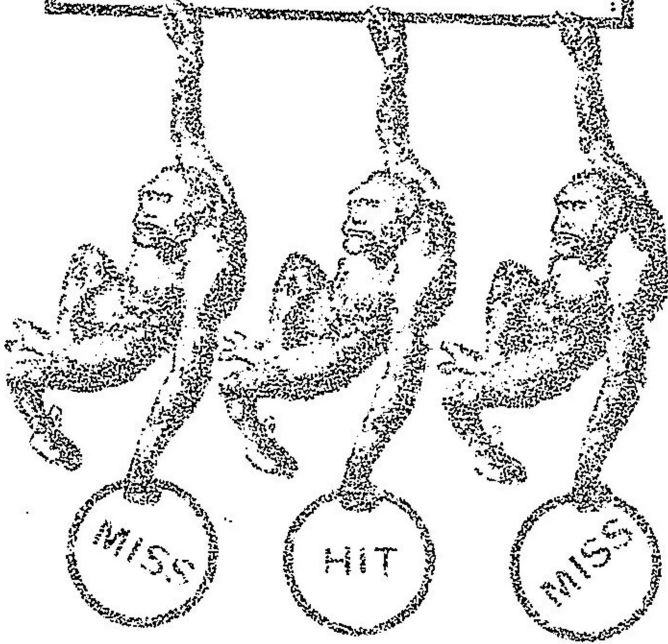
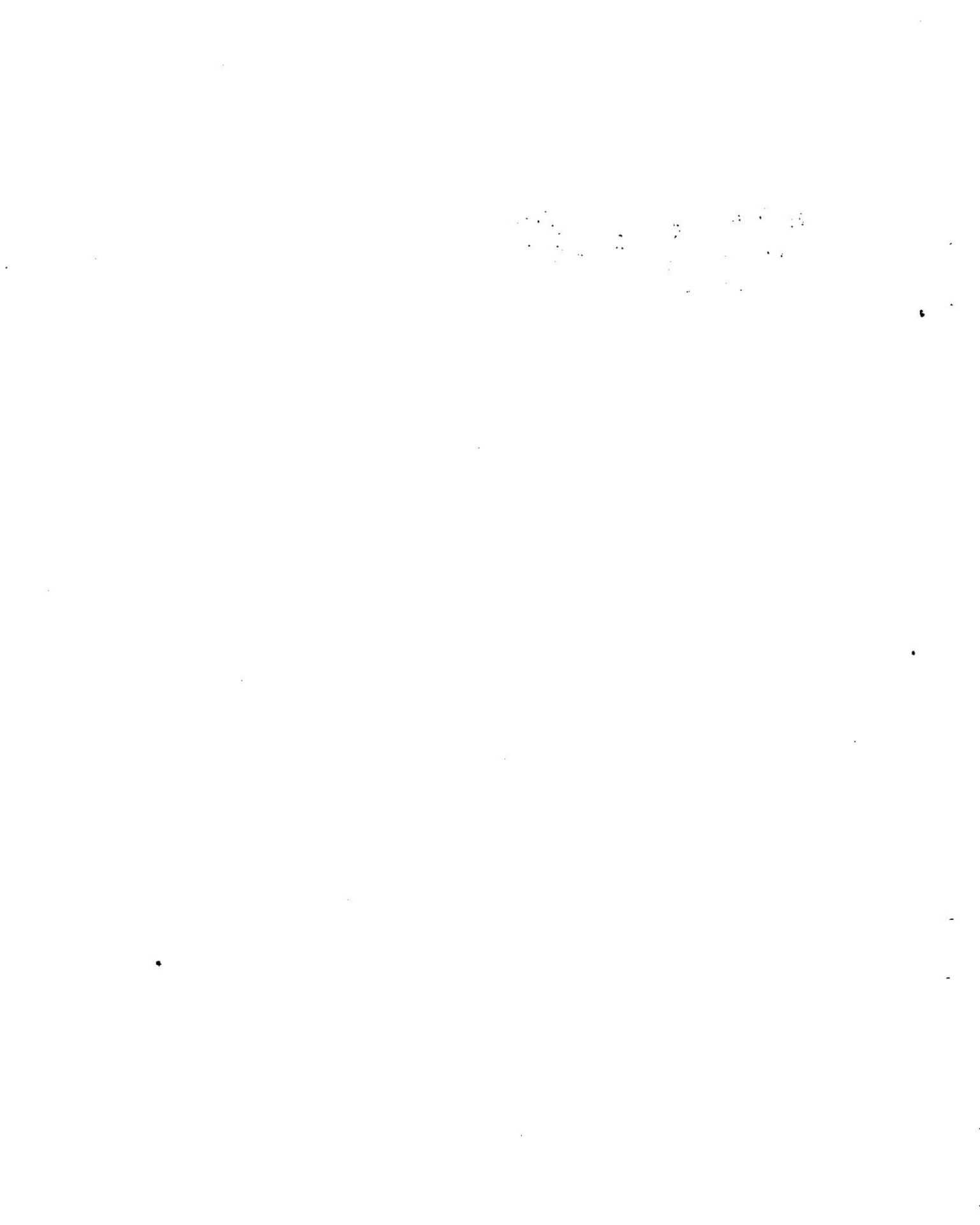


# NEXUS





# NEXUS

NEXUS 5, published for the 47th OMPA mailing, March 1966, by Pete Weston, 9, Porlock Crescent Northfield, Birmingham, 31. U.K.

THANK YOU THAT MAN ...I've rather neglected OMPAc lately, but do still feel immensely grateful to that member last time who took me carefully by the hand and explained to me the mysteries of the universe, viz. mailing comments. I can still remember that tender explanation "...you see, they're just like letters-of-comment, Pete..", though I can't for the life of me remember the kind member who helped me so much. I think it might have been Richard Mann...I certainly remember that the zine was one I'd not seen before, with a green back page, and one side printed upside down. I'm sorry, Rich, if it was not you, but whoever it was might consider that after doing a 40-odd page NEXUS 3 (for whatever it was worth), I just might not feel inclined to wax long and poetic over the last mailing.

There won't be much in the mailing comments section this time, either, for the rather simple reason that I don't have the last mailing to hand, to comment upon. Being concerned for the growth of that delicate seedling, the BSFA Fanzine Library, I have given almost all my own fanzines to the official custodian, or whatever, Charlie Winstone (and I might suggest a few of you others out there do the same), including all my OMPazines, and yes, including the Christmas mailing. Such carelessness - but it was a pretty disgraceful mailing, anyway; possibly the smallest since the very beginnings of OMPA. Just before deadline, when I was in Sheffield, Brian didn't even know if there would be a mailing, since he'd received nothing at all. I'm glad that ultimate disgrace was postponed for a while longer. So, I'm all in favour of increased activity requirements. If I thought I could keep it up for very long myself, I'd suggest something from everybody in every mailing. Hell, even a chatter-zine, like this NEX, is better than nothing. It's also better, I might mention, than a list of what some American member has contributed to other organisations. I don't remember who that was, either, save that it was one of those anonymous West Coast fans who turn up with minimum-activity, year after year, Sorry, whoever-it-was, but I'm not interested, don't want to know. Let's have something to read!

KUDOS for Dick Eney's fascinating series on the Population Explosion, (More cheering than I'd dare hope before), for Ian Peters brilliant HAGGIS, mailing after mailing, for Bill Donaho's VIPER, about different historical attitudes - but there was a sheet missing from my copy, Bill!, for Alva Rogers' BIXEL, Fred Patten's LEFNUI, and a few more I forgot in there.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON THE WAY TO THE OFFICE.... The other morning, I woke up, looked out of the window, saw a beautiful white world, sparkling in the light of the street lamps, glistening merrily through the delicately-engraved patterns of the frost on the panes, groaned deathily and crept back under the blankets. There I lay, dreaming up further complicated sentences to bewilder OMPA members, and slowly a thought dawned on my incredibly tired brain. I had to get up, because..

Recently, my portable typewriter became totally useless for cutting a stencil. I then persuaded my employers to let me borrow an office machine, to take home in the boot of my car. This arrangement worked fairly smoothly, until one fine day I was abruptly transferred from our Small Heath factory, in Birmingham, to the howling wilderness of Redditch, where we have a small ~~factory~~ factory of remarkably low production. Kaput went my carefully-maintained connections. No more access to a typewriter, no more access to a duplicator ! ...this meant a drastic cut-down on fanac. But as things worked out, I was able to borrow an office machine, on condition I brought it back before opening time, since the machine was used for a vitally important task during the day.

You'll begin to see now why I had to get into work that morning. For, sure enough, I'd borrowed the machine the previous night.

No breakfast and no shave put me outside the house five minutes earlier than I had any right to expect. Then the race against time begun. Would I make it, would I get to the office before 8.15 (I know that's a funny time to begin an office job. It's a funny firm, and I didn't chose that time). To the back of the car. Balance the typewriter and my briefcase on the wing, with a steadying left hand, and fumble with the lock to open the boot. Frozen solid. (I am forced to keep my vehicle outside the house; a primitive custom, but unavoidable, regrettably.) Round to the front. Balance the typer on the front wing, with a steadying left hand. Fumble with the lock. Frozen solid. Minutes are ticking by. Place the typer on the ground. Stoop and blow into the lock, shaping the lips into a funnel to pump vast quantities of super-heated air into the tumbler. Try again. The lock opens. Put key in ignition, start her up, fumble under the seat for a rag and the anti-ice spray. Run around the back, look at the boot lock, decide to put typer on front seat, after all. Run around front. Wipe windscreen, run around back, wipe side windows. Run around front. Re-start motor. Place typer on front seat, wipe inside windows. Engage reverse gear, start her up. Get out, run around back, remove brick from under rear wheel (a safeguard to prevent car from rolling back down the steep incline on which it is parked.) Run around the front. Re-start engine. Gears grating, roar down the road, and turn right for Redditch.

I should have stayed in bed. Only five minutes behind schedule, and that, driving on icy roads, isn't at all bad going, I hit a pot-hole. Bump, and a minute or two later, a sort of methodical bump-bump-grind, as my rear tyre toar itself to shreds on the road, flat as a pancake. The rut had hit the rim of the wheel (or vice versa; that's like telling your victim to take his mouth off your boot), denting the rim, and letting all the air escape from my tubeless, carefully fitted tyre. Hell & damnation, since my spare had a blowout the preceding week, and was a write-off.

There was a garage pretty close to where I had discovered the flat tyre, so I was able to crawl into it, and ask for assistance. At 8.00 in the morning, you don't get much help anywhere, let alone a deserted garage, miles from anywhere. Luck was with me - there was a fairly capable chap there, who put a tube into my useless, tubeless tyre, and fitted the two back on to the damaged rim. For the benefit of non-car-owners, I'd better explain that a tubeless tyre is rendered airtight only by the precise fit of the rubber tyre on to the metal wheel rim. If the latter is dented, no seal, & no air.

I phoned my new boss up from the garage; "Good morning," I squeaked, "er.. "Where the devil is my typewriter," came an answering blast. He was a little cross, since I didn't finally arrive until after 9.00AM. It wasn't my fault, but I daren't ask to borrow the machine again..

In case you wonder how come I'm typing this - I managed to arrange with the Good Old Small Heath Office for me to come in at the weekend and take my usual machine home with me. But when you get your next ZENITH, stop and wonder for a while, since the final result will have been typed on no less than seven different machines.

While I'm talking about tyres (or tires, for our US circulation), I might mention how I burst my spare tyre the other week.

Rog Peyton, editor of the BSFA VECTOR, and Charlie Winstone, stout OMPAN and BSFA Treasurer, were invited to a combined social meeting/Yarcon meeting/BSFA Committee meeting at Doreen Parker's mother's place, in Peterboro'. I'm not on either Committee, though I have a selfish interest in the success of the Yarcon, and may be a BSFA Committee member next year, but did have the exalted status of 'friend', so was invited. Besides, I have a car, which made it rather more easy to get all the people up to Peterboro' at small expense.

We drove up with little trouble, save for an amusing episode in Coventry. Doreen had advised me to come via Warwick. But looking at the map, I could see no route to Peterboro' through Warwick which wouldn't take us some 20 miles out of our way. So, we went through Coventry - or tried to. It would seem that you can't get through Coventry. I tried turning left, and kept coming back to where I'd started from. So I tried turning right, and kept coming back to where I'd started. By this time, Chas & Rog were waving back at people, who were lining the pavements waiting our next circuit of the town. I couldn't go straight on, for a confusion of those horrible Continental road signs barred the way, and who knows what they mean? (European and U.S. readers - ignore such esoteric references to our fair land). I finally found a deserted dual carriageway which seemed to go in the right direction. We shot around a bend and saw a huddle of huts across the road, and a yellow sign, "WIMPY". A man told us that we could carry on if we wished, but would end up in a deep hole. The road wasn't open to traffic yet. With red-faces, we back-tracked, and finally got past Coventry. We nearly ran out of petrol, when there wasn't a garage for miles, and Rog & myself discussed the production of a Drinking Guide to Britain; listing all the pubs, such as the one we found, whose beer was utter DELETED BY CENSOR.

Not much happened in Peterboro, though there was an interesting incident on departing. The ~~La. Libr~~ less broken the meeting up on the Sunday morning, and Doreen had gone home to cook her husband some breakfast, Archie &

Beryl Mercer had left early, in their new Triumph Herald with the scratches down the side that Archie had put there that previous evening, to reach Bristol before darkness fell, and the residium; - Rog, Chas, Roy Kay, Daff Sewell & myself, were going to leave as soon as we had had dinner. We decided to go along to a Chinese restaurant, almost traditional now at British fan-meetings, after which Daff would catch a train back to London, Roy would come as far as Rugby with Chas & Rog, and would then get his train for Liverpool, while we would return alone. That was the plan.

Everyone piled in at Doreen's mother's house, luggage in my boot, bodies cramped in my car (not designed for seating 3 in the back), and as we pulled away, the lads waved through the rear window, and Daff waved gaily from the front - she wasn't going in the back with that lot! After an interesting meal, we prepared to depart. Charlie Winstone wasn't very impressed with his first full-scale Chinese meal. Rog ate in consequence about 3 times as much as anyone else (ah, the faces that will be red, on reading this distorted account). Then, it started. Roy said, I've left my coat at the house. We all piled in the car, went back to the house, all got out, collected the coat, all got in, headed for the station at top speed, (since according to Daff, her train was due), arrived at the station, all piled out, went up to the ticket window to see Daff away. The man explained that British Rail was using the 24-hour timetable, and the two O'clock train Daff was after was due at two O'clock in the morning. Her next one was at 3.30 PM. "Well," I said benevolently, "we can't leave you here by yourself." Against Daff's protests, we all got back in the car, and I drove to the Bull, scene of the two-years-running Peterboro Conventions (No, it didn't actually last two years, more's the pity) We arrived at the Bull, parked on the historic car park where Charles-Platt-locked-himself-out-of-his-car-and-had-to-smash-a-window, and all piled out. The hotel bar had just closed. Dammit said Rog, angrily. Back to the station we went, all got out, saw Daff away, all got in, drove off, stopped at a garage. all got out & went to the Gents, all got in again.... as Roy said, after a while you get used to it, and your limbs take up their positions automatically. You find yourself sitting at home, knees under the armpits, head down and body sort of scrunched up.... I replied indignantly that I hoped he'd enjoy his walk to Rugby.

In Rugby we had some trouble; we approached a road island, and I saw a sign pointing left, saying "to the station". Blinkers out, I went around the island, and just as I was about to turn left, Roy said, "look there's another sign", and blow me down if there wasn't another British Rail sign pointing the other way. "WhichwaydoIgo" I flapped, "I don't know" said Roy, "Left" said Charlie, "Right" said Rog. In panic I went round the island to the starting point. Then Roy said "We want the Midland Region Station", so I went around the roundabout till I found a notice saying "Midland Region Station, this way". We turned off, dizzy from spinning in such a tight circle for so long, memories of similar happenings in Coventry renewed in our minds, as the disappointed crowds of spectators disappointedly guessed that we wouldn't be around again, and continued on their Sunday afternoon constitutionals, cheered by the unexpected dash of gait and idiocy they had witnessed.

At the station, we had to wait till 4.15 for Roy's train, and till .:00 for a surly British Railways' girl to open the doors of the canteen and let us in. We had the worst cup of coffee I've ever had. So unutterably foul was it, that thirsty as ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> was, Charlie could not drink his, and I found fumes from the vile stuff drifting up from my stomach throughout the rest of the journey. Rugby station is a dismal place, Victorian grandeur dreadfully mauled by modernisation, the result being the worst of both worlds.

Nothing much happened until just outside Birmingham, when we were cruising at a steady 55 mph, Rog dozing and Charlie reading, when a tyre blew out. It was one that had previously been plugged, and I guess the plug must have been torn out. We came to a stop safely, and had to change the tyre ;--the first we'd ever changed. Rog & myself felt quite proud of our prowess with the jack and spanner, and Rog kept looking at his hands, dirty with good honest dirt for the first time in years, and muttering, "I'm a mechanic. I changed a tyre" (a wheel actually - it wasn't till we arrived home that I found the tyre to be split and useless, which is why I had so much trouble the following week in Redditch).

I hope this little spin through my rather futile past has been of some interest to you. It has been rather fun re-living it all, as I've put it all down, straight on to stencil.

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DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT DODGEM CAR FAN. ? It begun during Al Lewis' visit to Birmingham last year, when Al, Rog, Chris Priest, Daff Sewell, Mary Reed & myself, all went along to Dudley zoo & castle (combined). At the time, Chris & myself were waging war for some reason, probably due to the perennial radioactivity caused by he liking Ballard, and my disagreeing with his taste. Or something like that, no matter.

During our walk around the somewhat run-down place, we came upon a dodgem car stand. Everyone piled in - although I think Al was content to stand and take photographs of the rest, and battle commenced. We soon found the knack of controlling a car; there is something joyful in the smooth sensation of power as you glide across the floor at a helpless Chris Priest, trapped up a corner or at low relative velocity, as you crash into the side of his car, sending him lurching and cursing to one side, and as you swoop away, like a hawk from the kill, banking into an Immelman turn to come back and let him have another burst across the bows. Daff & Mary were soon bruised all over (so we were told), and gave it up. Rog went on to the gambling machines, while Chris & myself, time after time, tilted lance at one another. Each time the power stopped, we would look at each other, nod happily, and have another shillings-worth. Hot, sticky, bruised and poor, we finally gave up, long having chased everyone else from the floor. The girls told us how comical we had looked, crouched over the wheels of our brightly painted cars, how Al had taken pictures of the pair of us, and probably thought we were both daft. It was good practice for me, who didn't have a car at the time, though Chris admitted that the dodgems were nothing new to him; he'd been dodging idiots at the wheels of other cars all week on the roads in London. After walking around a little further, we both looked at each other, smiled, and ran off, back to the combat. At the time we made such big plans - a dodgem car fanzine, trips to Battersea funfair, and lots more fun. Nothing came of it, though.

THEY'RE AN IGNORANT BUNCH AT THE BSFG.... Meeting night for the Birmingham Science Fiction Group is a rare occasion that appears along with the full moon, on the first Tuesday of every month. There is no connection between those two events.

At half past eight at a recent meeting, a new member made his appearance, a medium-sized chap with a merry, P.T.-instructor-type face, and no other remarkable assets save a collection of ASTOUNDING that was more extensive than that of any other member. Naturally, we hated him, but at least Charlie Winstone was able to ignore such subliminal urges as unworthy of our calling as fags, as prophets of the Great God Science Fiction, and he invited the lad into the snug coterie.

Half a dozen stalwarts of Birmingham fandom were seated around the flickering gas-fire in the Winstone front room, Charlie himself, of course, and Rog Peyton, editor of VECTOR!, Darroll Pardoe, long noted for his statement in WHO'S WHO IN SF FANDOM-1961, that "I've read Lord Of The Rings seven times !", Martin Pitt, of whom more later, John Derry, another newcomer, and in disgrace for confessing to liking J.G. Ballard, Mike Beard, King of the Trainspotters, and that was all. Pete Weston was conspicuous by the silence of his absence; occasional muffled giggling could be heard, echoing & re-echoing from the fan-room on the top floor of the large and somewhat rambling house, up in the corner of the building distant from any accommodation remotely conceivable as living quarters.

Indeed, the first I was to know about our two newcomers that evening was when Charlie came into the fan room and interrupted me. At the time I was shivering and freezing, for although Charlie had earlier very kindly switched on an electric fire, a gaping gap in the panels of the door kept the room temperature sub-zero, and between convulsions as another toe was hit by frostbite, was looking for a copy of DYNATRON 23. The story behind this particular search is long and pathetic; being mad keen to perpetuate fandom through the BSFA Fanzine Foundation, I had given my all, as regards my own fanzine collection, to Mike Beard when King & Curator of this section of the BSFA Empire. When, rather in character, he failed to do anything with this material save to let Cliff Teague take the best items, we took the remainder away from him, (much to his secret relief, I suspect), and installed it all in Charlie's place, along with three hundredweights of older material, donated by Cheltenham via the BSFA outpost in Liverpool. After a complete and thorough mixing, it was completely impossible to tell what we had, nor where it might be. And I now had need for that particular item. Cataloguing and collating being hardly begun at the time, I was pawing through the stacked piles in rather an aimless and hopeless way, and each pile failed to produce Tackett's Tribulation, but did produce all sorts of goodies I'd previously only read about. Amidst loads of N3F bumpf, dating well back into the forties, I found such as RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST, QUANDRY, OOPSLA, FANTASY FAN, PSYCHOTIC... and lots more. I even found a copy each of HARP STATESIDE, AND WILLIS DISCOVERS AMERICA, though not the INCOMPLEAT BURBEE, which I was eager to read at the time. Naturally, I didn't intend wasting time with the BSFG when this accumulation beckoned so temptingly...



As I was saying, Charlie interrupted, said something about another new fan had arrived, and would I be sociable and go and talk to him. I wasn't much interested, but as a sort of added inducement, he mentioned that his mother had just brought in the tea.

Mrs Winstone usually makes us a pot of tea and a couple of plates of cakes, and I always feel that it is almost an insult to leave any on the plate; it is as if we didn't appreciate her cooking. So, with heavy heart I went slowly downstairs to do my duty.

The second thing I saw after an empty plate was this new fan, pinned in a corner by the bulk of Rog Peyton, being pumped as to what books he had for sale, and did he like Poul Anderson's work? A warm nostalgic glow entered my body, along with a couple of overlooked iced buns. This is a time when the ancient traditions of the group assert themselves. Soon, I knew, Rog would discard the chap, and Charlie would persuade him to join the BSFA. Then Beard would buy all of his spare books from him, and I would sell him a copy of ZENITH SPECULATION.

I finished my cakes, and awaited to be introduced to this new star in our skies (or should it be skys?). They're an ignorant bunch at the BSFG, and they didn't bother with such formalities. So I introduced myself, and told him all about what we had upstairs, which was why I was so covered in dust, ha ha, and didn't he think HYPHEN was great? He went up to have a look at the accumulation for himself, accompanied by Rog. They didn't stay up there long, and Rog brought some sex books down with him. We sat there, united in our fannish interests, Rog and myself, each reading intently. I with QUANDRY, Rog with SAUCY SEXY SCRUBBERS, or something like that.

Martin Pitt quipped, "we ought to re-name this group the Birmingham Sex Fiends Group." Which suggestion was considered, and discarded in favour of the Birmingham Sex and Science Fiction Group - BSSFG.

The said Pitt was highly rosy-cheeked over his recent break-through into the Fig Time, since he had just had his first illustration accepted by ZENITH! (It appeared on Page 27, Issue 11). This little piece was notable for the clever shadow-effects therein, so that it illustrated a scene without actually drawing what was happening. Very clever. Of course, success went to Martin's head, and he immediately produced further illos along the same lines. Such is the power of his genius that the massed intellects of the Brum Group could not make head nor tail of the result.

"Is it a Rorschach test?" queried literate, well-read Charlie Winstone. (He later confided that he got the word from that SF story by Wilmar Shiras in which a child psychiatrist uses it.)

"I think it is a lunar mountain range," said educated, artistic Darroll Pardoe.

"You're half-right" agreed Martinus (he studies Latin; is proud of it)

"Let's see.... a lunar something or a something mountain range," said Darroll, gleam in eye and beard bristling.

"I think it's a welsh witch" said Mike Beard, but he was ignored.

Finally, gloating over his triumph, Martin revealed that the illo was of a Gemini link-up in space. His elation was shattered by a sad-looking Pete Weston, shaking his head and saying that "the ZENITH readers won't like that, mate!"

Subsequently, Darroll, Beard & Weston were antisocially playing a quiet game of QUINTRO, while listening with half an ear to the intellectually stimulating conversation that ebbed and flowed around them.

"Cor, what a pair," said an enthralled lustful voice.

The Game Players of Erdington ceased listening, and began another game. The object of the absurdly simple game is for a player to get five of his pieces in an uninterrupted row across the board, either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. It is a simple game, and the winner usually wins through his opponent's carelessness, more than anything else. However, after a brilliant opening gambit, and a disgracefully-flubbed follow-up, I was getting nowhere fast. Consequentially, Gambit 3 was employed, which involves much play with the hands, that joke about the man who was late getting to work at BSA (see me at the Yaron and I'll tell it), and quiet and inconspicuous moving of the pieces, each time around.

A stroke of genius by Darroll allowed me to win triumphantly, and the same thing happened for the next two games, to the disgust of Mike Beard. Meanwhile, very casually, I said out of the corner of my mouth to Darroll, "Who is this fellow? I've forgotten his name", this comment accompanied by a sly gesture with hooked finger at the newcomer on the other side of the room.

"I don't know," said Darroll, "I wasn't listening."

Mike Beard was consulted. He too was ignorant, and had to refer to Martin, who didn't know, and who had to ask Roger, who....

It dawned upon me that so anxious had we been to be sociable and charming, to make our guest feel at home, that we had completely failed to take any notice of his name.

Ignorant bunch, the BSFG !

Careful manoeuvring by the Player behind the scenes induced our guest to sign the visitor's book. Seven heads craned forward eagerly.

"No, no, your full name, we don't like to be restricted to initials in this book, ha, ha."

and then,

"Anyway, David..."

"David, would you like to..."

"Hey Dave..."

But Roger gained the ascendancy, and asked a question I was surprised, and glad to hear.

"Quite honestly, Dave," said Rog, "what did you expect to find tonight ....and are you disappointed?"

So many Birmingham fans have made one appearance and no more, that we were delighted to hear that Dave had had no preconceptions, and wasn't a bit disappointed, if anything, a bit the other way. "After all," he said, showing surprisingly good sense for a Birmingham fan, "I've met SF readers before, and know what a mixed bunch they are..."

The meeting then degenerated into reminiscences of days and faces gone by, when the BSFG of international fame was the lowly Erdington SF Club, three lads in a room and a pile of books, meetings three times per week and publicity slips in second-hand books at the Rag Market. Those were the days!

A short sample of the conversation:-

"Last year we decided it was now or never if we were to get a clubroom: It was never."

"Remember Janet & Margaret, the two femme-fans we roped in through that advert in the Birmingham Planet?"

"Whatever happened to Cliff Teague?"

"If you mention NEW WORLDS or Ballard in here, this lot jump on you."

"You haven't met everyone yet, some of the best ones haven't turned up. There's Mik, and Geoff, and Ed, and Alan; Beryl's down at Bristol now, but we still have Ken, Dave, and...there's over a dozen we can usually count on turning up, and over 40 'on the books'.."

"Remember Adrian, who turned up in a balaclava, and whose mommie wanted him back home by nine?"

Riotous laughter.

"Oh, you'll like fandom," I said, "I'm a bit of a fanzine fan myself, I think, if you ever want to publish one..."

"Fanzines!" snorted Rog in mild contempt.

"Oh, they're all right," I said, on the defensive, "if you take no notice of all that science fiction stuff you sometimes find in them.."

"Oh Pete," said Rog, "if you'd heard someone say that a couple of years ago!" and he laughed violently.

"We had a con in Brum last year," said someone.

"It was a flop, but.."

"Pete's zine was up for a Hugo last year.."

"Would you like to subscribe, it's only.."

"And the year before, we had the BSFA Committee all together in Brum, Ken Cheslin was the chairman, and he was also the Chairman for our BrumCon. He reckoned that it would be a good idea if we all joined OMPA, and stood for the OMPA Committee, as well, to be really drunk with power, as it were."

"He gaffed soon after."

"Alas, poor Kenneth, I knew him well."

Everyone eventually piled into my car, and we had an uneventful ride back into the city. I took Rog home, and stayed till midnight drinking coffee and talking fan-talk.

As I drove over the hill from Quinton to Northfield, the full moon was at last sliding down behind the clouds.

*Pete*

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NEXUS, the Saturday afternoon fanzine, produced for OMPA and for the delight of a few personal friends on my highly select mailing list. These lucky people are expected to make comment during the course of our normal correspondence. Juicy bits from Letters of Comment are wanted, (send the whole LoC if you wish,) along with reminiscences, and other bumph. Some MC's next time, perhaps, fellow OMPAns, meantime no ego-boo for any of you. Now you've looked through this zine in search of your name anywhere, go back & read it. Pete.

