

LITTLE BLUE NUMBER 8

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This fanzine acknowledges the members of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is produced in Hawthorn, Victoria, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

INTRODUCTION

Green? Not so sure about this one, yet.

GOINGS ON IN THE GROVE

Further to the house renovation going on at number 28, two doors up, everything seemed to come to a halt for a while. I could only presume they had finally finished. And then the workmen were back, this time dismantling the cover over their car port. It seems they had violated a recent heritage overlay that had been put in place over a number of houses in this street. This overlay applies to the street view, in that you cannot make any major changes to the view of the property from the street without permission. So, if your front fence is falling down and needs to be replaced you can only replace it with something exactly the same. It doesn't matter that it might only have been that way since the 1960s, what's there now has to stay as is. Putting a cover over the car port wasn't allowed apparently.

When I was writing last time about the cat we have "acquired" I mentioned the possibility of flooding and rain. Well, that problem didn't take long to manifest itself.

We've been having a very wet and cool spring this year in Melbourne: lots of rain and some cold days and nights; very much not a normal spring. Mostly the rain has been of the steady variety, raining all day but not being overly heavy. Then, in early November, we had a downpour.

But first some background. We live here in Elphin Grove halfway up what was once called Glenferrie Hill. It's not that high but the slope is persistent and with all the nearby land coverage – roads, footpaths, driveways and buildings – a lot of the rain that falls here, and further up the hill, does what water always does and seeks the quickest path down to the lowest point; not much tends to soak into gardens or the ground. Very occasionally we get a thunderstorm cell that drops its rain load in just the wrong spot. The water pouring down off the high ground gets into our street and overflows the gutters in the road up onto the footpath. Even then things are normally okay as the footpath has been built to have a slight slope away from the houses so the water will channel down the footpath into the drains. That's what it's supposed to do, though the footpath is old and is, in places, warped by the trees growing in gardens and on the nature strips. And sometimes, when the rain is really bad, the water overflows the street, and the footpath, and spills into our off-street parking area, through our front garden and ends up on our front verandah. And floods.

Luckily we've never had it into the house, though we have been close. It doesn't happen often: probably twice in the first 15 years we've been here, and then probably another 5 or 6 times since. Climate change is screwing up the local weather patterns and causing more of these severe weather events.

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So in early November we had just such a “flooding event”, which by the time I went out to check, had the front verandah about 5 cms under water and rising. I know what to do in these events and can stop the water rising any further though it does entail me having to put down a sandbag – cunningly disguised as a bag of potting mix – in the right place and making vigorous use of a broom to keep the water away from the parking area. Such was the case this time and all was fine after about 15 minutes.

The cat, of course, sat on a chair on our front verandah, watching serenely over the rising water as its bed slowly swirled backwards and forwards. It frankly didn't seem to be bothered in the slightest.

An hour later, and, other than the mess left on the verandah tiles, you might not have know there had been a problem. The cat bed, however, was a write-off. A new one had to be purchased and the cat rug disposed of.

I thought we might have purchased something a little better than our previous cat bed, but was reliably informed (by the missus) that the old style was all that was available unless we wanted to get into the hundreds of dollars. I did not. So we did not.

Cat update: Nothing seems to have changed, though I have noticed it almost rubbing up against me when I sit outside reading the paper. Almost, but not quite. A slight tilt of the head is all I get, though that is markedly more than I got about 8 months ago. I give it a pat and a head and cheek scratch when I go to change its water each morning, or when I passing during the day And Rob gives it a combing once a week or so. It seems content.

Further update: We've been cat sitting for my daughter during the first week of December. Given my indifference to cats of any sort, the feeding arrangements were left to Robyn. I seemed to be left with the cleaning up. The only interesting thing of note during the week was watching the indoor cat (Gus) staring through the screen security door at the front of the house, at Jessie (the outdoor cat). No hissing, no snarling – just the long cold stare. Having seen Jessie stare down the dog from next door I have no doubt as to who would win that staring contest.

Comments on Mailing 323

Official Organ – David Grigg

I am liking these covers of yours.

And a very hearty congratulations to **Claire** as our new El Presidente.

Chez Ashby 3 – Derrick Ashby

ReYctoMe: We look like getting my father's funeral and associated events all taken care of in March 2022. Nearly two years after he died. It's annoying but a lot of other people have had it worse, so I'm just going to leave it at that. •

Another one on my back about Patrick O'Brian! Will this never end? Well, yes, if I just get off my backside and read the first one. That would do it. I hope. •

Quoz 79 – Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer

Mark – It sounds like your pub service is the same as ours: QR codes, pay and order at the table, etc. Not sure how long this sort of thing is going to last, though I am expecting it to be lifted before Christmas. It does get over the problem of being in the wrong place at the bar where you get totally ignored by the bar staff and all new customers think you've already been served and are just

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waiting. Still and all, I prefer going up to the bar to order. You never know what you are going to encounter there and it gives you a break from the conversation pit. •

ReYctoMe regarding the 1966 Hugos: You will, hopefully, have seen the final article in **The Alien Review 2**. No-one seems to have commented on it so far, so I can only assume they've just gone "ho, hum" and moved on to something else. •

Re masks at conventions: I agree that Discon's policies are the best for this present time. I tend to think that security (or mask policing) in bar areas is a matter for the bar staff who will be much better prepared and understand the rules better. If you are sitting at a table with a drink in front of you then I presume you are drinking it, so no mask would be required. If you leave the table then mask on, same as for your previous pub commentary. •

Claire – The only cross-over we have in our reading appears to be with the Hugo nominated works. •

The Fiery Participle 47 – Leigh Edmonds

ReYctoMe on magnifying glasses: I don't yet feel like I'm ready for the "Daylight" device you mention. Though a good strong white light is very useful for reading purposes. I have a favourite spot in the lounge room where I like to sit and read, with some sport on the telly in the background with the sound down. The light there is too yellow, and is covered by a lamp shade as well, so I'll need to get something to help out. I have a feeling I will have to either sneak it into the house or get the seal of approval from herself first. •

Yes, I do have your comments on the two issues of **Perryscope**, for which many thanks. •

Re scans of John Foyster fanzines from SAPS: I might be interested in having a look at those sometime if I may. I'm happy to chip in to help with the scanning costs. •

Rhubard 92 – John and Diane Fox

John – ReYctoMe regarding gins: I had not known of the gin you linked to (Muscat Gin by Backwoods), though I will certainly attempt to track it down next time I'm up in the north-east of Victoria. I see that it is a collaboration with Scion Winery, from Rutherglen. I know that winery from a couple of visits and they are certainly on my list each time I get there. If only because they offer something a bit different from the standard heavy reds of the area. •

Diane – ReYctoMe regarding Madeleine St John: I doubt she was aiming for a Booker Prize winner with her last book. I think we just thought that was the sort of book that was being sold at that time. She might well have been right. Doesn't make the book any better though unfortunately. •

brg 118 – Bruce Gillespie

Recipes: I learnt early on that the trick was to read the whole recipe through first before you start to actually cut, slice, baste or set ovens to warm. You don't have to remember or understand it all but it gives you a chance to pick up the vital clues such as "And now, using the marinade that you reserved from earlier...", when, of course, the recipe did not say that I was to use only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the bloody marinade, and retain the other bloody quarter, did it? •

ReYctoMarc re Yvonne: The second series of **ASFR** is on the cards to be scanned, it's just a matter of finding the time and energy. It is certainly a title that we should have on FANAC. Hopefully we can get permission from the remaining editors for that to occur at some time. •

ReYctoMe regarding **Piranesi**: You're the only person I know who thought the same as me about the gender of the protagonist. Neither David Grigg nor my wife thought that. I can't understand why: the author is female and the main character is a first-person PoV, so why would you think

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anything else? I fear, Bruce, we may be at odds with the rest of the universe. Such is life. •

ReYCtoMe regarding Keith Dunstan: I don't think I have a copy of **Wousers** either. I must look it up. •

ReYCtoMe regarding covers for **Perryscope**: I've gone beyond the time when I cared what people thought of me, so putting photos of me, flattering or otherwise, on the covers is just a sort of running gag now. I can't draw to save myself, so using old photos seemed like a reasonable idea so I'm sticking with it. I have noticed that no-one else is dumb enough to do it. •

The Fretful Porpentine 40 – David Grigg

Good to see the new hat, suits you. •

ReYCtoMe regarding gin: I do drink gin straight, sometimes with ice in the summer months. But I'm also partial to a G-and-T and a Negroni, but this last only with dry vermouth; a concoction that one bartender told me was called a Cardinal, presumably from the red colouring in the Campari. •

ReYCtoMe regarding lock-downs: that little sequence of comments started when I had something specific to say in the first of them. Then something came up about a week later, so I threw that in, and then it just followed from there. I have been informed that I was starting to get a bit fixated by the pandemic and associated lock-downs – though I don't personally think so - and have now decided to give it all a miss. I look on that issue of **Perryscope** as being very much a product of that month. Something to look back on in a few years' time and wonder. •

Necessity 162 – Jack Herman

Further to my previous notes re scanning of old newszines, I have been in touch with Roy Ferguson and have his permission to visit and scan in his old print copies of WASFFAN. No idea when that will be, though probably in the New Year. •

I had rather forgotten about the great Harry Flashman being in Afghanistan. I must go back and re-read that one and then move on to the others. I concur with your thoughts on the recent Afghan War; a total waste of time and money with little or nothing gained. Except maybe for the creation of the Afghan cricket team. •

Re the updated Tesla self-driving system: I own a relatively new (2018) Subaru which has a whizz-bang automated braking system (ABS), designed to stop you ploughing into the back of a car in front. I have been told that the system will practically put the car onto its nose in order to stop it in time. A recent drive on a highway to Gippsland demonstrated this to effect. A long piece of opaque white plastic sheeting had previously fallen off a vehicle onto the road and had then been pitched into the air in front of me by another vehicle. As the plastic fluttered through the air it started to come down thirty metres or so directly ahead of me in the middle of the lane. The ABS mistook this for a decently solid object and slammed on the brakes. A bit disconcerting but not a big problem usually. That is, except for the van behind me who was not expecting me to brake so sharply when, as far as they were concerned, the road ahead was completely clear. Luckily no collision occurred as I steered the car to one side – just a little – the ABS lost focus on the plastic and normal functioning was resumed. One to watch out for. •

The John Sayles film **Matewan** (1987) deals with a case of a miners' strike against a coal company which paid its workers in script rather than cash. An excellent film as I recall. •

ReYCtoMe regarding gin: I believe the juniper berries were imported, most probably from Croatia or Serbia. I think I remember hearing that someone in Tasmania is attempting to grow a crop due to the large demand within Australia. But, like a lot of these things, there is a long lead time before the plants can start producing any quality or quantity. •

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ReYctoMe regarding the Lord Darcy stories: Being a big fan of these I'm aiming to write a longish piece about them for **The Alien Review 4**. •

ReYctoMe regarding typos: I'm starting to think of them as Easter Eggs I plant for the more observant readers (cough!). •

TV: Thanks for the recommendations. I shall check out some of them, when we get through all the other ones we have lined up. •

Gaston J. Feeblehare 21 – Kim Huett

You may be interested to know that the issue of **Perhaps** that you feature was used as a prop by Leigh Edmonds in his recent FANAC Zoom session about Australian Fannish History. He seems of the same opinion as yourself as to its standing. •

I seriously doubt there would be an hour's worth of material in any discussion of me. •

Sketchy 9 – Christina Lake

You are probably right about the fact that the Laura house was quite large; it certainly had high ceilings – probably 12-15 feet. It had a long central corridor so you could open it for any breeze that might be around, and the walls were very, very thick. When you are a kid, though, it all just seems normal. •

Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

The one thing that nuclear power proponents don't talk about is the waste disposal problem. I guess that because it's the same for all other forms of power generation, and they just don't want to talk about that either. •

From the LAIR of the LYNX 119 – Lync

Thanks for the screen grab photo from the Nova Mob session. Can't see me using it for a cover of **Perryscope** though, sorry. •

Crash of the Hard Disk 55 – Gary Mason

Re your interest in the recent Canadian election: I'm guessing it's one way to ensure you remind yourself of where everything is in that vast country. I'm not sure I could come up with another reason to follow it that closely. Just read the final tallies at the end of the day would be my take. Though I guess this is equivalent to me watching a Test cricket match between England and India. Which team should I follow? Do I care? I will say that I usually have it on, with the volume muted, as moving wallpaper in the background while I'm reading. An odd thing to be doing, I know. [I generally adhere to the ABE approach when comes to sport: Anybody But England. Just 'cos.] •

Good to hear you contributing to a reprint collection of Mercier cartoons. I'm sure I've come across some of his work from time to time when I'm trawling through Trove, probably looking for C. J. Dennis poems. Either that or I've seen his work reprinted elsewhere. A National Cartoon Gallery? Must drop in there next time I pass though Coff's Harbour. •

Re your mailing comments title font: I recognise that font! Does it have a specific name? •

Knot Kneaded – Marc Ortlieb

Re your F&SF review: I'm still working on stories in the late 1960s – currently 1967 – so it will take me a year or so to catch up. But looking through the contents of your September 1970 issue it is interesting to note that only Swann, of the fiction contributors that month, was producing works in the mid-60s that caught the eye of awards' voters. The list here almost seems to be from a completely different genre entirely. •

Re your comment on Laura: Everyone seems to take the road north from Adelaide and drive up the

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coast road. Don't. It's crap. Far better to take a little longer and pass through the Clare Valley, and then further up to Yakka, Gulnare, Georgetown, Gladstone and then Laura before heading to Melrose. Better scenery, and the chance to stop off at a winery or two. What else do you need? •

Interesting point re Jamestown High not having Year 12. I wasn't aware of it, and Dad's no longer around to ask him. •

I have more on my education coming up in future issues of **Perryscope**. The January issue will feature my primary school years and sometime next year I'll start on high school. I'll probably have to split that over a couple of issues as a fair amount went on during that period. •

I'm guessing the photo on page 25 was taken at Aussiecon 4? Looks like a bunch of reprobates anyway. •

From the Threshold 6 – Ann Poore

Do give the new gins a try, I'm sure you'll be surprised at the range and variety. It was never a drink I imbibed during my formative years but have graduated to it as I've gotten older. The standard British London or Bristol variety is only useful as the alcoholic portion of a G-and-T, or other cocktail. The recent Australian varieties utilise a range of different Australian botanicals adding to the flavour and nose. •

The Erotic Wombat 20 – Gerald Smith

Thanks for your trip report regarding your Ceduna sojourn. I'm trying to talk my wife Robyn into a long road trip from Melbourne, up through Mildura to Wilpena Pound, back down to Port Augusta, over to Ceduna, down to Port Lincoln, back to Port Augusta again, down to Adelaide and home. We're in no rush for this as we've been doing a bit of driving lately – with more to come in the New Year – so this can wait for a few years until she retires. But it is good to have recommendations for things to do and see. •

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Thanks to all the other contributions in yet another massive mailing. I keep reading them but am not finding anything to comment about.

Stay well.