

LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 2



LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 2, December 2020, is an issue of a mailing comments apazine published by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, 3122. Produced only for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association). E: perry@middlemiss.org



INTRODUCTION

Firstly, I need to be a bit more careful about my conversion of the original text document for this fanzine into pdf format – it seemed to fit fine onto four pages originally. Conversion seems to have pushed it over onto the fifth, which made it look, well, just a bit weird.

Secondly the font size seems too high. Everyone else appears to utilise a much smaller print size. I suspect this might take a while to get to a happy medium. We're down at least one with this issue when I start it. It may go lower.

Lastly, on the question of whether this apa should remain as an all-electronic version, my vote would have to come down on the side of “yes”. I'm not in any great position to duplicate 30 copies of anything at this time. I'd either have to be a printing firm to do it for me, or wander down to Officeworks or somesuch.

In any event I do want to add my thanks to David Grigg for setting up the apparatus that allows each of us to utilise the electronic version of this apa. It is very much appreciated.



Comments on Mailing 317



OBO – Bruce Gillespie

Congratulations on now holding both major positions for the apa. I have no doubts your ascension to the position of President was well deserved. ■

The fandom we know is getting older, and as a consequence we will start losing our friends at a faster and faster rate. It is still a shock when it happens however. I knew Phil Ware, but certainly not well. He always seemed very quiet and reserved whenever I met him. We will need a few memorial gatherings in 2021 when we are allowed back in touch. ■

The Every-Day Book 4 – Derrick Ashby

The problems we have with technology. I sympathise. I'm taking the rather low tech approach of drafting these fanzines in OpenOffice Writer, and then converting them to pdf format when I'm finished. I'm certainly sure there is a lot more I could be doing with the word processor, just need to play around with it long enough to learn where the interesting bits are. ■

I don't envy you your hardware faults. I'm dreading the time when some of my old drives kick the bucket and I lose the data (mainly photos) I've stored there. I've taken the option of paying for a DropBox subscription at about \$20/month. I figure that equates to about one failed drive per year. I now just have to figure out what I do when I don't want the subscription any more. The process of uploading the photos off old hard drives tot he relevant Dropbox folder is a laborious one, though it needs to be done. It also allows me the opportunity to do a bit of cataloguing into sub-folders, so not all a waste of time. ■

RYCTo Me: We are not allowed to mention Worldcon in this house unless it is accompanied by a derisive laugh. I jest, but I'm not going back to run another one, nor even to work on one. My time is done. ■

Little Blue Number 2

Quoz 73 – Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer

Claire – Thanks for you hopes that we'll be out and about by the time I read this (mid-October), but no, not to be. I reckon it will be before Christmas but how much before is anyone's guess. Our State Government has been pretty strong on the current second wave lock-down and the policies have been working, except for a small number of idiots who continue to flout the rules and spread the infections just a little bit. Which really means just a little bit too much for us to get out of our current restrictions. ■

I really don't have a problem with the length of anyone's contributions (as he looks at the 27 pages he contributed this mailing). Especially with the new electronic version it's just a matter of skimming bits and reading others or reading it all in bits. I really don't see the problem. Bloat away I say. ■

I can attest to the quality of the Murderbot novellas, and look forward to the novel. Just not sure when I'll get to it. As you can probably tell most of my reading now is targeted at what David and I will be discussing on the podcast. I think both of us are starting to think this is becoming a tad too restricting. It comes about by wanting to have a specific topic to discuss backed by relevant book examples. We can get around this by scheduling in more episodes which really cover the basic idea of "What I've been reading lately." We must do more of that. ■

I think you apologise twice, once to David and once to me, about being behind in your listening to our podcast. You really shouldn't feel apologetic at all. I assume that the total audience that will be interested in all of our episodes will be approximately 2. Best just to pick and chose which ones catch your eye, or ear. But thanks for admitting you actually do listen in. It is appreciated. ■

Regarding retirement: I'm not finding it too much of a burden as it will be over a year since I worked by the time of this mailing. I have enough to keep myself busy (sometimes I think it is too much) and only wish I could get out a bit more, go to the pub and have a few beers or just go out for dinner and a chat. The fanzine writing has become a new interest and I'm enjoying that. The perzine, PERRYSCOPE, goes up onto efanzines as it is produced while this little thing will be kept strictly for ANZAPA. However, I have had a thought that comments on the perzine in ANZAPA that I think might be of interest to the wider audience will be shifted over there. This will probably become evident in the next issue. ■

Oddly enough, both David and I have an interest in poetry. Mine just doesn't extend to the modern form which tends to do nothing for me. I have asked him if he'd like to discuss a couple of poems on the podcast one episode. Not sure he's that keen. ■

Mark – I agree with James Bacon's views on online conventions. I found it very difficult to engage with the New Zealand Worldcon and only attended a couple of items. I just wanted to go hang out at the bar and chat to all and sundry. Unfortunately that wasn't to be. ■

I'm finding later Heinlein to be a real struggle. David and I are reading the Hugo nominated works for the podcast and he keeps coming up. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND was a hard read and I can't say I liked it much. My father was a Heinlein fan and I was reading this book in the last few days of his life. I mentioned it to him, he remembered it but wasn't in any shape to hold a coherent conversation about it. I think he may well have liked it a lot more than I did. And if you think that novel's horrible you should try GLORY ROAD. Gawd. ■

I can certainly recommend A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY and THE RETURN OF THE SOLDIER. Excellent short novels about the effects of wars on the men who fought them; only men in these two. ■

In Vere Scribo CIV – Leigh Edmonds

A really good piece about your reaction to John Baxter's book. I'm fairly certain I have read it, and I'm fairly certain it is in the house somewhere, but if you were to ask me to put a hand on it now I doubt I could do so. Must go back and have a look at that again, if I can find it. ■

"The reason that I enjoy the David Grigg and Perry Middlemiss podcast – Two Chairs Talking - is because they chat about lots of old stuff and don't get too excited (well, Perry does occasionally)." Yep, that's about right. David is the thoughtful one. ■

I skipped the Tour de France this year. I'm having a lot of trouble getting interested in things sporting. I usually watch the tour, or at least some parts of it. I used to like the 30 minute summary that SBS used to show at 6pm

Little Blue Number 2

before their news but it seems they have decided to drop this in favour of the overnight live broadcasts. ■

As to the identity of a possible Australian President Stephen Fry once recommended Adam Gilchrist on the basis that he seemed like a straight-forward sort of bloke who showed a sense of proportion by giving himself out in an important innings of a Cricket World Cup. He was actually out, it's just that the umpire hadn't seen it that way. And this was in the days before the current Decision Review system. ■

I've lifted one of your comments about the podcast and my reading and plonked it over into PERRYSCOPE and commented on it there. It's of interest to readers of that zine other than those solely in ANZAPA. ■

RYCTo David Grigg: We do feel that we have to be a bit careful about spoilers. We would screamed out if we let things out of the bag too much. Sorry about that. ■

I tend to dispose of all electronic equipment. Various desktops, laptops, and typewriters have been dropped off at electronic disposal places over the years. I don't have the room or sentimentality to keep them. I do miss my old Olivetti typewriter though. I seem to recall lending it to my father these many years past. I suspect it has also ended up in a tip somewhere. Must check that with my step-mother. Or maybe just let it go and not worry about it, which seems much the better option. ■

Rhubard 86 – John and Diane Fox

John : You did exactly the right thing in regards to your accident. My wife had something similar happen to her when, after a slight bingle, the offending driver wanted to handle the repairs himself as he thought he'd lose his job if the accident was reported. She took all of his details, gave him three days to respond, and then contacted our insurer anyway. He was trying it on and hoping it would go away. We had a discussion about this. ■

Diane : Dad's cancer had spread to his lungs by the end stages of his illness. I guess it took about 15 years from first diagnosis to his death, and he probably had the prostate cancer for a few years prior to that. I've been making sure that the doctor adds in the prostate cancer marker check into the list for my annual blood tests – I gather these are not automatic, even for men my age. My brother tells me he's been doing the same so some good may come of it all. I think you could probably put his death down to multiple organ failure. He'd just had enough. ■

brg 112 – Bruce Gillespie

The Zoom meeting for the John Bangsund Nova Mob event went quite well. A lot of the time familiarity with a certain software application will make it easier to use. The best thing to do is to keep using it rather than fighting it. Zoom, and the various other video conferencing software apps will be with us for a long time to come. I honestly can't see us getting back to anything like normal until the latter part of 2021. So things like the Nova Mob will continue in this way. ■

The major problem I'm finding with the lock-down is a feeling of disinterest in most things. It's hard to get going on anything, and, when I do, I'm more than willing to stop. I don't stick to routines terribly well so that doesn't help. My hope is that the upcoming warmer weather will help get me moving. ■

The Fretful Porpentine 34 – David Grigg

Nice piece about John Bangsund. ■

You note: "It's getting tricky, with so much of my reading now being for the podcast, to know how much of it to include here in ANZAPA." You'll be pleased to hear that I have the same problem (Strange that!)

Back when I was running the MATILDA weblog in the 2000s I tried to review the Australian books I read, giving them a reasonable treatment without getting into essay length. I've decided to re-start that idea, as you'll see in the recent issues of PERRYSCOPE, and keep the other reviews to capsule length. The problem then comes to timing: do I want to publish a review of a book before I've had a chance to discuss it on the podcast, assuming that is what I will be doing? Well, no, is the answer. So there is a bit of a shuffle with the reviews, ensuring the podcast discussion comes first, then the review will be put into PERRYSCOPE, and then up on GoodReads and the FaceBook Australian literature page I started earlier this year. Given the number of things I have to keep in mind to make this work I'm sure I'm going to stuff it up at some point.

Little Blue Number 2

On the other side of the discussion the point needs to be made that our discussions of books tends to be a very different beast to a straight written review. I find the two writing exercises very different. The notes I make for the podcast about a certain book are aimed directly at a conversational tone. The bones of which I can then extract later if I want for a longer review. It seems to be working. I think. ■

Both you and my wife have told me now that I should read Sarah Bailey. I'll get there, someday. Kate Atkinson you've mentioned enough for me to add her to the list as well. But I won't read your PIRANESI review here until I've read the book and we've discussed it on the podcast. ■

RYCTo Christina Lake (and me): "I'm very keen on non-fiction myself, but the requirements of the podcast have rather de-railed that." It appears we've both come to the same conclusion that we've been pushing it a bit too hard with our reading for the podcast, and a change is required. Hopefully we've caught it in time (I think we have) and the subtle changes we've instituted with the upcoming schedule should make things a bit easier. It is certainly something we have to keep an eye on. And, yes, I'm happy to admit it is my fault for getting too enthusiastic about particular themes and topics to be discussed. ■

Necessity 156 – Jack Herman

Given your general interest and your past working life I expected you'd be watching and listening to a lot of current affairs. I used to be addicted to a similar path but decided some time back to move away from that addiction. And I feel a lot better for it. Thirty minutes of news in the evening, a few browses of newspaper and ABC websites to check the headlines and I'm done for the day. I don't doubt that I'm missing a lot of the nuance and subtleties of what's going on, yet feel I'm getting enough information to stay up with what's happening. And that's plenty. ■

You have my sympathies regarding the addition of an extra person in your household, however welcome she may be. For a while the Victorian lock-down meant that we had four adults in this house, all working in separate rooms. Well, I say separate. Mine is in the dining room, which is an open walkway which means I have people walking past me on a regular basis. The others are in little rooms of their own. That was only fair as I was the only one not actually working for a living. But four was just one too many for this house. We have solved that now with our daughter moving out into a nearby apartment. More on that at later time. ■

RYCTo Marc Ortlieb: "How is Richard Colbeck still a Minister?" He knows too many secrets and is an old mate of Eric Abetz. He's done a spectacularly hopeless job at all of this. Chances of him remaining in his post until the next election: 100%. This current Federal Government, like so many of its ilk, have no sense of accountability. ■

RYCTo Gerald Smith: Gorton voting against himself in that party election for leader must rank as one of the selfless acts of any politician in Australian political history. As I recall his reasoning was along the lines of: "If a clear majority didn't want me then I didn't see any point in staying." He'd realised his time was past and decided to move on. If only others did the same. I never like the idea of past Prime Ministers remaining in Parliament. They always cause trouble in their own party, putting themselves ahead of everything else. ■

Plague of the Living Dead 4 – Kim Huett

I'm guessing your mystery thespian is Angry Anderson. Though who he is supposed to be portraying is beyond me. ■

RYCTo Me: The major overriding feeling I have about my retirement is one of relief. I just don't think I was on the same level as most people I worked with. They all seemed to be very sensitive souls who were unable to take any form of criticism at all, taking it as personal rather than as directed to the work, no matter how I introduced the discussion. They should have been around in IT in the 1980s! My work in IT over the last 30 years was as a contractor. I signed specific length contracts and I then felt duty bound to fulfil that requirement. So noticing the problems with management early didn't really help. I wish it did. I had wanted to get through my career without walking out on a contract. Nearly made it. I resigned from the second-last as I didn't trust my manager to do his job properly, and he wouldn't let me do mine without continually micro-managing. ■

RYCTo Me: Thanks for your explanation of the Hugo Award fiction categories over the early period of the awards, even if it is theoretical. It tends to make sense. The consistency of length description was a problem early on. I keep on mentioning it on the podcast as we are gradually getting closer to the years when the categories expanded. It is interesting to watch, though probably not for everyone. ■

Little Blue Number 2

Sketchy 3 – Christina Lake

My mother's family came from around Crediton, over by Exeter. I've driven through there but probably not as far over as Barnstaple. Probably drove all around it. We've been further down to Bocastle and Padstow to Penzance. You know, the typical touristy spots. ■

Running a marathon: Gawd!! I admire the work, though not enough to try to emulate it. ■

Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

RYCTo Garry Dalrymple: "I note reports some bacteria in hospitals are gaining resistance to high alcohol disinfectants. Not sure how they manage it, but it seems impressive." Stan Robinson, in his novel AURORA, makes a very strong point that bacteria evolve very much faster than us, due mainly to the much shorter gap between generations. Hence you get bacteria evolving to gain resistance to anything. There are some reports that the COVID-19 virus is also evolving though it appears not to make it more injurious to health but more to make it easier to catch. Just what we need. I'm guessing nay vaccine will only work for about six months, by which time the virus will have mutated enough to require another, different, vaccine for the new version. This will go on for some time until real "herd immunity" relegates it to another of those background corona viruses that we all get once or twice a year. ■

RYCTo Me: "Sounds as if things were getting tight all over towards the end of 2019. Much as I was seeing in lower end work in country areas." A number of my old IT mates could always tel if a recession was coming when I lost my job and had trouble finding another one. This happened in 2000 (post Y2K and Ansett collapse), late 2000's (GFC) and then again in 2019. I reckon a recession earlier this year was on the cards which got swallowed up by the COVID crisis. There will still be a recession it's just that people will shift the cause.

I've been having a good run with the reading. Then again I've set myself a schedule and attempt to make time available each day. I'm never usually very good at scheduling as I tend to get distracted. Actually that's not quite true: I schedule well, I just don't usually stick to it. ■

From the Lair of the LYNX 113 – LYNC

The prevalence of asbestos in Australian building is actually quite scary. We were lucky with our renovation in the late 1990s – when we demolished an old weatherboard extension at the back of the house – in that none was found. ■

Crash of the Hard Disk 50 – Gary Mason

RYCTo Me: My wife, Robyn, and I came to the conclusion about 15-20 years ago that we were never going to be able to qualify for a Government pension and so aimed to be self-funded retirees via our superannuation accounts. Once the kids were through school we started to push more money into those accounts and I changed from a crappy fund to an industry one. The change in our fortunes over the past 10 years was quite marked. Robyn has been in the Victorian Government super fund for almost 30 years so she has been doing very well all the way through. Our next boost should be when we sell our existing house and downsize. And that should be in the next three to four years. Like you I want nothing to do with Centrelink. ■

Life on Earth 30 – John Newman

RYCTo Me: 1997 since my last appearance in ANZAPA? Sounds about right. Around that time I was getting heavily into organising Aussiecon 3 so probably decided I needed to drop everything else. Gawd, that seems a long time ago. ■

Oddly enough I'm quite enjoying retirement. The stress levels are way down on what they were. For one thing. And it gives me a lot of time to do the things I want to do for another. ■

Sparrowgrass & battle-twigs 70 – Roman Orszanski

Good to hear that the fund-raising went well. Actually it sounds like it went much better than expected. Having a method of pledging and donating money via a website strikes me as a very sensible option that will serve you well into the future. Gotta look on the bright side of things this year. ■

Like you I didn't get the hang of Discord as used by CoNZeland. My major thought about the convention was one of sadness, for both the organisers and for New Zealand fandom. I would guess they were looking at a kickalong of interest in sf in New Zealand after the convention which probably won't now occur. And to think of all the hard work they put in before it all blew up. ■

Little Blue Number 2

You really know you're home when you find a wombat in your bed 189 – Cath Ortlieb

There are just some years that you want to forget, even before they are over. I'd have to say that 2020 ranks up there with 1981 and 1983 for me. I've been lucky in that I haven't had too many things go awry for me over my lifetime – no major illness in the family, with only my mother dying way too young. I hope your chemo works out for you and that the outcomes are what you hope for. ■

Knot the Same – Marc Ortlieb

Thanks for your memories of John Bangsund and the re-start of SASFS. Another memory from long ago. ■

Your reviews of F&SF from 1970 remind me of the reading that David Grigg and I are doing to read the short works nominated for the Hugo Awards in a given year. They can be a real mixed bag. Some still hold up well but others... Well, they are probably best forgotten. ■

RYCTo Me: As stated elsewhere here, I'm fine with my retirement, and I certainly don't miss working. Having people not listen to your opinions and treating you like you are an idiot most of the time became wearing. As I used to say in the workplace: "If I want this sort of abuse I can just go home!" They didn't like that either. Far too serious and no sense of humour. ■

Debussy 10 – Margaret Riep

RYCTo Me: You quite threw me when you mentioned "I still haven't listened to your podcasts, other than the one we just happened to hear on ABC Radio a long time ago." What is she talking about? I thought. Our podcasts haven't appeared on the radio as far as I'm aware, and the "long ago" seems to imply a period prior to David and I working together. So I have come to think that you may be thinking of the time I appeared on ABC Radio's *Books and Writing* program to discuss C. J. Dennis's verse novel THE GLUGS OF GOSH. Was that it? ■

Fascinating reading your Silk Road adventures. Keep them coming. ■

Oz SF Fan – Lucy Schmeidler

There are websites out there on the web which will convert practically any text format document into a PDF. You just need to google them. Which will lead someone (Eric maybe) to tell me to steer clear of them. The OpenOffice and LibreOffice Writer apps both have a Convert to PDF function which is pretty useful. ■

The Erotic Wombat – Gerald Smith

Good luck with the move to Adelaide. The city has its attractions but I've now been too long gone (almost 40 years) to want to move back. My life and family are all (or nearly all) in Victoria now. But the great thing about fandom is that will nearly always know someone wherever you move. ■

I also worked in the ATO in Adelaide, a long, long time ago, in 1980-81. The building then was in King William Street, and I notice it has now changed address. Hope that works out for you as well. ■

Les Chattes Parties 170 – Sally Yeoland

The Nova Mob meeting in early October was a great remembrance but I think the work you have reprinted here surpasses it. I hope you are well and looking after yourself. ■

