You could stay at Durham for ever, and indeed, we stayed too long and had to desperately navigate a tangle of roads down to Stamford — the Candlesticks Hotel, where the kind proprietor provided us with a meal at about 10.00 p.m. In the morning, there was an extensive market — all kinds of food and clothing; cheeses and terrines from France; pickles from Belgium. Although Britain staunchly retains its sterling currency, the produce was from the broader European Community.

Then suddenly it was all over. We were back in London. I had a day to catch up with friends and visit a Virginia Woolf exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. The next morning I was rattling along on the Piccadilly Line, keeping an eye on my luggage, gradually shedding London; Gloucester Road, Acton Town, Hounslow, Hatton Cross, and so, to Heathrow.

Hadrian — and more, 2015

If you can forget time zones, my trip back to the UK in August 2015 was a breeze: I got onto the plane in Melbourne just before dinner and got off



Royal College of Music, London.

in London just after lunch the next day. But if you measure time in terms of movies watched and books read, it's a different matter: between Melbourne and Singapore I read half a novel (I'm a slow reader) and watched *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; between Singapore and Dubai I watched a couple of episodes of *Downton Abbey* and pretended to sleep; between Dubai and London I watched *Birdman*, *The Water Diviner*, another episode of *Downton Abbey*, and almost finished the novel (Emily Bitto's *The Strays*).

Once you've topped up your Oyster Card and you're sitting on the tube, you forget about the anxious wait at the luggage carousel and the queues at passport control; it's a sunny Saturday afternoon ... and ... you're in London!

I changed to the Jubilee Line at Green Park and then to the overground at Canada Water. By 4.00 p.m. I was juggling my luggage up the steep steps leading to Anne's front door and praying that her keys would work. Anne was in France and had generously given me free use of her house in New Cross Gate for a fortnight. Within half an hour I was sauntering through the local Sainsbury's, picking up an all-important bottle of wine, food for a simple evening meal, and my favourite breakfast cereal, Grape Nuts, which, my extensive research has proved, are unavailable in Australia.

The next morning, fortified with rather more Grape Nuts than needed, I decided to soak up the summer sun by going for a walk. I caught the train to nearby North Greenwich, then walked along the Thames past apartment construction and the Emirates cable cars that soar over the river to the docks and back. Unexpectedly, abutting high rise construction, I found an Eco Park where there were a couple of bird hides for viewing ducks, grebes, warblers, and other water life and ... a lot of wasps. I turned back along the Thames and lost my bearings a bit, as I'd expected to reach Canary Wharf, where I knew I could catch a train home, but there were no signs and I just kept walking in the pleasant 26 degree sun (stupidly — like the other walkers — without a hat). At last I reached a landmark, the Cutty Sark pub, overflowing with Sunday lunchers. After some enquiries I learned that the 177 bus would get me back to New Cross Gate and I arrived home in need of what my grandmother used to call 'forty winks'.

By happy coincidence, my good friend Jinny was spending a few weeks in her London flat, working on her fourth novel. We arranged to meet for dinner. How exciting to see her here! Jet lag dissipated as I raced off to the station to catch up with her at a Greek restaurant in Store Street, Bloomsbury. As though no time had elapsed since we last saw each other, we were soon intent on discussing our writing — Jinny has written vastly more than I have.

The next morning I had some tickets to collect at Waterloo Station. In a fortnight's time Anne and I would travel up north to walk along Hadrian's



A stile in the Hundred Acre Wood.



Pooh Sticks Bridge.

Wall, the object of my trip. I had also reserved tickets for the Proms, which I decided to collect straight away, rather than struggling with crowds on the evening of the performance. From Waterloo I headed off for the Royal Albert Hall. The tickets were waiting for me and I celebrated with a large coffee in the Royal Albert café, took a photo of the Royal College of Music opposite, and thought briefly of the movie *Shine*.

I had planned to go to the Victoria and Albert Museum, but there was some kind of disturbance. The street I'd taken to the Royal Albert Hall



The gate posts at Walton-on-Thames

had been cordoned off and there was a line-up of emergency vehicles. I took another route through the Royal Imperial College, but that was cordoned off too ... and so was the next road. I gave up my plan of having lunch at the V & A café and headed off in search of Harrods, which I knew was quite close by (you will have gathered that I'm not a keen map reader). I was approaching an intersection, heading towards South Kensington, when, in front of me, on the kerb, I saw them — two friends, Carol and Peter from Newcastle, New South Wales. I had no idea they were holidaying in London. I walked up beside them and said, in a mock casual voice, 'hello'. When we had all recovered from the amazing coincidence we decided to have lunch.

Some days later I learned that the disturbance had been caused by a man who was travelling around the world with his children in a Kombi van teaching them to love everyone, no matter what their beliefs or behaviour. In an act of incredibly naïve stupidity, he'd parked his Kombi painted with pro ISIS slogans in the diplomatic area of central London.



Sedcedenum Museum, Wallsend.



Chesters Fort.



Hadrian's Wall near Once Brewed.

The next few days were exactly as I'd planned — living, as closely as possible, an ordinary life in London. I'd stroll down to the shops to buy *The Guardian*, eat a bowl of Grape Nuts, water Anne's vegetable garden, work at my writing, watch the news on TV. One Saturday I went to a late afternoon movie session (*Manglehorn*), just as I might at home in Melbourne.

One day I decided to go to Ashdown Forest, the setting for A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. At East Grinstead station I had the worst cup of coffee I

have ever had ... well, perhaps the second worst. In India you often can't tell whether your beverage is tea or coffee. I caught a bus to Hartfield, on the edge of the Hundred Acre Wood, and was relieved to find that the Pooh setting had not been highly commercialised. I even had to ask directions to Pooh Sticks Bridge. Through copse and spinney marched Jennifer ... and over a stile — so English! I walked about a mile down a lane, over fields and along the edge of the forest. A couple of families were playing Pooh Sticks at the bridge, but it certainly wasn't thronging with tourists. From E. H. Shepard's drawings, I had expected pine trees, but there were birches and oaks, all very lush and green. I walked back to Hartfield and the one touristy shop — a café and gift shop called Pooh Corner. The menu invited you to have 'a smack-erel of something'. I could have had typical Pooh fare, perhaps an extract of malt sandwich, but I settled for a sausage roll and salad with a pot of tea.

One of the delights of living in a private house in London is that you need to go food shopping. I invited Jinny to dinner and set off for the Borough Markets for provisions, an easy train ride away. Everything was very expensive — oranges were 80p each (more than \$1.60) — but, too bad, this is London! I bought chicken pies and some pâté (no need for vegetables because of Anne's productive vegetable garden). I wasn't tempted by wild pigeon; I realise I am not a foodie. I bought a coffee because I was feeling tired and it gave me an excuse to sit down on a bench ... no. I sat in the wrong place. A woman shooed me away as though I were an untouchable. All the surrounding seats were vacant but I evidently paid for second class coffee that you must drink standing up.

One afternoon, almost on a whim, I decided to catch a train to Walton-on-Thames, where my New Zealand-born maternal grandmother worked as a masseuse in a special New Zealand hospital during the First World War. The only remnant was its gateposts. The main road is now called New Zealand Avenue. I walked along the Thames near where the hospital had been, and had a glass of cider in a pub right on the water's edge. Maybe she once walked along that path with her young man.

Anne returned from France. We packed sparingly — one back-pack and day-pack each — and caught the train to Newcastle. It was a fast train and we sped through York and had only a glimpse of Durham Cathedral. We arrived a little before 4.00 p.m., so, after locating our hotel, there was time to wander around the city; twelfth century almshouses, St Nicholas Cathedral with fabulous stained glass windows, impressive bridges over the River Tyne. It was my birthday, so Anne took me out to a Jamie Oliver restaurant, Jamie's Café.

Anne had found a service that transports your luggage to your accommodation while you walk



Greenhead Hotel.

along Hadrian's Wall, so we had the freedom of walking with just our day-packs. We caught the tube to Wallsend — actually the end of the wall, but we were doing the walk back-to-front, from east to west. At Wallsend is Segedunum Museum, where, from a look-out, you can get a bird's-eye view of the Roman settlement of nearly 2000 years ago. There were outlines of infantry stables, a granary, and a reconstructed bath house. Over the next few days we would become familiar with this layout. The bath houses were nearly always on the edge of a settlement, quite often because of access to a river. We spent the night in a B & B near Hexham to which our luggage had been delivered.

The next morning Bob, our host, drove us a few miles to Chester's Fort. After looking at an amazingly intact bath house and a museum of relics from a nineteenth-century collector (including pieces of Roman leather), we caught a bus to Corbridge. At this settlement you could see how the underfloor heating system was laid out, and how water was piped up from the river for the bath house and other domestic use, including a fountain.

Then came our first day of serious walking when we joined the Hadrian's Wall path. The wall was built by the Roman army for Emperor Hadrian, following his visit to Britain in AD 122 to keep out the barbarians (my ancestors). It runs for 73 miles (about 118 km) across the north of England from Bowness-on-Solway in the west to Wallsend in the east. You don't actually walk on the wall; sometimes there is a track, sometimes just signs across fields. So although it is referred to as a 'path', for much of the time there is no path at all. It is mostly clearly marked, although once, on the first day, we ended up in a mire of cow manure. Many of the farmhouses and their out-buildings are made of stone — an indication of what happened to some of the wall over the years before it became a World Heritage site.

Most of the time we could see walkers ahead of us. The first people we met were a brother and



Haltwhistle.



Bowness-on-Solway.



Keswick: Derwent Water.



Keswick Theatre by the Lake: tribute to founders Judi Dench and Michael Williams.

sister of about our age from America — a brother and sister of certain means, as they had sailed to the UK in the *Queen Mary*. But walking the wall is a levelling experience — everyone has the same sort of hike boots, back packs, water bottles. Although the walkers must have had varying levels of fitness we seemed to cover about the same distance in a day — faces became familiar. Glorious views. Glorious sunshine.

The walk on the first day was fairly level. For most of the time you could see the remains of the wall and the steep ditch that had provided addi-



Walk to Catbells.

tional fortification. Then — just to test our stamina — the final haul up to Housesteads Fort was quite strenuous. A cup of weak powdered tea was heaven. Too exhausted to look around the ruins, we caught a bus to our YHA accommodation, Once Brewed. The American brother and sister walkers were staying at the slightly more up-market pub, Twice Brewed. We slept extremely well in our bunk beds.

The next day we walked back to Housesteads, looked at the museum there and walked around the ruins. The presentation was not quite as good as Corbridge had been, and we were aware that labels were only in English, although it is an International Heritage site. The weather was not so good — we needed our raincoats and we were glad that we'd booked two nights at Once Brewed so that we could visit the amazing fort at Vindolanda, built to guard an important Roman road. We walked the three miles to it through misty rain. Vindolanda became famous recently because tablets of writing were discovered there — including an upper-class woman's invitation to her birthday party and orders for food and other supplies. These writing tablets are now in the British Museum. I liked this site because you could see archaeologists at work and you could imagine the treasures that might be hidden in the sludge they were shovelling into wheelbarrows. Apparently one can volunteer to work on the site — an enticing prospect. Everything at Vindolanda is very well presented, with a reconstructed wooden fort and well-signed houses, shops, a granary, the commandant's spacious villa ... I was amazed that so much is intact. In the museum there are coins, shoes, pottery, and glassware.

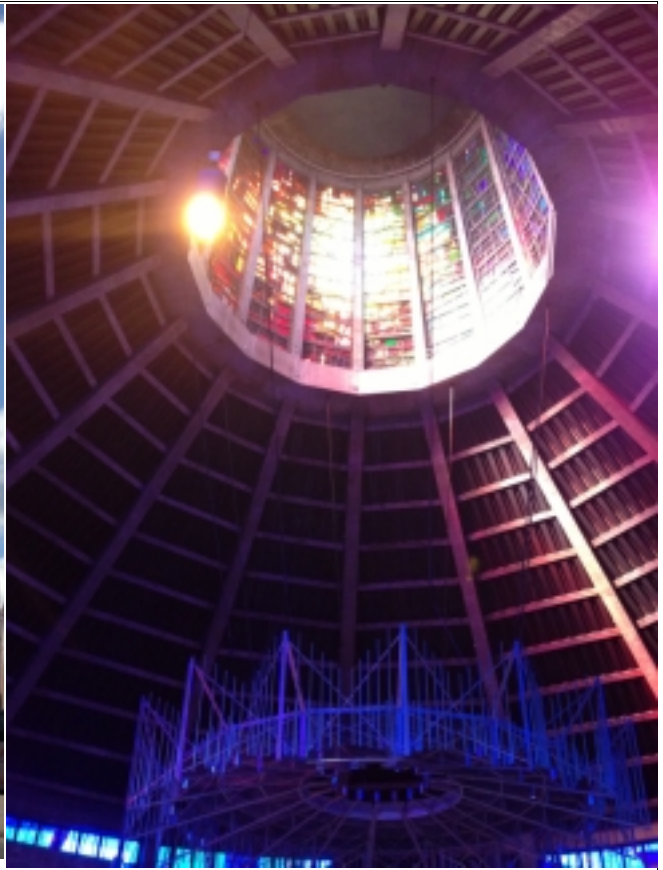
Then a big walking day from Once Brewed to Greenhead. It was exhilarating. Our path was quite steep (both rising and falling) and we were glad that the rain had stopped, otherwise it could have been treacherously slippery. Sometimes the path took us through farms, at other times we were on the edge of crags, with magnificent views. There were still a lot of people taking the walk, but they didn't spoil the peace. By the time we reached Thirlwell Castle we were flagging. A sign 'Greenhead Teahouse 15 minutes' spurred us on.

I loved the name Haltwhistle station and was determined to catch a train from there. We were wrongly informed that there would be a market; nevertheless, it was pleasant to wander around the little town and wait for the 11.00 a.m. to Carlisle, which we reached after a quick trip past coal-blackened stations and brightly painted art nouveau style bridges.

We spent a couple of days in Carlisle, visiting the castle where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned and other prisoners were treated so brutally that they had to satisfy their thirst by licking water from the stone walls. We caught a bus to the end (or beginning) of the wall at Bowness-on-Solway, although all of the wall at that point has been destroyed. The weather was suitably bleak.



Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.



Liverpool Catholic Cathedral.

We arrived at Keswick on market day, looking forward to a few days in the Lake District. I went to an antique fair and wished I had room in my luggage for some Moorcroft china that seemed unbelievably cheap — not so the Derwent colour pencils (the more well-to-do girls at my school in the 1950s had sets with 72 different colours). A box was going for £80. We took a boat trip around Derwent Water and then managed to get tickets for Noel Coward's *Fallen Angel* at the Theatre by the Lake. It's a fairly new theatre, opened by Judy Dench and her late husband. There's a professional repertory company, and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, in spite of having to walk back to our B & B in teeming rain.

We did all kinds of touristy things, such as a cruise on Lake Windemere and a visit to Dove Cottage, where Wordsworth lived for a significant part of his life. One day we climbed Catbells — a walk that was described as 'difficult'. Nevertheless, quite a few people were doing it. Some brought their dogs, who had to be carried over the more challenging bits. Everything was very fresh and green and — in spite of the gaggles of climbers — peaceful. Sheep seem to make a place peaceful, and I especially loved the Herdwick sheep, bred by Beatrix Potter. Apparently they can survive on brambles.

From the foot of Catbells, we could have caught a launch back to Keswick, but it was a beautiful day so we decided to walk back around Derwent



Eltham Palace near London.



Mrs Courtauld's bath, Eltham Palace.

Water, with no idea of the distance. We walked through forests, across pebbly beaches, around little inlets where families were messing about in boats. We may have walked 9 miles. When we came to a rather exclusive-looking resort, we decided to reward ourselves with cream teas. We sat under an umbrella on a manicured lawn. Inside, withered octogenarians huddled over log fires sipping gin. The scones were disappointingly stale. In the evening we went to another excellent production at the Theatre By the Lake: *Abigail's Party*.

Next day we went by bus to Penrith, where we caught a train to Liverpool. Liverpool has clearly been a very poor industrial city. There are most likely still pockets of poverty that we didn't see, but a general feeling was one of artistic innovation, liveliness, and multiculturalism. We stayed in the Docklands area very close to the new Tate Liverpool, where we saw a fabulous exhibition of Jackson Pollock. I have seen *Blue Poles* a few times and some of Pollock's work in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, but this exhibition included examples where he was creating a new style, his 'black' style, where abstract merges into the figurative. Many of these works are black enamel paint on a white background. One I particularly liked is *Number 7*, 1952, a quite realistic head where swooping curves make the whole thing vital and energised.

The Beatles museum was rather pallid after several hours spent with Jackson Pollock, but it was a pleasant nostalgia trip. There could have been more about their extraordinary musicianship. Then to the massive, extravagant neo-Gothic Anglican cathedral built between 1925 and 1958. Of course it's impressive, but I have mixed feelings about it. Why Gothic? Why not a

style that expresses the twentieth century? And what about the millions of pounds spent on the construction when hundreds, if not thousands, of the population are homeless and impoverished? Liverpool suffered terribly during World War II. More appropriate, I thought, was the Roman Catholic cathedral completed in the 1960s — a circular design that makes use of coloured light. The altar is central, overhung by an enormous crown-of-thorns sculpture.

We caught the train back to London and it felt like returning home. It was good to be able to wear different clothes! That evening we went to the Proms, Bernard Haitink conducting the

Chamber Orchestra of Europe. Haitink was controlled and calm — not a glimmer of passion, even in the final movement of Schubert's Ninth Symphony. Maria Joao Pires is the same age as me, yet she played the Mozart A Major Piano Concerto with youthful verve. It was wonderful.

I stayed at Jinny's for a few days. On the first afternoon we spent a relaxing time in companionable silence reading each other's novels. I spent some time fantasising about buying a studio apartment in London. Apparently it always rains on Bank Holiday, 31 August. And this Bank Holiday was no exception. We had planned to go to Sissinghurst, but it wouldn't be much fun strolling around the grounds in a downpour. In the end we set off for Eltham Palace — originally a royal palace that fell into disrepair for centuries (I think Henry VIII may have stayed there as a boy) and was 'rescued' by the Courtauld family in the 1930s, when they turned it into a glamorous Art Deco home. Almost every bedroom has its own bathroom — although, in keeping with British tradition, only one has a shower. There is a 'secret' passage from Mr Courtauld's bedroom to his wife's boudoir. There is a library and a map room, a special scullery for arranging flowers, a magnificent dining room, a sitting room where they showed movies ... (just the place for Busby Berkeley extravaganzas) and, for parties, a great hall with a magnificent oak carved ceiling, restored from the palace's Tudor past.

During the next few days I spent pleasant times pottering around parts of London that were new to me. I went to Sir John Soane's museum — a private collection by a late eighteenth-, early nineteenth-century architect who died the year Queen Victoria came to the throne. It is an extraordinary assemblage of artifacts in what was his home: Greek and Roman statues, death masks, architectural drawings, an overwhelming collection of paintings — three Canalettos, Hogarths, at least one J. M. W. Turner — and you get some idea of

what it might have been like for a successful architect living at Lincoln's Inn in the early nineteenth century. On the way back to Jinny's I walked around Covent Garden market. It has been taken over by tourist trash — no food market; instead, lots of bars, restaurants, jugglers, mime artists, and music students playing Pachelbel's Canon.

Back to Anne's and a concert by Khiyo — a group that I would call fusion. The group is led by a Bangladeshi singer, there is an excellent guitarist/pianist, a double bass player, who I think is Australian, a percussionist playing small tabla-like drums and a 'cellist. There were songs of Tagore, pieces based on ragas, and a couple from American musicals. Supper had been described as 'canapes', but it was generous serves of curry.

One memorable day Jinny, Anne and I headed off in Anne's car for East Sussex, to visit places where the Bloomsbury set had lived. After a few false turns we got to Charleston, where Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and their 'family' rented a farm house from 1906 into the 1950s. It was here, in 1918, that Vanessa gave birth to her and Duncan's daughter, Angelica — believed by many (including Angelica) to be a child of Vanessa and her husband, Clive Bell. I bought Angelica's book, *Deceived with Kindness*, in which she describes the shock of discovering the truth. Duncan was gay, and Angelica ended up marrying Duncan's partner, David Garnett.

Almost every surface of the farm house had been painted, mainly frescoes. Duncan had painted a dog on Vanessa's bed to guard her during the night, and she had painted his bed. In the dining room there was a wonderful painted table around which so many interesting people

had dined: Maynard Keynes, Benjamin Britten, Bertrand Russell ... Then we went to nearby Rodmell, where Virginia and Leonard Woolf lived — so homely with her detached studio and the bowling green with deck chairs set out, yet it was from here that Virginia flung herself fatally into the River Ouse.

A surprise was a nearby church, St Michael and All Angels at Berwick, which contains superb frescoes done mainly by non-believer Duncan Grant. The church is abundantly covered with paintings of harvest and ripe fruits, dominated by a crucifix, the Christ modelled on his lover, David Garnett.

What should one do on one's last day in London? It was grey and rather cool — walk through Regents Park with the joggers and new parents smiling into prams. Then to the Baker Street tube station and the Freud Museum. I didn't have the patience to read papers in display cabinets, and of course there was the famous psychoanalysis couch, devoid of the stories divulged from its cushions. Then I walked over Waterloo Bridge to farewell the famous London icons — on one side Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, on the other, the London Eye and Royal Festival Hall.

There was still time to visit my favourite impressionists at the Courtauld Institute — the wonderful green-coated woman by Toulouse Lautrec still stared at me, as did the poor innocent Manet girl at the Folies Bègères. Van Gogh was there, his ear severed after an argument with Gaughin. His blossom trees will still be blooming next time I visit.

— **Jennifer Bryce**, April 2016

Robert Day, as you will read below, is an English fan with a long and various career. Robert contributed a very enjoyable article on Dmitri Shostakovich to the 'Music Issue' of *The Metaphysical Review*, No 14, November 1989, and I've been waiting for a follow-up article ever since. This is it!

Robert Day

Other tracks, other fandoms

One of the very first fanzines I ever had, Rob Jackson's *Maya*, had a little filler cartoon that I definitely related to. It showed a chap dressed in an English Civil War Roundhead costume at a table full of model soldiers, saying 'Of course I'm still an SF fan!'

I came to SF in my early teens, as I suspect a lot of us did. I came to fandom when I also became a student. But I had a number of other interests, one of which in particular has shaped my life as much as fandom. I am a railway enthusiast.

The reaction of many people on hearing this admission will be familiar to many SF fans. If you are lucky, you will get some potentially condescending questions, like 'Are you a train spotter?' ('No, I've never spotted in my life.') or 'Do you have a model railway?' ('Yes. It's one of the ways of relaxing after a taxing day at the workface, preferably with a glass of something.'). If you are not so lucky, you get the cultural sneer or even the imprecation to 'Get a Life!' — to which I reply 'I've got a perfectly rich and satisfying one, full of friends and experiences and good times. I even have a girlfriend.'

Along the route of my personal railway journey, I have seen much, travelled further, and met with recognition. I have become a published author, with all the ups and downs that particular craft holds. (I was particularly grateful there for the knowledge of publishing that my fannish life gave me, if only to have a realistic idea of what to expect.) And, as with fandom, there is always more to see.

As with so many things, it started with my father, Ted. He went to work on the railway in 1948 after coming out of the Army. Britain's railways had been nationalised just weeks before; originally in the hands of over 120 private companies, UK railways were 'Grouped' by Parliamentary order in 1923, after the railways were almost run into the ground under Government control during World War I; when almost the same thing happened in World War II, the post-war Labour gov-

ernment saw not only the opportunity to bring the railways under State control, but the need as well. Ted started as a labourer at the major freight marshalling yard, Toton, to the west of Nottingham; fairly quickly, he gravitated to working with the signalling department, then taking the necessary courses to become first a signalling linesman, then Chief Signalling linesman. At this time, Toton was part of British Railways' 'Modernisation Plan' and was being mechanised. It was a showcase installation, and was often visited by dignitaries and senior officials from other railways. On one such visit, Ted took charge of the party from their official minder, conducted the tour, and fielded technical questions afterwards. At the end of the tour, the minder, a senior Inspector, asked my father why he'd never applied for any promotion, and advised him to consider his position the next time any more senior openings were advertised.

A few weeks later, Ted was just going on shift when his deputy turned up, brandishing a memo. 'I'm taking your shift. Go home and get to bed,' he was told 'and make sure your best suit's pressed. You're to report to Derby' (regional signalling HQ) 'at 10 a.m. tomorrow.'

This had my father worried. He could not think of anything he'd done to earn a carpeting before the Higher-Ups. So he turned up at the signalling offices in Derby next morning, only to be ushered into what turned out to be an interview panel for a job in the signalling drawing office. He was recruited to start designing, installing, and commissioning whole signalling projects, embracing the change from mechanical to colour-light signals on the modernised railway and the introduction of automatic lifting barriers at level crossings. He stayed there for 10 years, until he began to see the impact of the cuts in the railway system proposed by a particularly anti-railway Government. When his work began to consist of taking lines out of use and removing signal boxes instead of modernising and installing new equipment, he felt he could no longer see a future in the industry,



The Festiniog Railway in North Wales helped develop a special type of articulated locomotive, the Fairlie — named for its inventor — to double the power available to haul slate wagons whilst only needing one crew. This was a special train over the newly reopened Welsh Highland Railway in 2011.



Photographers wait for the special to make a run-past up to the summit of the Welsh Highland at Rhyd-Ddu.



London & North Eastern Railway class A3 no. 4472 Flying Scotsman arrives at Derby for renovation after its financially disastrous tour of the USA between 1971 and 1973. After a perilous voyage as deck cargo from San Francisco, including a passage through the fringes of a hurricane off Panama, the engine was returned to Liverpool and was able to make the journey to Derby under its own steam. Flying Scotsman has just re-entered service in 2016 after a ten-year overhaul.

and in 1966 he left to take up a job with a company that made sectional timber buildings for schools, hospitals, and so on.

During that time, I was growing up and my childhood consisted of regular journeys by rail. By that time, we had moved to Derbyshire, but with my mother's family still being in Nottingham and Dad's family being in London, family visits and annual holidays were all made by rail. As an employee, Dad had concessionary travel, and we made good use of it. Of course, this all ceased when Ted left the railway, and we started travelling by car. In 1968, we went on holiday to North Wales.

North Wales is the location of a number of narrow-gauge railways, mainly connected with slate quarrying. The first railway preservation society was formed to preserve the Talylyn Railway, an amazing hangover from the Victorian era that survived up to 1951 in a sort of time capsule, to be taken over by a preservation group just before its aged proprietor passed away and the line disappeared into total decrepitude. Just three years later, the Festiniog Railway, which carried slate down to the sea for trans-shipment but which had closed completely at the outbreak of war, reopened its first section under the care of another preservation society. By the late 1960s, these lines and a handful of others were regularly carrying significant numbers of passengers, and with the disappearance of main line steam from British Railways in 1969, were becoming a tourist destination in their own right. I saw the Festiniog, and read about its history and the considerable

network of quarry lines at its far end, climbing up mountainsides rendered almost alien by a century or so of slate extraction, and I was fascinated.

The public library quickly threw up some interesting local relics. Narrow-gauge railways were far less common in England than in Wales, but there were two closed examples not far from home; one, the Leek & Manifold, ran from nowhere to the middle of nowhere through impressive scenery on the Staffordshire fringe of the Peak District; it was only open for less than 35 years, and its engines were designed by someone with experience of designing engines for India, so they appeared with cab roofs insulated against the tropical heat and huge headlights for picking out elephants on the tracks — always a concern in deepest Staffordshire! (Staffordshire did have wallabies for a while, which escaped from a private zoo and bred quite happily for a number of generations.) The other was the Ashover Light Railway, which ran for about seven miles through rural North Derbyshire, intended originally to bring quarry products to the ironworks of the north Derbyshire town of Clay Cross. It was built in the early 1920s with mainly war surplus locomotives and stock, and was a victim of road competition in the immediate post-World War II era. However, one part of the line survived to move quarry products around the quarry site itself, and some of my earliest and most precious photographs are of the remains of that operation in 1967.

We then explored another railway fairly close to home. The Cromford & High Peak Railway was an early line, originally planned as a canal to link



Derby station, headquarters of the Midland Railway, photographed in 1972. The station building here was started in 1840, and was extended over the years until it reached the appearance it shows here in 1892. It was demolished in 1985 and replaced with a modern structure.

two other canals on opposite sides of the Pennines. However, given the difficulties of ensuring an adequate supply of water in the Peak District, the engineers took the decision to build the route as one of those newfangled railways, and so it opened in 1831. It was nonetheless designed like a canal, with long, contour-hugging level sections punctuated by rope-worked inclines where wagons were hauled up steep gradients by stationary engines. Canal traffic disappeared very quickly after opening, but the line began to carry considerable traffic from limestone quarries; this pattern of working continued up to closure in 1967. I have vague memories of it being in work; we began exploring it shortly after closure, uncovering relics and finding out about this almost prehistoric (in railway terms) survivor.

Seeing my interest in photography taking off, Ted suggested that there were all manner of railway installations — the sort of thing he'd been asked to decommission, in fact — that were disappearing and that we ought to get out and photograph these before they disappeared altogether. This we did, spending a large amount of the 1970s travelling the country, photographing stations, level crossings, signal boxes, and goods sheds before these were demolished, rationalised, repurposed, or just gentrified. I now find it ironic to see some of these locations now, and reflect that where there are now housing estates or supermarkets, there was often once a thriving passenger station or goods yard which at one time would have been the centre of the community's business life. And Victorian station buildings could often be exquisite examples of the corporate architecture of the time. The railway was the high-tech industry of the day, and the railway's structures were designed to impress and project the image of the railway as a cutting-edge company — even if the

railway companies themselves were sometimes impecunious and teetering on the edge of bankruptcy in some cases!

After about ten years of this, we increasingly found that the sort of scene we were looking for, which might have survived unchanged in its essential details for a hundred years or so, was disappearing faster than we could capture it. Even if the stations were not being removed or rebuilt, they were either being renovated as opinion caught up with what we were doing — and so were no longer under threat, though the renovation often also removed a lot of the charm and original features that made the project so interesting in the first

place; or the buildings were changing hands and being adapted out of their original purpose, and also passing into private hands, making their photography a rather more contentious issue. And then came privatisation at the end of the 1980s, and suddenly what had been public assets became private property; and some companies seemed very possessive over the exposure of 'their' assets.

But this work had given me a large archive of material, and a few years ago I got my first mainstream publishing deal, to produce a book of my photographs from that era, with commentary and a bit of a memoir. *The Lost Railway; the Midlands* was intended as the first book in a series — I reckoned I had enough material for at least eight volumes — but my editor left the company mid-project and his replacement didn't really have the same level of commitment to the title. Sales were unspectacular, and the company declined to pick up the option on the later titles in the series.

At the same time as we were going around photographing stations, a preservation group settled on a railway fairly near to home to create a working museum. Derby grew into a major manufacturing city because of the railway workshops built there as early as 1840, making Derby perhaps the first 'railway town'. It grew into the headquarters of the Midland Railway, one of the pre-1923 companies that operated trains on a national basis, with services from the Midlands to London, the south and east coasts, to York and Manchester, and over the northern fells to Carlisle, from where associate companies would transport passengers on to Scotland. For a long time, the Midland had a large segment of the London domestic coal traffic, with long trains carrying coal in merchants' wagons to the hearths of the capital. The Midland had set a reputation for style and the quality of its coachbuilding, introduced Pullman cars to Britain, and was the first company to challenge the accepted arrangement of three classes of passenger accommodation. (Interestingly, they did this by abolishing *Second Class*



The No.8 Erecting Shop at Derby locomotive works, photographed during the annual open day, 1977. Locomotive building had been carried out on this site since 1840; it closed in 1990 and has since been replaced by a major retail park.

and making all its third class carriages up to Second Class standard. But without re-branding them.) The city council had for a long time marked that history with a rather fine model railway in the municipal museum and art gallery, but with heritage railways becoming bigger business, in the 1970s the city determined to do something about it. They instituted a museum project to set up a working railway that would commemorate the Midland Railway, and a group of enthusiasts were encouraged to come together to help make this happen.

By 1976 a site had been acquired, though it was very much a 'brown-field' site; a piece of line that connected two main lines had gone out of use, but had been retained to move outside loads from a local engineering works. Ted and I volunteered to go on site with some of the earliest working parties to start restoring what was left, and installing artefacts recovered from elsewhere. A big part of the job involved recovering track from a section of the line that was due to be completely abandoned when a new bypass was built that would sever the line; but my first job was repainting a couple of prefabricated steel huts that originally stood next to the signal boxes at two of the station locations. I visited recently and the huts are still there (and may not have been repainted since I slopped paint on them in 1976). At least one of them has had a signal box put next to it — in fact, a signal box from the northern fells that I photographed in its original location some 10 years before it was eventually moved to the site in the 1980s.

After about 18 months of this, we stopped



Former Southern Railway class N15 King Arthur class 4-6-0 Sir Lamiel adds to the early morning mist at Barrow Hill roundhouse, 2010.

going to working parties as I had important exams coming up; but at least I can point to something on a heritage railway and say, with perhaps a bit too much pride, 'I painted that.'

Quite a few years later, I stepped forward again when the enthusiast group — by now formally incorporated as the Midland Railway Trust — asked for volunteers to catalogue a lot of engineering drawings that the council had acquired and were to be lodged with the Trust. These were from the chief Civil Engineer's Department of the Midland Railway, and included a beautiful set of drawings from the late 1830s of bridges and structures that George Stephenson — who in his later life engineered the North Midland Railway from Derby towards Chesterfield and Sheffield — put up along the line. These were fine examples of the draughtsman's art. Another interesting thing that we found were other engineering drawings from about the same time where the draughtsman had used the old-fashioned 'long S' in the labelling of the drawing. Considered literary opinion had it that the long S died out in the late eighteenth century; yet here was an example of it being used possibly 50 years after that time! I could only speculate that these drawings might have been given to the senior draughtsman in the drawing office, and that he'd perhaps been taught as an apprentice by an old-timer who passed the long S on.

But as I said, from the 1980s, other interests arose. I went away to college, and discovered SF fandom, for one thing. And women. And music. And work. And the labour movement. And politics. And as I said above, the subjects of my photography were becoming fewer and further between. We had occasional trips to heritage railways, which were interesting; but these usually meant journeys of various lengths, and they involved an outlay of money to pay to ride on the trains, and then visit the bookshop afterward.

Then, in 1992, we went to see my sister, who had moved with her family to Cornwall. And whilst we were away, our house was burgled. This upset my father no end. He was not a weak man; he was no stranger to physicality and to disorder. But the break-in upset him so seriously that he never left that house overnight again, save for one night in hospital and one night away when his sister died. For the last eight years of his life, Ted stayed at home. But after two years of that, I was getting stir-crazy.

Then, one night on television, I saw a report on a holiday program about touring the Swiss Alps by train. Riding trains! Through mountains! And Swiss trains certainly looked more exotic than the



Vintage Austrian local train in 2003 — an engine from the 1920s and two coaches, one from the 1950s and another from the '60s.



The line-up at the Dampfloktfest in Selzthal, Austria, 2003.



Neustadt station in the Pfalz region of Germany during the 2005 Plandampf.



Platform conversation at Wolsztyn, Poland, 2011. This photograph won first prize in the colour section in the US Center for Railroad Photography and Art's 2012 Creative Photography Award program.

somewhat tired appearance of British railways. I was enthused. Part of my growing up was watching films set in Europe — James Bond driving his Aston Martin DB5 over the Furka Pass and battling super-villains in mountain-top headquarters, or more adventurous family members recounting tales of continental trips when mass tourism began to take off. But my object was not so much Switzerland, but Austria. One of the Welsh narrow-gauge railways had acquired some coaches, and later a locomotive, from Austria; and one of my mother's favourite films was *The Sound of Music* (even though I later found that its interpretation of inter-war Austrian politics, let alone the actions of the von Trapp family, were somewhat fanciful). So I began to think in terms of making an independent trip to Austria, and in 1994 I went.

I was captivated. I landed in Austria and immediately felt at home. The country was full of blokes who looked like me, and the railways were like the railways I remembered from my early years — plenty of diverse services to destinations large and small, branch lines, freight trains — but with a particular twist, such as the Austrians having the firm belief that anything can be coupled to anything else, resulting in some rather odd-looking train formations; or the survival of a number of pre-war electric locomotives, all with odd outlines and sprouting a profusion of bonnets, ventilation grilles, connecting rods and insulators, as ugly as a box of frogs but possessing a remarkable amount of character. And cities like Vienna, Graz, Linz, and Innsbruck still had trams

and trolleybuses; Vienna's tram network is the second largest in Europe, second only to St Petersburg. I spent ten days travelling the country from (almost) one end to the other, and I think I experienced some sort of epiphany at one point, finding myself almost overcome with an inexplicable emotion on first seeing a particular valley in the south of the country from the train. At the end of my trip, I made the decision, while I was still waiting for the train back to the airport, to come back as soon as I could.

I was conscious that I'd flown over a lot of territory between the UK and Austria, and determined to try to see more of it at closer hand. On my next Austrian trip two years later, I travelled overland, which took two days going out but which could (with a disgustingly early start) be reduced to one day coming back. (Improvements in the European rail network in the years since have meant that it is possible to travel by rail from London to Berlin and onwards into Poland in a day.) Over the following years, I travelled to Austria as much as I could, with additional trips to Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, mainly to coincide with railway events such as the 150th anniversary of Swiss railways in 1997, an international railway festival in Austria in 2003, and a 'Plandampf' in Germany in 2005 (a special weekend where the railway authorities allow the owners of preserved engines to bring them out onto the main line system and to actually run the advertised timetable with those engines).

This period also coincided with a time where I



Barrow Hill roundhouse, Derbyshire, UK.



Photographers at Barrow Hill. 'Amateurs worry about equipment; professionals worry about money; but Masters worry about light.' These two photographs were exhibited simultaneously during 2010 in exhibitions on different continents; the first in an exhibition at the Californian Railway Museum in San Diego, the second in a show at the Powerhouse Museum in Melbourne.

was discovering new directions in my photography. In part, this may have been because of a change in my health. I had been diagnosed with high blood pressure in the mid 1990s, and put on beta-blockers. I took them for about nine years, all told, but by the end of this period I was finding that (among other side effects), I was beginning to find my capacity for doing serious cognitive work was being impaired. But — perhaps in compensation — my ability to think and (more importantly for a photographer) see creatively seemed

to increase over the same period. I came off the beta-blockers in around 2001, and although my capacity for cognitive work picked up again, my creativity did not decline. In 2010, I decided that my job in the UK Civil Service had nothing left to offer me, and I engineered an exit, intending to work as a professional photographer and journalist. That lasted for about three years, because the work was not a financial success. Artistically, though, the story was very different. I won a couple of photographic awards and had photographs exhibited simultaneously in both Australia and the USA. Another group of photographs were exhibited in a highly prestigious international art photography exhibition in the UK; and I had a book of my historical photographs from the 1970s, *The Lost Railway: The Midlands*, published professionally. (The shared experiences of SF authors, editors, and agents describing their publishing horror stories came in quite useful there!) I also had some magazine articles published. None of this made me any money, you understand; the most money I ever made from photography came from a recurring gig as the photographer for an online estate agent, until they began cutting back on the expenses and changed the rules three times in as many months.

Eventually, I had to give up the dream and try to get back to paying full-time employment — not an easy task when you are the wrong side of 50 years of age. But just because I gave up on the ambition of becoming an acclaimed and profitable writer and photographer doesn't mean that I don't have any projects in hand. But those projects are either



Polish State Railways Pt74-65 has just brought an evening train from Poznan into Wolsztyn, February 2011.



Polish State Railways Tkt48-18 2-8-2T at a special evening steaming at the Roundhouse Museum at Jaworzna Slaska, February 2011.

highly speculative or are being done for the love of the thing and are not expected to make me any money at all.

As I became more and more interested in the railways of Austria, I joined a society called the Austrian Railway Group (ARG). Although based in the UK, the ARG has members world wide. Its main function is to promote an interest in, and study of, Austrian railways; and when a few members expressed a wish to have a list of books in English on Austrian railways, as a former librarian my immediate reaction was to start compiling a bibliography. The ARG was the natural choice to publish this in its range of books, and although the resultant work, listing nearly 1000 books on Austrian railways, hasn't been a best-seller in the UK, it has sold moderately well in a trade outlet to which we have access in Vienna itself. It is, after all, the first such bibliography for 100 years, so I consider that I have at least added something to the sum total of human knowledge (or, if you like, human metadata).

The ARG is a full-blown fan group; our *Journal* has a lot in common with a fanzine, in that it relies on contributions from its readers. And food and drink play a fairly key role in the times when members gather. We have even started to emulate fans by holding a convention — well, an exhibition at the same time and venue as our AGM, with members' model railway layouts, sales stands, and even the option to stay overnight in our hotel venue if the evening 'banquet' is a bit too bibulous!

In due course, I allowed myself to be ever so politely persuaded to become Secretary, advising on procedural matters where necessary and keeping the records of the Group up to date. And we attend other exhibitions and shows with our sales stand. Last year, one of our members in Vienna secured us an invitation to attend the big model railway exhibition there, which was quite an experience. It's rather like attending a convention as a trader, though in this case we had the added complication of transporting not only ourselves but our stock and display stand from the UK to Austria.

Our status as British fans of Austrian railways rather bemused many Austrians; after all, there is no equivalent body in Austria for enthusiasts of British railways. I explained this by telling people, in my best German, that in Britain, an interest in Austrian railways is Different; and some of us actively look for things that are Different. Although British enthusiasts can be quite tribal, there are actually a number of societies for many of the European railway systems. One of my colleagues pointed out that people do not choose which football team to follow based only on their allegiance of birth or residence; why should railways be any different?

The community of overseas railway enthusiasts in the UK is quite small, a fandom within a fandom; and within that group, I have become fairly well-known, both to other societies and to the limited number of professionals — magazine editors and book publishers — working in the field. And that's something that I might find useful in the future.

My professionally published book *The Lost Railway: The Midlands* was not a stunning success. Partly, that was because the commissioning editor exited the company halfway through the production process; his successor didn't have the same degree of commitment to the project, and the promotion of the book left a lot to be desired. The book never made its advance back (and that advance was hardly immense) and my publisher has declined to pick up further books in the series. I'm still thinking of looking for another publisher to pick it up, though I would have to buy the original title back from the publisher if I wanted to include a reprint or second edition of the first book in the new proposal. But other projects are possible.



One such is a book which I think of as *Return to the End of the Line*. And that title isn't just a suitably railway-themed random choice. For a while now, I've been an admirer of a book from the 1950s called *The End of the Line*, written by an author called Bryan Morgan. It was a personal travelogue of minor railways of Western Europe, just at the point where many of them, particularly in France, began their decline as the continent recovered from war and began to find prosperity again. Morgan was an enthusiast, but he didn't revel in technical detail; rather, he would talk about the countryside, the passengers, the decor of the coach interiors and, as one reviewer said, 'the shape of the conductor's moustache'. He was also an accomplished writer, with a few, now mainly forgotten, novels to his credit as well as a number of books on railways and engineering. *The End of the Line* is a charming book, if a little redolent of days long past. About half the book is taken up with France; it then continues to deal with Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Benelux countries, and Italy.

But it's not just about nostalgia. When I read Morgan's book, I realised that, although the lines he described in France were almost all gone, many of those in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria survived in some form or another, and I had visited quite a few of them. Moreover, Morgan had been unable to access the railways of eastern Europe, and the best he could manage was making some allusions to rumours of wonderful

things just across the internal German border in the Harz. What I'd seen in the former East Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland had a lot of the flavour of the sort of railways Morgan was seeing in the West in the 1950s. With that material, plus what I had on some of the lines he'd seen, I could probably make a reasonable story about 'The End of the Line — sixty years on'; and if I could raise some money, I might even be able to get around a few more of the survivors and make quite a production of it. But persuading a publisher of the viability of the project might be a bit harder — some specialist publishers I spoke to, even those who shared my enthusiasm for the original, could see little mileage in a sequel to a sixty-year-old book that very few people today would have heard of.

But part of the delight of any interest is the discovery of new facets to that interest, no matter what it is, and uncovering stories that we never suspected existed. Whether we are talking about re-discovering writers from the past, or new voices in our preferred genre, or experiencing railway journeys in odd corners of the world or finding exotic pieces of machinery in places where we least expect them, it is that act of discovery that delights and inspires us to carry on looking. And that is the allure of whatever it is that interests us. Ultimately, for me that's what makes life worth living.

— **Robert Day**, May 2016

Letters of comment

Feature letter:
My life, and Sparky's

CASEY WOLF
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I just watched an interesting movie from Argentina called *XXY* (2007), about a teen who is intersex and all the attendant conflicts in the people around her. Not exactly a laugh a minute but I liked it. (More painful than I prefer.) Went to enter it in IMDB and discovered they've changed the login process and I can't access my account. My oldest internet account! Wah!!! All those movies, jotted down here and only here. Oh, bloody sigh. I've contacted them and await their mercy.

Next film up is *Australia* with Nicole Kidman and, um ... Hugh Jackman (had to read the cover). Hoping it isn't dorky. Nicole Kidman can roll either way. I confess I watched her, in desperation and purely for lack of anything else to hand, in the *Bewitched* movie and grudgingly have to admit I did laugh. So I'm not very pure, it's clear. I'm all caught up on *Downton Abbeys* and *Big Bang Theorists* and await further revelation. Still waiting on *Sherlock* and *Doctor Who*. Loved what you said about cliffhangers. *Puhleeze!* Those are really all the TV shows I've watched this year, as I only see what Howard saves on his PVR for me, or the odd thing I catch on someone's flash drive.

Am just finishing Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Really enjoying it. I am so glad I saved these books for this time in my life. What a treat, and so much still to look forward to.

Since next year's VCon is themed 'Time Travel', and Joe Haldeman is the GoH, I picked up something of his from the library. (Have never read a word by him, as I recollect.) It's an audiobook called *The Accidental Time Machine*, read by Kevin R. Free. (Pretty sure that ought to be Kevin IS Free, but whaddoeyeno?) Also awaiting from the library *Lagoon* by Nnedi Okorafor, a Nigerian American SF writer. She was a guest on a BBC podcast I like, 'The Forum', and talked about her alien invasion novel — *Lagoon*, not surprisingly — where Lagos is invaded. The aliens apparently have a rather different approach than in the usual alien invasion scenarios.

I have also just acquired a Barbara Pym book, *A Glass of Blessings*. I'm pretty excited; haven't read a Pym in many years. So, much to keep me busy on the literary front.

Speaking of the literary front, I am immersed



Sparky. (Photo: Casey Wolf.)

in (besides heavy editing of poems I wrote Just Before The Diagnosis) an edX course called *The Art of Poetry*, taught by Robert Pinsky. Wow, what a lot of work! But I am enjoying it very much. It's a reading, not a writing, course, and it is great fun and quite a challenge to think so much and so hard about poetry. Getting to read a lot of stuff I hadn't been exposed to and then haul in stuff I like and expound on it. Very fun work.

Sparky is doing astonishingly well. Playful, happy, very cuddly, adapting catfully to the harnesses and leash. I can't get him off the Cerenia (and of course he is a lifer on the Prednisone, too), and can't leave him for more than four hours tops without consequences (having to coax him back onto food, which he doesn't indulge in when left alone, and *must* have or else), but as long as I keep to that regime he is for the moment as perky as a fellow half, nay, a quarter his age. (Which is 16.)
(24 October 2014)

I'm not actually finished *Treasure* 3. But I just put down William Breiding's piece and am in a thoughtful mood, and since I'm relaxing between Busy Seasons, there's no time like the present to write.

I don't have a lot of individual comments to make on 'Beyond the Mask', but I found it a compelling read, unusually intimate, and yet told in an almost detached, conversational tone. Bill's story reminded me of my own difficult early years, and it was interesting to see his struggles spelled out so plainly and compare them against my own. I'm impressed with his openness. Thanks for

publishing this thoughtful piece, Bruce.

Back to *Treasure 2*: I was delighted to receive these two treasures in my mailbox, and dipped in right away. I enjoyed your lists, making mental notes I immediately lost in the round file. But I did take a peek on YouTube at trailers for *Mon Oncle*—it looks delightful. I'll keep my eyes peeled for it.

I very much enjoyed your con report on Continuum. I wish I could get to more cons — they can be a lot of fun, and it sounds like this one was exceptionally good. There is that dizzying rush as you try to catch up with everyone and get to everything that interests you — I gave up entirely this year at VCon as I had my sister's two youngest, as well as their papa and another young friend, and between my commitments to the con and accompanying them to this and that I got to no panels, had few chances to chat with old friends, and no time to look carefully through the vendors' room. (I did get to whirl through the art show, which gets better all the time).

I'm not complaining, though, as it's really fun to hang out with kids who are thrilled with being at a con. If we could afford to stay at the hotel, those conversations would happen more easily, at room parties and such.

Because VCon this year (No. 39) was also the Canadian national convention — Canvention 34 — there was a rare Bill Gibson sighting. He used to come to all the cons, as a fan before coming as a guest, but for many years he hasn't been attending. However this year he was inducted into the (apparently fairly newly established) Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association Hall of Fame, along with Spider and Jeannie Robinson. They join A. E. Van Vogt, Robert Sawyer, and Susan Wood. If I had a vote, I would suggest Eileen Kernaghan and Phyllis Gottlieb, as two of the longest-contributing speculative fiction writers in Canada, not to mention some fine writing, especially by Eileen, and the assistance they have given countless neophytes over the decades. Hmm. I wonder if I do have a vote? I'll look into this.

When I read of your friends' (and see your) large SF collections I recall wistfully the days when I, too, kept all the books I loved. But living in one room I must pass on most of the books I read, keeping only reference books, books with Sentimental Attachment, and books I'm likely to read again. I still have more books than I can conveniently store.

I love the title of Kirstyn McDermott's collection, *Caution: Contains Small Parts*. Very nice. Congratulations on *SF Commentary*'s Cronos win.

As always I enjoyed the letters. I just have a few short responses.

I wonder why Robert Elordieta figures that the mail-shredder is a teenage kid? My paranoid imaginings would have gone in another direction:

disgruntled neighbour. Plenty of adults put their hostility into the world in surreptitious ways, out of fear of getting caught. A few years ago my sister in Melbourne was having difficulty with a neighbour. In the midst of it her cat was poisoned in his run, which was adjacent to that neighbour's yard. Horrifying, impossible to prove, and no kids involved.

I was surprised by Ned Brooks's coffee remedy for cats with kidney failure. I can't imagine it would have helped for long; perhaps as an appetite stimulant it would help keep the cat going a while. For kidney failure my vet says phosphorous binders may be helpful, as in kidney failure there is too much phosphorous produced. Some vets still recommend low-protein diets for kidney cats, but the thinking is moving away from that. Cats tend to dislike low-protein diets, and the extra carbohydrates tax them in other ways. In general she recommends keeping cats on a diet they like, keeping them hydrated (later this may mean subcutaneous fluids), and comfortable.

I hope you noticed in the photo of me standing in front of the Australian coat of arms that there is a halo hovering above my head, and a star above it. I don't know if Carole did that on purpose, but I think it brings out my Heavenly Queen aspect quite nicely.

Stephen Campbell asks, 'Why did Philip Dick write an exegesis that seemed to consume his sanity?' I'm no expert on Philip Dick, but I can't believe that his writing cost him his sanity. Writing is an extension of our selves, not a thing that uses us (IMHO), and we may express our loss of control or hope through our writing, and we can certainly use it to get ourselves into a worse lather, but it isn't the cause, simply a misused tool.

Lloyd Penney writes about picnicking in High Park, Toronto. Sigh. I lived two short, full years in that city in my early twenties, washing dishes in a gay diner (The Empire Diner, if you ever heard of it, Lloyd) and making sandwiches at the Members' Lounge of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Most of my friends were gay, artists, actors, fun-loving people who I had some great times with. (And most of them, including my best friend, Henry, are long since dead of AIDS.) I attended my first cons there, meeting Samuel Delany, Judy Merrill, Phyllis Gottlieb, and numerous other stars in the night sky; I drifted happily around the Spaced Out Library (now named The Merrill Collection); I took an SF writing course from Terence Green — a teensy class with me and I think three guys, two of whom I hung out with for the rest of my time in Toronto; I lived in an artist's loft with two friends, in ancient rooming houses around Kensington Market and Chinatown; I ate at the Mars Café and Fran's Restaurant, hung out at the Royal Ontario Museum, ate kasha and kugel and lox for the first time, walked for miles with Henry and ChooChoo in the dead of night and fell in love with the Henry Moores, High Park, and Allan

Gardens ... obviously I still have deep nostalgia for those people, those places, those days.

And greetings to you, too, Lloyd! I bet we do have some folk in common in there. Next time you're in town, if ever, give me a hey ho.

Notes on Polly and Sparky — I was sorry when Polly was no longer able to carry comfortably on. I'm glad that Cerenia got her a brief respite. Sparky now has to be on a daily dose, no more tapering off, and even then he is not a great eater these days. I know he will not be around a whole lot longer and he is the last of my cats. The place will be awfully empty without him. But at the moment, I'm enjoying his company very much.

Your lack of an e-book reader is unfortunate in only one way. There are increasingly books that are only available in that format because of the expense of paper copies. I understand your reluctance, though. I always have paper books around and I just like reading them more than reading e-books. On the other hand, when I travelled to your fair land I wanted to take carry-on only; to accomplish that I bought a secondhand iPad, which I used for email, skype, notepad, and library. I read *Great Expectations* on it, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Colin Cotterell's first Laotian mystery, and I forget what all else. It was fun to withdraw books from a Vancouver library while sitting in Preston West. So it can have its place, the e-book, even for old-fashioned readers like me.

(12 December 2014)

An upper-date on Sparky. He is fine. I will start there.

He fell four stories off a balcony on Sunday, and landed in a juniper bush. I died a thousand deaths as I searched the yard for him. I was on my way out for the third search of the yard (about 15 minutes had passed) and he was sitting by the door waiting to come in. I picked him up, he purred, we went inside, he ate (always a miracle), and then he actually allowed me to tip him into a sitting position so I could snip all the juniper off his belly and legs. No breaks, bruises, cuts — nothing. Except there was no way he was going near the balcony again. (We agreed on that.)

I live on the ground floor and he is used to walking on my railing, but something happened and he went flying while we were upstairs with Albert, his friend and my cat-sitting charge. I swear this cat has had more narrow escapes. Did I ever mention the three winter days he was trapped in a catchment area on the rapid transit train track? The only way I could hear him was when we finally went down onto the tracks themselves (illegal) at the bottom of the narrow railway cut our yard abuts on. Then figuring out how to rescue him. That was 12 years ago. I must say I am happy he is only out on a leash now. Well, normally ...

John Litchen's remarks about Norman Mailer's and Gore Vidal's World War II books: there was an earlier one — *The Eighth Champion*

of Christendom trilogy by Edith Pargeter. I read the first one (not realising there were others) at the end of 1999, and have it out to read again. Excellent book. It came out in 1945. She wrote an earlier one as well, a 'lightly fictionalised' diary of her war services as a Wren, which came out in 1942: *She Goes to War*. I lent my copy of *Eighth Champion* to someone and never got it back, and for years kept asking people about it, even librarians, even the CBC show that claimed to track down lost titles, but no one knew what it was. I had misremembered it as Daphne du Maurier's *The Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse*. Which is a great title but she didn't write anything of the sort, and no one thought of Pargeter. I do recommend you (or John) get hold of a copy.

(19 December 2014)

I am deeply saddened to tell you that I had to have Sparky euthanised on Saturday. He was incredibly loving and loveable (and demanding) until the end. I was able to get a vet to come to the house (though it took longer to find him than my nerves enjoyed — a day and a half) to spare Sparky the trip out, as he was feeling very inward and hidey and yowled if I tried to remove him, say for fluids. The last night and day I kept him in his carrier with a heating pad over it, on low, and a blanket over that, just the front unobstructed so he could peer out at me all night long. He wasn't in pain, but merciless fleas, taking advantage of his weak state, and the discomfort of occasional bouts of gas were raising his stress level, and though more intervention could have possibly bought him some days, or perhaps weeks, I decided the risk was too high that it would not, and his distress was mounting quickly. I couldn't bear to leave it to the point where he was really distraught.

Thanks to his regular vet (actually, the technician), we had a good supply of buprenorphine on hand so I was able to keep him comfortable while I worked to arrange a good exit for him. Every time I unzipped the carrier to caress him he purred gently. When he needed to pee he gave a big shout and I was able to assist by swinging into the washroom, carrier and all, and releasing him. His work done, he wriggled back in and curled up happily. Dr Callend was able to sedate him completely while he was still in his carrier and with me petting him, so he purred his way to oblivion and we then removed him from the case for the final farewell.

Sparky was my last and perhaps my sweetest cat. Always gentle with me, no matter what fresh indignity I offered, demanding and certain of his rights but cheerful as the sun, he was, though a nervous cat, a great tutor in finding the best of each moment. Even in the midst of having blood taken he would pause in his struggles to rub his cheek against my chin, then go back to attempting to escape.

He had been the unadoptable kitten, returned by his first family after one week. He wouldn't

make eye contact, was *not* interested in people but only in his brother, Fluffy (whom I also adopted, and who died seven years ago). It took determined effort on my part to teach him to look at me. Nor did he like to purr. It tickled inside his ears. There was a great deal of head shaking in those early days.

When he disappeared in the snow for three days at four years old (we found him trapped in a place where his voice couldn't be heard), I discovered the silence that descended on the room, despite there being two other cats. Though never the dominant cat (that was left to his disabled brother — a fellow with an extremely rare muscle disease that made him look like he had been poured onto the bed, but who would beat the crap out of any cat that hassled Sparky), Sparky early earned the title Social Director, and until the august age of 17 he organised my days and filled them with purpose and cheer. It was a long process to give in to the idea that there were other agendas equal to and often more relevant than my own. I am very grateful to have finally understood

that truth.

I have learned more about loving — and simply *being* — through living with and caring for him than I ever managed on my own, and I am now extremely bereft. I am still going for our quiet walks in the back yard. It is amazing how much Sparky-care proved to be Casey-care, as well. I hope I will not slip back into my distracted ways, but will keep up those peaceful moments in the cold air and birdsong, and under the evening moon.

(28 November 2015)

[*brg* This such a wonderful series of letters that I don't know how to reply. I thought it best to tell your own story rather than interrupt. Elaine and I are still very grateful that a pharmaceutical tip from you helped keep our cat Polly, who died in 2014 aged nearly 20, alive about a year longer than expected. We are very glad that you managed to meet Polly when you visited Australia, and sorry that we could never meet your Sparky. We both know how much of a hole they leave in our lives.*]

PATRICK MCGUIRE
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Here is my real loc on *Treasure* 1. My point of greatest overlap with your interests resides in SF. Since *Treasure* is a mostly non-SF zine, my comments will be a little thin.

I find it a little curious that you, as someone who rarely gets even out of state (as we say in the US; I gather the Australian is 'goes interstate'), have found so many travellers to exotic places to write pieces for you. But perhaps it's all of a piece — vicarious experience and all that.

It doesn't seem that many years ago that I saw a bio-documentary about Richard Feynman on Nova (the premier US public-television science show — its contents sometimes get repackaged under other titles in places like Oz and the UK, and Nova similarly repackages their stuff). One longish segment described Feynman's efforts in the Soviet era to get himself invited to Tuva. The place was not ordinarily open to tourists then. Feynman figured that, with his reputation, he could have offered to do a physics lecture in the USSR on condition of in return receiving a tour of Tuva, but he considered that to be too easy. Instead, he became a booster of Tuvan culture on the world scene and eventually was indeed rewarded with a tour. In post-Soviet times, I learn from Dora Levakis, there is at least one American permanently living in Tuva and married to a Tuvan, and numbers of Western tourists tramping through. Quite a change!

'Moosh' (p. 10) is actually Russian *muzh*, but the *zh* (representing the sound of the *s* in pleasure) is devoiced to *sh* in final position. It means 'husband', not 'boyfriend'. At least in Russia

proper, *kvas* is made from rye, not wheat (p. 11). I think it now may be obtainable in the US, since we have so many emigrés from the USSR or, later, from the Russian Federation and other former Soviet republics, but I have never remembered to look on those rare occasions when I am in an emigré-heavy suburb or big-city neighbourhood (there are several such in Baltiwash and in many other metro areas, although of course the real concentration of emigrés is in New York City).

Dora seems surprised at the negative reaction she got to her statement, 'I've come to Tuva, not Russia' (p. 13). Does she think it would have gone over better if she had said in Montreal, 'I've come to Quebec, not Canada'?

Do Indians really call the vehicle a 'tuk tuk'? (Jennifer Bryce, p. 18)? I could tell from context that it was a vehicle, but not much more. The only place I found the word was in a British dictionary, which says it is a three-wheeled taxi in Thailand. Is this a word common in Oz because of so many Australian vacationers in Thailand?

John Litchen's serialised memoir continues to be of interest in almost an uncanny-valley sense. As you probably know, that term is used of a robot who appears almost human, but is not quite close enough to remove a sense of unease. Similarly, in his enthusiasm for SF, John seems a lot like your average fan, but he's simultaneously a jock (a somewhat disparaging US term for an athlete, used largely by student cliques who lack either the will or the ability for athletic prowess themselves), what with all that skin diving, and even an extroverted night-club musician. A puzzling and disquieting combination, to us more nerdy types.

The idea that Verne's *Nautilus* is powered by anything approximating atomic energy (p. 38) is

an urban myth that I remember from my childhood. Verne has Nemo explain something really vague, such as that it is powered by minerals extracted from the sea. Aha! The *SF Encyclopedia* says the 1954 Disney film made it nuclear powered; that is likely the source of the myth, although I only learned that just now when I looked the film up. I imagine they were playing off the US Navy's *Nautilus*, which if memory serves was commissioned also in 1954.

Tim Marion rates the Jeremy Brett Holmes series as 'quite excellent'. (In YankSpeak, 'quite' means 'very' or 'completely', not 'somewhat', as in BritSpeak or, I believe, OzSpeak.) I can't fully agree. The eighties were a time when the British 'creative' strata were full of self-hate and doom, in reaction to the fact that Margaret Thatcher was saving the country by cutting off their socialist feeding trough. This gloom and negativity bled through into the screen versions of many Arthur Conan Doyle stories that were decidedly upbeat in Doyle's versions. In the earlier episodes, I think my predominant response was to the historical accuracy and excellent production values, the good acting and the plausible characterisation. But the negativity got heavier and heavier as the series went on, to the point where it overwhelmed the good points.

[*brg* Thanks to Dick Jansen, I saw the whole Jeremy Brett *Sherlock Holmes* series a year or so ago, and I don't remember any change in tone throughout the series. Every episode seemed to stay remarkably close to the Doyle originals. I have been told that Brett himself was quite ill toward the end. :: The early eighties is usually considered the greatest period of British television, when the BBC and Thames were throwing money at programs like *Brideshead Revisited* in the effort to compete with each other.*]

Tim also discourses on time travel (p. 50). He might have done well to read more widely before making sweeping criticisms. Heinlein's *The Door into Summer* (1957), a relatively early and classic time travel story, specifically addresses the question of the movement of the Earth in space. I would be surprised if it was the first to do so. After a while, the operation of time machines becomes an SFnal convention not requiring an explanation every time, just as FTL does not. Of course, after a point, time travel and FTL both begin to look too easy as handled in SF, and there is traction in stories that treat them more realistically and admit that they pose major problems even after fictional refined laws of physics are posited to permit them at all.

I certainly agree with Steve Sneyd (p. 51) about the existence of a 'year-bottom energy slump'. For me it usually starts even before Christmas, when I am supposed to be writing holiday notes, and it gets reinforced by all the tax-related stuff I have to do before year's end, since I have procrastinated on it earlier. As we enter the new year, I feel

wiped out, and am swamped in backlogged in daily chores; in many years, I go down with the winter flu to boot. Thus it is that some people theoretically on my holiday list still haven't heard from me in May.

Elaine Cochrane read Kuttner's *Robots Have No Tales* in 2011 (p. 55). I remain fascinated by the evolution of beer containers posited in one of the stories therein. At the time it was written, in the 1940s, a coating for the inside of cans had just been developed that would permit beer to be canned without picking up the taste of metal. By story time, beer cans had become dominant but then have declined, being replaced by 'plastibulbs', although one European brand is still using cans — which still require a tool to punch an opening in the top, an essential element of the plot. This of course is not literally how things worked out. Beer cans are still around as a specialty, perhaps most used on picnics and the like where glass might break or add inconvenient weight, but they have pop-tops not requiring an opener. Most beer still comes in glass bottles, but they are now mostly disposable (even if a deposit is required, they are mostly recycled rather than being refilled) and have twist-off caps. Plastic bottles (which could have been called plastibulbs, although they are not) have seen wide use for carbonated soft drinks, but not for beer — I am unsure if this is for technical reasons, or is just an issue of market acceptance. Nonetheless, Kuttner got the spirit of things to come right — here in *The Future*, imported European beer bottles require bottle openers, as (at least in the US) do craft beers, but the major brands have moved to twist-off caps.

Jenny Bryce has not read *Nicholas Nickleby* (p. 57). Neither have I, although I have tried. PBS here some years ago showed the stage production made from it, and that got me interested enough to buy the book, but I found it unreadable. The Dickens works I have enjoyed are his uncharacteristic ones — 'A Christmas Carol' and *A Tale of Two Cities* (I voluntarily read the latter, first in the 1960s, in the copy my mother had been required to read in high school in the late 1920s). I myself had to read *Great Expectations* in high school, which I think I did with mild liking, and I believe I may have voluntarily reread it since then. But in general Dickens comes across to me as filled with characters who are too cartoonish.

I'm somewhat puzzled by your (Bruce's) remarks about the Astor (p. 59). Is the theatre running non-classic films on Saturdays and holidays, and for that matter earlier on weekdays? If the theatre is sitting idle at these times, their choice of scheduling for classic films seems odd. I also wonder if the admission charge (at least in the US, often low for classic films) is so high as to make it impractical to leave after the first film of a double feature, when I would think public transport might still be running. Not that I myself would find any compulsion to see films in a

theatre more often than once a week anyhow. (I actually go only a few times a year, and some of those because my fellow loccer Martin Wooster sometimes organises SF film-viewing expeditions, where the company is as important as the film.) In any case, your desire, in the age of DVDs, to see films in-theatre must be the effect of Audience Appeal, presciently covered in another Kuttner story in *Robots Have No Tails*.

(6 June 2013)

[*brg* The Astor in Prahran (about 8 km south of Melbourne CBD) has a single, huge screen, and both upstairs and balcony seating. It shows two features a night, beginning at 7.30 p.m. With interval added, many of their double features finish at midnight or after. That makes it impossible for me to catch any kind of public transport home to Greensborough (17 km on the other side of town) during the week. However, Melbourne has finally acquired 24-hour public transport on Friday and Saturday nights, so I keep promising myself to return to the Astor on those nights. Also, it runs matinees on either Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and occasionally I make it to those.*]

You told me a while back you were going to write to the *New York Review of Science Fiction (NYRSF)* about re-arranging a trade. I hope that was successful. The editors recently published a short article of mine on a couple of translations of Japanese SF/F author Housuke Nojiri, but currently have nothing of mine in inventory except a loc that they may or may not print. An article in progress on the Strugatsky brothers and their SF (as opposed to their fantasy) that I have been writing for NYRSF is taking far longer to finish than I had anticipated, because I keep expanding its scope. Even at the length it's gotten to, not yet finished, it would almost certainly have to be serialised over two issues. Fortunately, it should break fairly gracefully at several points. I think I should have a draft finished in the foreseeable future, but I've still got to get through normal discussions of five more works, plus some passing comments on a few others, plus some interesting biographical tidbits that I have come across in Russian sources.

I find myself still sending out copies of a what-I-did-in-2012 letter that was intended to go with, or to replace, Christmas cards, since I sort of stalled out on the effort partway through the list. It was mostly for relatives and non-fannish friends, but I will attach a copy for you (not for publication), in case you find anything in it of interest. And at this point, I had better see if I can get some progress made on my Strugatsky essay before I have to go out and scrounge up groceries.

In *Treasure 2*, you mention *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*. This is currently showing on local public television. I think we're only up to Series 1. I mentioned in an earlier loc that the DC sub-

channel WETA-UK, devoted to British programming, had seemingly decided that Australia was part of the United Kingdom, and was showing *Miss Fisher*. Having set the precedent, they have gone on to add *Doctor Blake* and *Mr and Mrs Murder*. So far I find that *Blake* has its moments, although I think I have missed some episodes, and unfortunately the public library has not acquired the DVDs. I am also getting tired of the fact that every episode seems to be devoted to exposing the seamy underside of society. This may have been a staple of the noir detective genre, but *Blake* is not really noir, and the conceit gets old fast. For its part, *M&MM* was entertaining for the first episode or two, but by then I had had enough fluff, and it started losing its appeal.

[*brg* We Australians like to think of ourselves as anti-authoritarian, hence the assumption that in carrying out his duties Doctor Blake the honest police surgeon will inevitably find himself afflicted by official corruption of some kind or another. Besides, this gives an extra dimension to the drama; it no longer seems to be enough to solve crimes any more in police procedural crime dramas. Doctor Blake also has to be given a rich and complex emotional life. The formula is still working; Doctor Blake goes back for a fifth season in 2017. I enjoyed 2016's episodes very much.*]

You also alerted me to the Broderick/Ikin reprints from Van Ikin's *Science Fiction*. These are available cheap in e-book form, and I have started working through them, but have not gotten very far to date.

I don't have much to say about the Edmonds-Gillespie discussion about music, although I have written about the decline of local classical music stations in past locs to you. One thing I have recently noticed is that Pleyel has suddenly become fashionable (unless he has been there all along and for some reason I have only recently noticed him). His *Wikipedia* biography says that he was famous in his lifetime but is 'currently obscure'. From the air time he gets on the local radio, I suspect his reputation is reviving again. I would supplement what I hear on the radio with cheap or used CDs if I came across them, but so far they have not shown up locally. It seems I could get some new ones from Amazon for about eight dollars each (not especially cheap for budget CDs) if I got together enough of an Amazon order to earn free shipping. Perhaps I will try that if I have occasion to order something else from there.

Of Robyn Whiteley's extensive travel account, I think the only thing I want to comment on is her remark that she was sorry she had only allotted one day for Bath (England). I was there quite a number of years ago, travelling on my own after either an SF con or a work-related meeting. I had allowed two days. I did manage to switch my itinerary around enough to spend the better part of three days there, which seemed to me to be

more or less enough time to exhaust the sights, except that I think the Assembly Rooms (which figure heavily in many novels) were closed. I also bought several books concerning Bath in its heyday and in the Roman period, and I read those with pleasure after I had gotten home again.

In *Treasure 3*, you mention your childhood home of Oakleigh. At the time that I knew her (the 1950s and early 1960s), my grandmother lived in the area of Cincinnati called Oakley, doubtless pronounced the same. We visited yearly. It was a reasonably thriving working-class area at the time, but after her death it went downhill because of factory closures. It seems to have since recovered, since the *Wikipedia* calls it a 'young professional neighborhood'.

John Litchen calls *A Case of Conscience* 'a powerful novel'. I can't remember whether I have delivered my rant on it to you, Bruce, or if it was to other fanzines. If I haven't already said so, here goes: I recall being bowled over by it as a teenager, but when I reread it later after I had done some reading of Catholic theology, it became clear that Blish had done massive arm-waving in the way of postulated future developments in Catholic doctrine in order to set up the book's problem. Once I could see how much of the book was Blish's arm-waves, and how relatively little was genuine extrapolation of Catholic doctrine, it lost much of its force. Litchen also wonders whether *A Canticle for Leibowitz* was taken less seriously because it was looked upon as genre SF. It came out when I was too young to pay attention to such things, but the *Wikipedia* article on it indicates that it did get (mixed) reviews in major media and the article indicates that it had a degree of commercial success that I do not think could have been supported by the SF community alone.

I will loc *SFC 88* separately, but I will here offer condolences on the death of your cat Polly. I'm not a cat person, but I nonetheless can understand something of the pain upon the death of a beloved pet.

(2 April 2015)

YVONNE ROUSSEAU
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In *Treasure 2*, I was particularly interested by your discussion with Leigh Edmonds about the changes in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's music programs on Classic FM. I entirely share your discontent that the overnight program 'Music to Keep the Days Apart' has now been replaced with 'unannounced musical pieces'. Some listeners have complained in the past of too much talk and not enough music, but this response goes too far.

[*brg* You might have seen the horrifying item in the *Age* a few months ago, picked up from investigations by a *Limelight* columnist, that the people who

control ABC radio plan to change Classic FM to an all-muzak format. This has been the most depressing news of the year, on a par with the prospect of a Donald Trump presidency. Such a move would make the ABC worthless, and not worth defending against its many enemies. After all, almost nothing on ABC TV is worth watching any more, very little on Radio RN, and not much more on ABC Local Radio.*]

On the other hand, I was pleased to read Lloyd Penney's disclosure that *his* Yvonne shares my delight in Alan Rickman's playing of Severus Snape in the Harry Potter movies. Another of my favourite Rickman performances is his role in *Galaxy Quest* (1999) as Alexander Dane — the actor who stooped to play the alien Mak'tar, Dr Lazarus of Tev'Meck, in the long-running television series, *Galaxy Quest*. It is indeed absolutely unfair that all the applause for Alexander's genuine heroism goes instead to Jason Nesmith (played by Tim Allen) — in his role as the ship's conventionally heroic commander, Peter Quincy Taggart.

(4 October 2014)

[*brg* And since you wrote your letter, we have lost Alan Rickman, as well as many other major figures in the film, TV, and music worlds.*]

DAMIEN BRODERICK
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Treasures 2 and *3* here. Much thanks! Lavish searches for lost time and distant places. And even kittens!

(9 October 2014)

[brg: How are the kittens going?]

Hard to say, since we have so many, and most of the cats serve as the Rodent Filter at the country place (which Barbara visits at weekends to feed animals, tend plants, and relax in various laborious pursuits). I don't like sitting in a car for an hour and a half each way (wrecks my neck), so I stay home with one of the dogs and whichever cats we have on site at the time. There's also a rather sweet duck here at the moment, recovering from repeated traumatic raping by a brutish guinea. Nature red in tooth and other parts, godwot.

(9 October 2014)

JOHN HERTZ
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For a book obviously SF but unnoticed by us, my candidate remains *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), Hermann Hesse's last and greatest. It was the subject of a Classics of SF book discussion I led at the 2013 Worldcon (electronicmen — you do know the suffix -man isn't masculine? — may see

www.lonestarcon3.org/program/classics.shtml, and a note by me in *The Drink Tank* 352 via www.efanzines.com). It was the first and for 50 years the only Nobel Prize-winning SF novel. It is worthy but seldom gets our full attention.

John Litchen thinks *The Dying Earth* (1950) is fantasy. So to many it at first appears. In my Worldcon report in *File 770* 163 (and included in Murray Moore's *Fanthology 2013*; both also at www.efanzines.com), I still declined to seem either complete or conclusive, but I did say of a participant, 'Terry Sisk Graybill saw to the heart: 'At the last chapter you re-think the whole story.' ... Maybe it isn't fantasy: not only the Curator at the end, but the supremacy of mathematics in the beginning.'

I agree with Litchen about *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960). Sir Kingsley Amis was good to make it his Novel of the Year — within our field, a nice question whether it should beat *Rogue Moon*, as it did for the Hugo; outside our field, to think this through I should re-read *The Sot-Weed Factor* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* — I confess a soft spot in my heart for *The Chinese Lake Murders* (his titles! a murdering lake! like the bell! the maze! the gold! the nail!) — but 'to justify the claim that science fiction has become a mature vehicle for the expression of certain important themes', no, Sir. No justification. No claim. No vehicle. No expression. No themes. That's not fiction. It's not art. More exactly, artists can do any of that if they choose; artists can do nearly anything if they choose; but they then carry a doubled burden, of making both art and sermon, which has most often brought both to ruin.

Litchen praises *Under Pressure* (1956; I keep changing my mind whether to prefer that title or *The Dragon in the Sea*) but, I respectfully suggest, not enough. He praises the psychology, which is like the linguistics in *The Languages of Pao*, and the 'up-to-the-minute reflection of what was happening in the real world', which falls into Sir Kingsley's pit. What about the weaving, seamless, and detailed, of real and imagined science into a story of people? We might almost be reading *Run Silent, Run Deep*.

Pao and *A Case of Conscience* were part of a 2008 Worldcon set Mary Morman the Programming chief and I called 'Wonders of 1958', published a golden 50 years before (see now www.fanac.org/Denven-tion3/programming/bookdiscussions.html; my con report, *File 770* 155). Pre-testing in New York at Lunacon that spring I had from the same author and year only *The Triumph of Time*; I was urged to add *Conscience*, which I did for the Worldcon; in my own opinion *Pao* is much stronger than its linguistics, and *Conscience* much weaker than *Time*. With *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) Litchen almost has, but let's slide the truth. The characters, not the book, espouse ideas, for which many careless readers love it.

I've eaten lots of Greek food (and spent hours

doing Greek dances). Once Litchen boards the *Ellinis* he excels as a raconteur.

Cat Sparks gave you a fine photo of Juanita Coulson, whom I first met in 1972, and who was Fan Guest of Honor at the 2010 NASFiC, which I miraculously was able to attend before Aussiecon IV. Your Coulson notes are also fine.

I saw *Genghis Blues* (1999), I knew Mario Casetta, who found himself in it and judging the 1995 Tuva song festival, and I met Kondar-ol Ondar (*Vanamonde* 360; *West of the Moon*), each of whom was a force of nature. 'Throat singing' is an odd expression, an amazing feat.

I must join Leigh Edmonds in applauding Rosalyn Tureck. To the credit of Wm. F. Buckley, Jr, he too was her fan. We aren't say people don't like classical music because they as children weren't taught it in school; that way lies inculcation (which means 'grinding in with the heel'); Plutarch said, 'A mind is not a vessel to fill, but a fire to ignite'; and the lesson of liberty is 'Why wait to be taught?' We ducked these for millennia.

Chicago (where I was born), I'm sorry to tell, is not called the Windy City for its weather. It has lots of that, but has also hosted lots of political conventions. John Collins is however quite right about baths. The Japanese manage wiser; their bathrooms are designed so you wash outside the tub and only then soak in its — very — hot water.

Perhaps William Breiding will let me quote from a letter I wrote him directly: Love is strange. Can we understand it? Can we do better than create art from it? At least we creating art can add to beauty.

(10 October 2014: 'Double-Ten Day' for Nationalist Chinese)

WILLIAM BREIDING
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Big changes are happening in my life. My very good friend Gail, who has been my best friend for over 20 years, came to visit me in late August, and after 20 years we finally became lovers — the longest courtship in history!! By the time she left we decide we wanted to be together. She is living in the Seattle area. We have settled on Tucson as where we will relocate. I expect to be moving there sometime in 2015, though I don't know exactly when. We are perfectly suited and expect to be together until death do us part. Gail is 60 and I am 58.

(13 October 2014)

STEVE JEFFERY
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I was halfway through your and Leigh's discussion about music when I realised the bath had gone cold.

Thanks for *Treasure 2* and 3. They've been in

the envelope travelling back and forth to work with me on the bus for most of the time since they arrived, but I have a terribly habit of nodding off on the bus and sleeping most of the way back from Witney to Oxford. And the couple of times I've tried to read in a break at work I've been interrupted before the second paragraph.

That irritating tendency of British TV series to end on cliffhangers continues apace. Not just *Sherlock*, but also *Orphan Black*, *Utopia*, and *Peaky Blinders*. And not just British series: witness the end of series 3 of *Homeland*. I have every confidence that the new conspiracy-thriller series we've just started watching, *The Code*, will do the same at the end of its first six-part run.

[*brg* Season 1 ended satisfactorily, because there no sense when it was first shown that it might be successful enough to extend to Season 2. However, Season 2 has just finished in Australia — I'm waiting for the DVDs.*]

Did I read you right that films like *The Mouse that Roared* and *The Third Man* were previously unavailable in Australia?

[*brg* I bought my copy of *The Mouse That Roared* quite some years ago. However, the amazing British Blu-ray remastering of *The Third Man* is fairly recent.*]

While they do get shown on one or other of the Freeview channels that seem to run old old black-and-white movies (mainly, for some unaccountable reason, a seeming never-ending stream of Randolph Scott westerns), they come round infrequently enough that I make an effort to take time out to settle down and watch them or tape them for later. Others, though, seem to be screened far more frequently. I've seen *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (in several versions), *Passport to Pimlico*, and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* several times now, while *A Matter of Life and Death* seems to be on at least once a week somewhere.

A fascinating, if troubling, memoir from William Breiding. (Where did that Roman Polanski quote come from?). I'm looking forward to catching up with John Litchen's continuing memories of SF, jazz, and conga playing, then dipping back into *Treasure 3*.

(20 October 2014)

The clocks have just gone back an hour, which means we are now officially out of British Summer Time, although the weather is still unseasonably mild for October. I don't mind at all, although the flowers are confused, and the passion flower in the back garden is still throwing out ornate purple and yellow flowers as if it's still mid August, and we still cropping the last of the tomatoes from the tub outside the back door. The herbs are not so easily fooled, and the several pots of basil are now

looking decidedly pale and sorry, although that might be due to the rain in the last fortnight.

I agree with your Nova Mob talk topic that genres work both ways, and the selection of authors you chose to illustrate that thesis. I remember it was Paul Kincaid, back in Acnestis days, who championed Steven Millhauser as a writer who slid freely across genre boundaries into the fantastic. I haven't read those for a long time, although I recently found a nice small format hardback of Millhauser's *Martin Dressler*.

I've also read, and was hugely delighted by, Karen Russell's *St Lucy's Academy for Young Ladies Raised by Wolves*. Strangely, I've not looked for anything else by her, so thanks for pointing out the other books. Similarly, Edward Carey, with the wonderful *Alva and Irva* and *Observatory Mansions*. I'd also nominate Joanne Harris, particularly for her two story collections *Jigs and Reels* and *A Cat, A Hat and a Piece of String*. While a strong flavour of fantasy and magic realism runs through a number of her novels, her latest, *The Gospel of Loki*, is the first to be marketed specifically as adult fantasy (although I remember receiving her second novel, *Sleep Pale Sister*, for review in the BSFA's *Vector* back in 1999). In fact, you only need to look at the list of names in Harris's Acknowledgements to know that under the skin she was one of us, a fan as much as a writer.

I suspect if Graham Joyce's later novels had been marketed as mainstream magic realism (in which genre they would have comfortably fit) this probably would have given him the wider public recognition he deserved. Joyce was never a showy, flowery writer. His prose style was deceptive simple (a skill that is much harder than it looks) so that when the emotional punch came, it came out the blue with all the more force for not being dressed up in histrionics.

Although we'd been expecting it for well over a year, it was a real blow to learn of his death. Vikki and I have known him as long as we've been involved in fandom. The inscription in our copy of Graham's first book, *Dreamside*, reads 'To Vikki — I'm so glad I finally became eligible to sign one for you.' (Vikki had an autograph book she took to conventions, but Graham was mortified she wouldn't let him sign as he hadn't had his book published yet. He took his revenge, publicly and embarrassingly loudly (was Graham ever quiet?), at a signing session for *Dreamside* a year later. He was a member of Vikki's Prophecy apa for a few years until fatherhood and deadlines tore him away. Cat Sparks' photo on page 4 of *Treasure 3* perfectly captures him as I'll always remember him, laughing out loud. In fact, Cat's photos are one of the highlights of *Treasure*, especially those of Continuum X in *Treasure 2*.

It's been a decade or so since we last went to a convention. I don't know exactly why. A gradual drift into old age, gafia, and a sense that the last

few Novacons and Eastercons (particularly the latter's attempt to be 'all-inclusive' to a variety of fringe interests) were drifting away from what we remembered cons being about. It's all very well trying to move with the times but when the end result bears little relationship to the fantasy and science fiction interest that was our main reason for joining, then it's time to take stock. Plus it was getting more and more expensive. Deciding not to run a car for a couple of years was probably the breaking point, when it became a major effort to organise journeys on public transport. (Eastercons are traditionally held on a weekend when Railtrack shut down half the system for 'essential maintenance'.) But Continuum X sounded like it was fun — real fun, rather than desperate fun. Maybe it's time to think about easing back in.

I was impressed by your report of Juanita Coulson speaking for 40 minutes with no umms or errs. Not an easy habit to break, or even to be aware of. I have an embarrassing and salutary video of me giving a 15-minute talk as part of the company's 'Train the Trainer' presentation skills course.

Vikki's a big fan of Swedish country duo First Aid Kit. She had their *Stay Gold* CD on rotation for the week after I got it for her birthday. I've been a fan since I saw a clip of them doing a live rendition of 'Emmylou' in the Glastonbury BBC tent a couple of years ago. I love the fact that two Swedish girls sing in near perfect Nashville country accents. And hey, how can you not like anyone who name-checks the sainted Emmylou Harris in a song?

Re Ned Brooks: I didn't know there were different editions of *Titus Alone*. Maybe that was why I didn't get along with it so well, although I still think any sequel will pale in comparison to the magnificent sprawling splendour of *Gormenghast*. It's like Elizabeth Hand's *Winterlong*. She's written many far more accomplished and better books, but it's the youthful over-the-top exuberance of that first novel still remember fondly, as if the words and images were pent up, waiting to spill out over the page, and couldn't be stopped.

Exceedingly cute kittens photo from Damien Broderick. All together, 'Awwww'. No — must resist. (It's been some years since Enki died. Unfortunately it all flooded back when Taral published an unfortunate photo in *Broken Toys* of the end of his cat Sailor.)

Ned Brooks rather shocks me by writing that he's never been to a rock concert (what, ever?) while Lloyd Penney mentions missing the Rolling Stones retirement-fund tour when it rolled into Toronto. (I heard something on the radio last night about Jagger's ironically tongue in cheek comment on septugenarian reunion of the Monty Python team, 'Wow. They must be coining it in. That's pretty amazing,' the singer shrugs. 'But they're still a bunch of wrinkly old men trying to relive their youth and make a load of money. I mean, the best one died years ago!' Ouch.)

[*brg* Local journalists say the same about the Rolling Stones each time they begin a new worldwide tour. I just buy their latest concert Blu-rays.*]

About six months ago, back around my birthday, I passed on seeing the reformed classic Yes lineup when they visited Oxford. I was seriously tempted (I think I last saw them when they did the original Fragile tour at Chatham Town Hall) but ticket prices started at £50 and I'm not sure I could sit through three hours to see a bunch of old men try to recreate three albums that they recorded 40 years ago. I would have liked to have seen Jeff Beck though. I saw a program of him with his new band at Ronnie Scott's. The expression on his bassist's face (Tal Wilkenfield, a pre-Raphaelite-tressed 27-year-old Australian lass) as Beck pulled an astonishing array of noises out of a plank of wood with six strings and a tremolo bar was an absolute joy to watch.

[*brg* I saw the same video, Jeff Beck at Ronnie Scott's, on Blu-ray. On an accompanying doco, Jeff Beck unashamedly shows off his skills on the guitars in his vast collection. He still looks about 20 years younger than any of his contemporaries.*]

Neil Young is someone else who makes some astonishing and absolutely distinctive noises on guitar. He's been on the radio recently playing on Chrissie Hynde's new solo record, 'Down the Wrong Way', from her *Stockholm* album. Even before Cerys Matthew's announcement, I could tell it was Young on guitar about two notes into the solo.

(27 October 2014)

You were asking Leigh what systems he used to record his CDs and vinyl to computer.

CDs are fairly easy(ish) if you have Windows and Windows Media Player. Just pop the CD in the drive and select the Rip option from the menu. A bit more setting up is required if you want to rip tracks to mp3 format rather than Microsoft's default wma format (my Android tablet won't play these). However, rather than rip them all over again, I used a little freeware program called FreeConverter from Kyote Lab to convert existing WMA files to mp3 files. Though I'm not sure it wouldn't have been just as quick either way.

I also use another freeware program called Audacity, which is like Windows Sound Recorder on steroids. It has all sorts of options, but the big benefit is that I can record streamed audio (e.g. from BBC iPlayer or internet radio) to disk. Great for BBC sessions that have a time-limited online availability. I've also used Audacity to record vinyl. Lucky I still have my old Garrard 86 turntable. The bit that's needed in the middle is some soft of preamp/equaliser to boost the phono signal from the cartridge to match that of the PC's line-in inputs. In my case this was an old DJ mic/turntable mixer I bought for a couple of quid

at a car boot sale. However, you can buy more specialised converters from Amazon or online audio stores, even those that send the turntable input directly to USB.

Basically, experiment. It took a few attempts for me to find the right settings that either didn't distort with the (online) needles bumping into the red all the time, or too quiet to be useful on an mp3 player. Then, if your software lets you, save them, or write them down for next time.

I haven't tried dubbing from cassette. I still have a few hundred of these, but probably nothing that I feel the urge to preserve digitally, though I do have a number of radio plays I'd like to listen to again (Stoppard's *Arcadia*, Frayn's *Copenhagen*, Banks's *State of the Art*) and some nice compilation tapes from fan friends who kept me sane while I was working in Newcastle.

(27 October 2014)

On the other hand, if you don't fancy messing about under the bonnet with the settings of various freeware programs, there are a number of ready-built hardware solutions, which consist of a dedicated unit, usually with a turntable and sometimes an inbuilt cassette player, that connect direct to your computer via a USB cable and come with their own software. These are often advertised in the back places of magazines like *Radio Times* or gift catalogues, though I don't know their availability in Australia.

I'm looking at one now, called the Memphis player (it looks like an old 1950 record player) from a QwerKity (qwerkity.com) gift catalogue, priced (over here) a tad under £120, that records directly to a USB stick or SD card.

(28 October 2014)

I always thought my work colleague, Tom, was odd in that he admits absolutely no interest in music. He will listen to music on the car radio as a form of aural wallpaper but appears to have no favoured genres, songs, or performers, and no real ability to recognise which artist or song might be playing. (Is there a word, I wonder for a form of dyslexia for music? Not just an inability to read written music — I struggle to translate dots on a page to sounds in my head — but an inability to connect emotionally or even intellectually with music: to recognise different tracks by style, performer or genre, or to relate a song to a time or place in your life?)

As I say, I thought Tom was odd, and probably unique, in this. But then I was talking to another colleague about favourite bands and gigs, and one of his friends admitted that he'd never been to a live gig or bought a CD. To me, that seems even more extraordinary than someone admitting they'd never read a novel or bought a book.

I've only transferred a small fraction of my collection to mp3, just enough to put on a 4BG portable player with a bit of rotation. If I went about it with

any degree of seriousness, I'd probably want a big external hard drive as a library and a few free weekends to keep stuffing CDs into the drive every 10 minutes. However, stuffing CDs into Media Player and letting it look up the track details on the internet is a good way of building up a music database without having to do all that typing. Another project I keep promising I'll get around to at some point.

But I haven't even databased my books yet, and that really ought to come first.

(31 October 2014)

FRED LERNER

**81 Worcester Avenue,
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I spent much of the past three days reading the first three issues of *Treasure*. I think the zine is aptly named: to me. *Treasure* is something one brings back home from distant lands. I enjoy writing accounts of my own travels, and reading those of other travellers. Recently I've read *Eothen*, A. W. Kinglake's narrative of a trip through the Levant in 1834, and Heinrich Böll's *Irisches Tagebuch*, his description of a journey to Dublin and the west coast of Ireland in the 1950s. (When I retired from my post at the National Center for PTSD back in January, I resolved to resume the study of German that I had abandoned soon after high school. Reading Böll's book in the original is one of the first fruits of that project.)

A few weeks ago, while waiting in the Dartmouth College library's periodicals room for a demonstration of parchment making to begin, I picked up the first magazine I saw to read over my coffee. That issue of the *London Review* contained an essay comparing a new English translation of *Irisches Tagebuch* with J. M. Synge's *The Aran Islands*. 'Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God,' it says in the Book of Bokonon. Choosing to extend that insight into reading suggestions about travel, I'm currently reading the Synge book, and trying to remember the portrayal of those islands in Flaherty's film *Man of Aran*.

So you can see that I was primed to enjoy pieces like Dora Levakis's 'Journey to Tuva' and Jennifer Bryce's 'Good Horn, Good Brakes, Good Luck'. I don't expect I'll ever go to Tuva (which in my youthful days as a stamp collector I would have called 'Tannu Tuva'), and I can't say that I'd go far out of my way to hear throat singing, but that's hardly the point. A good travel narrative can arouse the reader's interest in a place he'd never think of visiting — or even in a place that doesn't even exist. (I'm thinking of Jan Morris's *Last Letters from Hav* and China Miéville's *The City and the City*.) I'd like to read more about Dora's travels, and about her adventures in learning throat singing. And if a troupe of throat singers were to perform at Dartmouth, I'd be grateful for the chance to see and hear what has so captivated

her.

I do have hopes of visiting India someday — perhaps if the Kipling Society puts on a ‘Kipling in India’ conference as a follow-up to the ‘Kipling in America’ session they held here in Vermont last fall — so I read Jennifer Bryce’s article with a bit more attention to the petty aggravations incidental to travel in unfamiliar places. These would not deter me from undertaking such a journey, especially after reading Jennifer’s enticing descriptions of the sights and wonders she found there.

John Litchen’s pieces aren’t travelogues, strictly speaking, but they held my interest as much for his descriptions of the Victorian coast as for his account of a transPacific crossing on RHMS *Ellinis*. They remind me that reading a travel narrative can transport me through time as well as space — often a more distant journey, for equipped with money, leisure, and determination I could come close to duplicating Dora’s or Jennifer’s trip, but nothing can ever allow me to experience John’s journey from Melbourne to Southampton.

Robin Whitely provided a different experience of surrogate travel in ‘Have Wheelchair, Will Travel’. Once she reached Finland she and her husband were exploring territory I remember from my own travels. The pleasure Robin gave me was that of reliving my visits to Helsinki and Copenhagen, and of comparing her impressions of rural Wales with mine of Skye and the Scottish highlands.

There’s one other feeling I got from reading these issues of *Treasure*. If your contributors are at all representative, then Australia must be swarming with congenial folks whose company I’d enjoy as much in person as on the printed page. Until I get the chance to confirm that hypothesis I reckon I’ll find both solace and anticipation in the pages of *Treasure*.

(22 October 2014)

DJ FREDERICK MOE
36 West Main, Warner NH 03278, USA

Greetings from New Hampshire. Autumn is progressing from blazing colour phase to bare-tree phase, setting the scene for Halloween. Lots of good pirate radio to be found on shortwave this time of the year, between 6800 and 6960 kHz.

I recall watching *The Mouse that Roared* in order to see William Hartnell in something other than *Doctor Who*. I was less than impressed with any aspect of the film.

I love Anton Karas’ ‘Third Man Theme’ played on the zither — a perfect soundtrack for the Carol Reed film.

I very much enjoyed your conversation with Leigh Edmonds regarding classical music and the radio. I’m saddened to read that Leigh can no longer tolerate tape hiss — to my ears it’s the mark of authenticity, one of the joys of analogue culture. I am on a mission to re-connect with

classic music after three decades of not listening. National Public Radio once had a program host named Robert J. Lurtseman. His daily broadcast, called *Morning Pro Musica*, was a joy to absorb. Robert was the quintessential NPR host — he used intonations and dramatic pauses like blunt instruments. He also used the program to educate his audience about the compositions he chose for airplay. Robert J. was on an odyssey of learning, and he invited his listeners along for the journey. I hope that I bring just a fraction of his enthusiasm to my own radio projects.

(26 October 2014)

ROB GERRAND
11 Robe Street, St Kilda VIC 3182

Thanks so much for *Treasures 2* and *3*. I love John Litchen’s *Memoirs*, and in fact went back to read the piece in *Treasure 1* about Birdland.

John, where was Birdland in St Kilda? Was it opposite where the National Theatre now is, on the corner of Carlisle and Berkeley Streets? If so, I think that may have been run by the parents of Henry Maas (of Black Cat and Bachelors From Prague fame).

(29 October 2014)

JOHN LITCHEN
PO Box 3503, Robina Town Centre QLD 4230

You asked for a short bibliography of the books I’ve written and published.

1974: *Cinematography Underwater*

Currently out of print, but I do have some copies (discoloured by time) somewhere in a box. It is possible copies of this could be available from Oceans Enterprises, which still have it listed on its website. It is however, regarding equipment discussed, many years out of date. Details about exposure and other problems encountered in underwater photography still remain valid.

1997: *Fragments from a Life*

This is a limited edition distributed to family members. (There were only twelve copies produced as leather-bound hardcover.) Some 10 years later a friend I met at a writers’ group read it and insisted on translating it into Greek. He also insisted that we enter it into The Agelidis Foundation competition for a life story told in Greek. It ended up winning first prize in 2007. Subsequently I revised the English edition and published both versions, Greek and English, in 2008. Visiting Greek clubs in Melbourne and Brisbane, we launched both books and sold every copy I had printed. A few copies have been sold at periodic intervals since then:

2007: *Fragments from a Life* (English edition) (*Thripsala Tis Zois* in the Greek edition).

2003: *Convergence: Aspects of the Change*

This is a collection of two novellas and two short stories. A friend bought a copy of this from Dymocks bookshop and later asked if there was a sequel to the longer novella 'The Great Flood'. I said I would write one, which I did. This was **A Floating World**, but because I had written this in the present tense rather than past tense I went back and rewrote the novella also in the present tense and expanded it to a longer work. Eventually the two — *A Floating World* and what was then renamed **And the Waters Prevailed** — became one book (in two parts) with the latter as the overall book title.

2005: Aikido Basic and Aikido Intermediate Studies

An illustrated manual for students of Aikido from beginning levels to first black belt (Shodan) level. Originally designed as a series of courses to be taught in primary school, it did not go ahead as a school project, but instead was turned into a book that included an e-book version. Both versions sold continuously via Amazon. After some problems with the publisher the paper copy was withdrawn from circulation, but still sells as a secondhand copy from various websites. It was completely revised and republished in 2013. (Originally this took two years to complete all the photos and drawings and the writing. The revised edition only took six months; we had to shoot a few hundred extra images for new material.)

2006: Attributes a Writer Needs

A collection of articles about writing and associated matters. It is available (in a slightly revised edition) from Book Depository in the UK as well as on Amazon as a paperback.

2010: And the Waters Prevailed

A novel dealing the effects of climate change and a rise in sea levels around the world upon a small number of people. This sold a number of copies to libraries and a few at the launch, which took place at Borders bookshop in Robina when it was there. An e-book version was created. This version has a slightly different ending to the printed version. It also has had a number of typos corrected. As an e-book it sold only one copy — to one of my Aikido students who googled my name and found it online. I'm thinking of making this available via Amazon in a revised edition, perhaps in 2015 sometime. I still have some from the original printing in a box in my office.

2010: Fragments that Remain: A Memoir

Since *Fragments from a Life* was a memoir about my father and the stories he told us of his life, I thought it only fair to do one about my mother and the stories relating to her, which included us (her children) and what I could remember about our growing up.

2013: Aikido Basic and Intermediate Studies

revised

This edition, which also sells well on Amazon and from Book Depository, contains 30 more pages than the original and quite a few different images and diagrams, making it a better and more comprehensive edition.

2013: Aikido Beyond: Questions Often Asked

A collection of articles relating to many aspects of Aikido, most of which have been published in magazines such as *Aikido Today* and the *Aiki Kai Australia* newsletter magazine over a 10-year period.

2014: Remembering Sensei

A collection of people's memories of Sugano Sensei and the influence he has had on their lives through Aikido. I am not in this book, but I designed and collated the material and produced the files for the printer. A lot of my photos are in it though *Aiki Kai Australia*, and the Aikido Foundation published it. This was officially published in January 2015 for limited sale and distribution at the 50th anniversary National School: 19–24 January 2015.

The series of memoirs, loosely titled **My Life and Science Fiction** appearing in various publications from Bruce Gillespie and which perhaps will become a book when the series is complete.

In the meantime I am revising a novel I wrote a couple of years ago with hopes to improve it enough for publication, as well as being the editor and publisher of AikiKai Australia's newsletter magazine (24 pages twice a year) *Aikido in Australia*.

(30 October 2014)

STEVE SNEYD

4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB, England

[*brg* Steve Sneyd has recently celebrated the publication of Issue 200 of his *Data Dump*, the only handwritten fanzine (as far as I know) left in the world. He gives a generous review of *Treasure 2* there, and adds:*

William Breiding's item in *Treasure 2* will get a mention in a later *Data Dump*. I've seen poetry by him and his brother, and exchanged a handful of letters with him down the years, so it's very interesting to know more about his background.

Margaret Atwood's SF books are certainly known in the SF world, and there is a lot of discussion of her ambiguous attitudes to the field. One moment she denies that she writes SF; the next moment she writes a book about SF.

(18 November 2014)



At home with (l. to r.) Valma Brown, and visitors David Russell, Stephen Campbell, and Robin Johnson. Leigh Edmonds is the photographer. November 2014.

LEIGH EDMONDS
Ballarat East VIC 3350

Did you have to travel all the way into the city to see *Interstellar*? I seem to recall that it takes a fair time, so no doubt you get a lot of reading done as well as watching a movie. It sounds like a day well spent.

Attached is the photo I took of Valma, David Russell, Stephen Campbell, and Robin Johnson. It's not one of the world's great pictures, but there you go.

(11 November 2014)

JERRY KAUFMAN
PO Box 25075, Seattle WA 98165, USA

The best thing about *Treasure 2* was the selection of photographs you included with Robyn Whiteley's travel diary. I have some wonderful memories of Suzle's and my visit to Cambridge in 2005, and seeing the River Cam and the punts on your cover, along with the interior shots, brought them back. Only we didn't take a boat ride.

I also liked reading about Continuum X — even older memories churned up by the mention of Van Ikin. They come from 1983, and meeting Van at Syncon and in Perth. Did I actually visit him at his office there, or is that a fantasy?

In No 3, again, I enjoyed the reading experience. I love John Baxter's books on Paris, but (oddly) have not read much of his work on films, despite being something of a buff. (A buff whose lost his with-it cred from not actually watching many movies these days.) So I read his piece about Martin Hibble, despite never having heard of him before.

John Litchen's memoirs continue to be fasci-

nating. And William Breiding (aka Bill) is awfully brave and revealing in writing about his romantic entanglement — qualities that we've seen in many other things he's written.

(23 November 2014)

JOHN BAXTER
18 rue de l'Odeon, Paris, France 75006

The picture shown in my article about Martin Hibble (*Treasure 3*) was taken in the lobby of the Wintergarden Cinema in Rose Bay on 29 May 1968, at the opening of that year's Sydney Film Festival. The reprinted reminiscence of Martin came from *Martin Hibble. A Tribute*, which Nicholas Pounder and I produced in 2003. We printed only 250 copies, and it's by way of being a rare item. It contains some excellent pieces, including one from another close friend, Anton Crouch.

The lady in question is J. (for Jolanta) Barbara Wronowksi, at the moment a professor of literature in Canada, specialising in the work of English novelist Henry Green, a writer as retiring as she was flamboyant. As for the others, Brian Hannant and I later collaborated on the making of a truly dreadful SF film called *The Time Guardian*. In this company, Martin was very much the odd man out, Gay, of course, but also a transplant from the UK, and therefore somewhat more confident and assertive than us. Also, of course, more interested in music than film, and a serious drinker among we amateurs. In short, a breath of fresh air, if sometimes too chilly for comfort. But comfort was something we had too much of back then. One wants to say of Martin, for all his faults, that, as Tom Stoppard did of Kenneth Tynan, 'He was part of the luck we had.'

(29 November 2014)

ANDY ROBSON
63 Dixon Lane, Leeds LS12 4RR, England

It's strange reading William Breiding's tales of teenage angst — something I'd definitely prefer to forget. Similarly with schooldays colleagues — apart from a couple I've kept in touch with over the years, there are none I'd want to know now. Certainly nobody I'd recognise. I've always gone in for burning bridges when chapters of my life have come to an end.

On the strength of your recommendation I bought a copy of First Aid Kit's *The Lion's Roar*, which I thought was truly excellent. However, the new CD *Stay Gold* isn't very good. It's horribly over-engineered and bland. It's not the fault of the duo, who performed one piece live on TV — a million times better. Just a naff, disappointing production on the CD. Years ago, live albums used to sound dreadful, with tunes coming across in waves and lots of peculiar echo and inaudible vocals. Nowadays, they're beginning to be preferable to the audio stew of muffled everything and lack of individuality. They'd turn Keith Moon and Jimi Hendrix into strict-tempo waltzers these days and no one would want to know! Promoters would even cancel offers of a free concert.

Cut movies: I've seen *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* at lengths of between 45 and 90 minutes. A TV repeat of one of my favourite films was recently shown at 45 minutes — including ad breaks! — when the original was an hour and five minutes with no breaks.

DVD releases are often as bad. The cut items are frequently the main attraction. If they must cut films, why not delete those long shots of scenery with Chopin waltz music as accompaniment? Also, there are title sequences that seem to last as long as the rest of the movie.

I enjoyed the convention report in *Treasure 2* — an appropriate coverage of the time spent in the bar and the actual events. Inevitably any advance program will be sidetracked. Recently I spent 15 minutes with an author selling his book and we spent the whole time discussing the guy who had written the foreword. (Er, sorry, what was your name again?)

(10 November 2014)

[*brg* Thanks, Andy, for not only trading Krax for my magazines, but also sending money to cover expenses.*]

LLOYD PENNEY
1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke
ON M9C 2B2, Canada

For the first time in years, we are both working steadily, but we have to pay back the monies we borrowed from various sources, including our investments. As a result, we are saving for a trip to London in the next few years, and we expect that will be our last distant travel of any kind.

Worldcons are now officially a thing of the past for us.

Ten episodes in a series? I know sometimes there are three or four in a series in Britain. The last two series of *Murdoch Mysteries*, series 6 and 7, each had 18 episodes in each, and the currently running 8th series will also have 18 episodes.

I haven't been getting anything fanzine-wise from Bill Wright. Do you know if he is still producing *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop*? Sure hope so. I am pleased to see that you can still win awards for producing a fanzine, and good to see that Nalini Haynes is still appreciated for her efforts with *Dark Matter*. She recently released a new fanzine-style issue I must get and comment on. I have given up all hope of anything fanzine oriented winning any awards on this continent. Fandom seems to have little to do with fan awards these days. I barely have time to respond to the fanzines I get, so I don't look at any podcasts. I wouldn't know where online to find them, as there are so many. I don't know if there is a central list of SF podcasts, the same way there's a directory in eFanzines.com.

[*brg* These days, Bill doesn't feel well enough to continue publishing Interstellar Ramjet Scoop. We miss him in ANZAPA as well. :: I had no idea that Nalini was still producing Dark Matters. The trouble is that she publishes it in HTML format, and therefore there's no way of printing it as a complete fanzine, in the way I can with any of the fanzines found on eFanzines.com. :: And, like you, I never listen to any podcasts. The only way I could do this would be download through my computer — but if I've turned on the computer, I'm working on it, so I don't spend time listening to podcasts. Most people I know who enjoy podcasts listen to them while travelling, but we don't travel much (and I read a book when I take the train into town).*]

Casey Wolf has the right idea. I should go to my local bank, see if they can sell me some nice polymer Australian money (Canadian bills are now all polymer), and I will send it to that nice Mr Gillespie. If I want more of those nice fanzines he produces, it might be a good idea to help out with it.

DVDs: We never did get the missing *Babylon 5* disks, but we found the missing movies on the Net, and downloaded them. Our DVD player has a USB port in it, so we can now watch the entire run of *B5* and its sequel. We did that last winter, and we think we might do it again. We now have all seven seasons/series of *Murdoch Mysteries* on DVD. Now that I am 55, more health problems may be on the horizon, as I have just had the second of a series of glucose tests to see if I am diabetic. I suspect the answer is yes.

Treasure 3: We wanted to be in London for London, but it wasn't to be. We just hadn't saved enough for the trip we wanted to have. We are still

saving, and would like to go some time in the next few years. We're too old to slap the costs on a credit card, and then wind up tapping our pension fund for the credit card payments. We purchased a new computer in 2014 as well, and it runs Windows 7, which has a few problems, but it just needs a cleaning every so often to get rid of the bugs.

I've been on Facebook for some years, but for some people, it becomes a pain. They might migrate to Google+, but eventually, they realise that this style of social media takes up too much time for them.

(14 December 2014)

DAVID RUSSELL

196 Russell Street Dennington VIC 3280

Thank you for sending me **brg** 89. It's the only reportage of Continuum 11 that I've seen so far.

The dead-dog party circle of chairs rebuff from fans was heartbreaking. Try putting your fellow fans' apathy down to convention exhaustion rather than any animosity directed towards your good self. I have been invited by Helena Binns to the celebration of Dick Jenssen's 80th birthday on 9 July at the Rosstown Hotel, and I *promise* to talk to you while you're there. Helena also asked me to pass along the invitation to Stephen Campbell to attend the party.

(24 June 2015)

We also heard from ...

Ron Sheldon (Ferntree Gully, Victoria) was the organiser of 2015's Oakleigh High School reunion that I attended: 'Thanks for your candid account of memories of Oakleigh High School. (The teacher in the Form 4 photo was Miss Howse). I will read the travel articles with interest, having travelled extensively in Europe in the 1980s.' Ron and his wife Chris are currently on a European cruise.

Carol Kewley (Albion, Victoria) meets us and the rest of the Friday night group occasionally at Ciao restaurant, or she attends meetings of the Melbourne SF Club.

Derek Kew (Bulleen, Victoria) is our friend with whom I (and then Elaine and I) have had Lunches of Comment since the 1970s. We didn't see Derek for about a year — 'My health has been up and down, but I have got through the cataract

operation without too much trouble. I just heal slowly.' — but recently he has been able to drive over to Greensborough for lunch at Allan House, a very good Vietnamese/Thai food restaurant.

Robert Elordieta (Traralgon, Victoria).

Ned Brooks (Georgia, USA) died on 31 August 2015, after falling from a ladder while repairing his house. You can find a tribute by Murray Moore in *SF Commentary* 90, pp. 13–14. He was much admired for his many interests, his fanzine *It Goes on the Shelf*, and his congeniality in fannish company. In his last email to me, he wrote: 'Much thanks for the zines! I was impressed that you were able to send one from next month. I know there is a time differential, and that Einstein said that there is no simultaneity anyway, but it is still only early October [2014] here! I will be a while reading these! I am currently in the middle of getting this year's *IGOTS* out.'

Michael Bishop (Pine Mountain, Georgia, USA) thanked me for *Treasures* 2 and 3: 'You can rest assured that I will read them, although not immediately or all at once, primarily because I've let myself get behind in my own work. Again, though, thank you, thank you, thank you.' Despite a major health scare, Michael has been working hard recently on a host of projects.

Randy Byers (Seattle, Washington, USA) sent a thank-you email. As readers of *SF Commentary* 92 will have read, Randy has also suffered serious health problems during the last year and a half, but stays amazingly cheery in his posts on Facebook.

Doug Barbour (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada) received *Treasures* 2 and 3, but: 'I haven't had a chance to look at them. I'm busy with manuscripts, board meetings, and Litfest here, where I attended two presentations (it's a non-fiction festival), and hosted one, in honour of Rudy Wiebe, a past member, and president of NeWest Press's Editorial Board.' I can't remember him sending any specific letter of comment about recent *Treasures*, but his music notes in the *SFC* letter column could just as easily have been published here.

Werner Koopmann (Buchholz, Germany) keeps in touch all the time, with postcards (especially when travelling around Europe), letters, and interesting books. He and his wife Ulla recently went on a cruise to Norway.

— **Bruce Gillespie**, October 2016