

tw11-ddu 3

from Dave Langford, at
---NOT Boundary Hall---
but: 22 Northumberland
Avenue, READING, Berks.
RG2 7PW, United Kingdom
"What I tell you three
times is true."

/1/

I WAS A PRISONER OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

((A Reader's Digest exclusive best-seller condensed to a few handy, bitesize paragraphs. To reconstitute the complete book, simply add words.))

The Escape Officer looked at me with steely eyes. "So you want to get out of Boundary Hall Hostel?"

"God, yes. It's hell in here."

"There's only one way Langford, and it's not an easy one. (Damn these flies) You'll need funds, external contacts. And more than that..." He paused. The soundtrack throbbed with heavy, ominous chords.

"I can take it, sir."

"You have to get...married."

T minus 4½ MONTHS (25 Jan 1976)

A house! It was big enough for me, Hazel and the books, so we set the wheels in motion; very soon I was telling Kev Smith all about it, on a commuter train.

"The study," I said, "is merely Day-Glo pink and orange. But the dining-room...oh dear. The walls are covered with virulent pink and purple blossoms, carnivorous orchids!" A woman nearby was leaning towards us in fascination.

"They writhe and squirm on the walls, and reach out with numberless tentacles to entwine their doomed victim. Slowly the disgusting fleshy petals draw him in, dribbling a hot froth of digestive juices---"

The woman suddenly decided to sit elsewhere.

T minus 4 MONTHS

The theatricals (Hazel's phrase) were to be conducted in my old college chapel. We called on the chaplain and found him supine on a chaise-longue.

"Sorry I'm unable to get up," he beamed: "I was at a service this morning and they gave me a great deal of gin afterwards."

There seemed nothing to say.

T minus 3 MONTHS

The obligatory wedding-present list was long and silly. It began with the ghost of Hamlet's father—"List, list, list!"—and continued through stuffed

ravens (pref. mounted on pallid bust of Pallas), vegetable rack for stretching carrots, Gestetner duplicator (some hope) to the mysterious entry "TORTOISE; viable". This beast is to be called Fang: I visualise daily feeding sessions in which I fend off the ravenous reptile with a chair while hurling it buckets of steaming entrails.

T minus 23 DAYS

We now owned a house.

Snarling and grunting, I wedged a dozen files into the car boot. From the windows of Boundary Hall canteen, various nerds watched wonderingly as endless boxes of books were shoved onto the back seat. I could sense their whispers: "Surely he's finished now?" (No.) "Why doesn't he put anything on the front seat?" (Because, you oafs, I'm picking up Hazel.) Langford, the conversation piece. I hope their food got cold.

Even keener interest came when I hauled the bookcase from my room. "He'll never get that in!" By this time I was hammering it up, and after lengthy study of the rear door (Too small? Too small.), walked widdershins about Fred the Car, scratching my head the while. Their eyes followed me. Pity I'd packed all the paper: be nice to have set up a sign. "Collapsed Matter" Kinetic Artform. All My Own Work. Give Generously.

The bookcase scraped through the front passenger door, and with a dextrous twist of several little-used muscles I slid it across the pile in the back. Simultaneously, something happened in my spine; the watchers in the canteen were delighted to see me writhing and massaging myself. Their food should not only get cold, it should sprout Bac. botulinus.

Bits and pieces: a pile of fanzines wedged in here. A shoe tastefully arranged there. (They may well wonder about the other shoe. Me too.) Doors securely shut.

As a climax to the show, I turned to the canteen windows and solemnly bowed. Within, the nerds took a sudden, embarrassed interest in their congealing food;

/2/ and presently, with derisive toots of the horn and crashes of the gears, Fred moved off...

T minus 21 DAYS

The shock of marriage would certainly drive me to drink. (I was already there, but perhaps it would drive more drink to me.) Solitary drinking is a fearful vice; accordingly I fixed a housewarming party for June 19th, one week after the wedding, thinking that with enough guests as smokescreen I could sit in a corner and get down to some solitary drinking. Of this, more later.

T minus 5 DAYS

The special licence appeared, a fearsome document covering a couple of square feet (of wall: Hazel hung it there as the huntress' trophy.); in it, the Archbishop of Canterbury addresses me with undue familiarity as his beloved in Christ. Seeing our full names thereon reminded me of a difficulty I had in early '73, when I took out a girl named Gita. Mentioning her to my mother produced an agonised cry: "She's not black, is she?" (I think she was Polish.)

Later I met one Dorothy Yamanoto, and was duly warned: "You know what Chinese girls are like." I didn't, and she was Japanese, so...Oh. Hello, Hazel. Nice Hazel. You realise all this is pure fantasy? Ouch.

T minus 4

T minus 3

T minus 2...1...

I went to work as usual. I thought no-one noticed a thing, but at the end of the week they gave me a wedding gift of tranquillisers.

ZERO HOUR (11 June 1976)

or, Langford's Last Party as a Free Man

An episode best left veiled in discretion. Participants: Keith Oborn, Dermot, Mike (Better Man) Rohan, Dai Price and Martin. These are the guilty men. The hours before closing time were adumbrated in a letter from

DAI PRICE, 2 Gaer Road, Newport, Gwent

"Remember the wise words of Herbert---

"I must have beer. Beer is the mind-killer. Beer is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my beer. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. When the beer has gone there will be nothing. Only 'I will' remains."

Me again. Subsequently, Dai produced

his collection of single-malt miniatures. After that, the dark. Sound of "Hymns & Arias" echoing through North Oxford. Deb Hickenlooper's attempts to force coffee into us. Presently I locked myself into the toilet and (hem hem) coughed a good deal. What with coughings and flushings of the toilet, it was perhaps inevitable that my denture should vanish forever, that I should sink into premarital oblivion with a yawning void replacing one incisor...

Laugh and I'll kill you.

AFTERMATH

And the next day Hazel was married. Me too.

* * * * *

SPEECH AT A WEDDING

(or, Christ-I'n-short-of-material-this-issue. To be delivered with the mouth firmly shut, lest the audience detect an absence of teeth.)

The story so far:

I met Hazel near the end of 1973, knew a good thing when I saw one, and immediately recited to her that interesting poem The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe. This is a potent charm---I've never dared repeat it in a public place for fear of being mobbed by hordes of maddened women---almost immediately one thing led to another and we decided to get married.

((Note on the power of The Raven: a year before, I had used it on a girl called Madeleine who---though her leg was in plaster---promptly flung herself forward and kissed me with a ferocity which, a week later, led to my taking antibiotics for a septic lip. This is true.))

Oxford at that time was a difficult place for meeting young ladies. In Hazel's college, intruding males were ruthlessly hunted down and ejected. And New Inn Hall Street, where I lived, was a den of crime: I had only to shut the door (to recite The Raven to Hazel in privacy) and it would be kicked down, or opened with an illicit master key, or blown in by an explosive charge. One or two close friends used to knock first: then they would kick the door down, or ...etcetera.

The floors were decorated with mouse-traps, the ceiling with beer-stains and the mantelpiece with skulls. In the cellar we brewed 15 gallons of beer each week (Can't imagine what became of it). Last month I went to collect some left-

behind items and found bottles of beer which were two years old...Have you ever tasted beer that old? Don't. As an added insult, someone had left a very similar looking bottle of paraffin amongst the beer; the worst of it was that it tasted much the same.

I suppose New Inn Hall Street had a strange reputation. For historical perspective, here's a genuine 1940's notice from one of the women's colleges:

"Oxford in wartime, and the neighbourhood of New Inn Hall Street in particular, houses a less restrained and select population than Hampstead in peacetime. It is urgently desirable that students should not be confused with its less discreet elements. The same consideration suggests, therefore, that farewells to friends outside the Porter's Lodge should be brief to the point of frigidity." ((Quoted by James Agate in EGO 5))

These rules will of course apply to parting embraces outside this hotel. The Proctors will be watching. Beware also of the savage University Bulldogs, especially trained to rend and maim impetuous hurlers of confetti. You have been warned.

According to the rules-book, it is now time to toast the bridesmaids. ("Over a slow fire", it says in the margin) But bridesmaids were banned, as the sweet young creatures might so easily have been corrupted by my vile influence. We did think of dressing Dermot in satin as a little pageboy; but satin is expensive. So is plastic surgery...

Instead, a toast to the huge supporting cast---the Chaplain ((pause here, of malice aforethought---the Chaplain was huge in his own right)), who attached the shackles with such dexterity, and the Organ Scholar, who doesn't like organs---refrain, please, from vulgar noises---any more than Hazel: which was why he played the piano...

((Have you been married to the sound of "Bridge Over Troubled Water"? Hazel's idea. Ugh. Me tone-deaf. Ordinary deaf, too.))

* * * * *

And so I departed in irons, sailing off in a punt in a complex evasion-plan, free from all but financial cares for one week, until...

Good grief, another party?

Martin was tasting the punch with scientific care; Liese, grimly efficient, dealt death among the cheese; Hazel erected towers of bread. "Wonder if anyone else will come?" I thought, gazing with dull fascination at Gra Poole, who was drinking at a speed limited only by the viscosity of sherry. The afternoon party (relatives etc) had dispersed; absurd that anyone would come to grey, wet Reading that night...



Kev Smith arrived satanically smiling; Pamela Boal's chair filled a dreary gulf; Stan and Helen Eling brought gifts and Vernon Brown his par amour Pat; suddenly the room was crowded. A second panic: would too many people come?

Brian Hamton evoked incredulity by producing canned grapefruit juice; possibly it was fermenting, but even so... Meanwhile, Ames opened his Bacardi, brought for Sheila Holdstock's especial benefit (at Martin's and Liese's party she failed to appear; not wishing to waste it, Andrew drank the lot and became unwell), and mixed a thimbleful with copious Coke. "Tastes...strong," he said dubiously.

Though Coral with continually plied with drinks, her inhibitions---few and feeble though they be---held firm; she was driving, and the obligatory huddle had to be provided by Vernon and the sinuous Pat, who did their thing upon chairs, the floor and (where I tripped over then most often) the stairs. Vernon later displayed a yellow-stained shirt-sleeve, insisting that it had been dyed by contact with the wallpaper. Most strange.

As Ratfandom entered in a body, the phone rang. "Hello, this is Kev Easthope. I'm at Reading West station, how do I find you?"

"Ummm. Errrrr. The bus is..."

"I'm in a car." No-one could help; he ran out of coins and was left to his fate.

Rob Holdstock began to talk about himself. "I'm not a hack writer," he explained with pride: "I stopped on Monday." Sheila remarked obscurely, "He's not that good." Her famous husband soon revealed that he would be a hack writer again as from the following Monday. To blot out

/4/ this cruel foreboding, he danced awhile with Malcolm Edwards. Christine had gone to sleep. Hazel sat in a corner being a perfect hostess.

Kev Easthope arrived after many adventures. "Oooh, I hate that Pickersgill," he cried, shifting backwards--forwards--sideways, as though staving off a session in the toilet.

"He's in the next room."

"I'm going to confront him." He pondered for a moment. "I need a few more drinks first."

Later, I became curious. "Did you confront Greg, Kev?"

"Well...I tried. Er, nice fellow really, isn't he?"

(Kev was hurt; Leicon had discarded him like a used tea-bag. "He didn't come to any of the committee meetings," Helen observed. What annoyed him more was that Greg was now running the fan room. Turned out that it wasn't Greg's idea; this made everything OK for Mr Easterhope, and they were staunch comrades once more, last seen arm in arm, singing merrily together, perhaps I exaggerate.)

Mrs Atkinson was also present, wearing (I'm told) a marvellously diaphanous garment. Several people were much taken with its appearance when viewed against the light. This I did not see, Leroy having cunningly distracted me by hints that subject to his stringent quality control, I might care to write something for TRUE RAT. Lips moving soundlessly, a stunned Langford tottered off for a drink.

Shortly before midnight, Andrew gave a lift to Mike Rohan and Deb; still clutching a tumbler, I piloted him through the Reading labyrinth, at the heart of which we found the station and Dave Rowe.

"This is too much," groaned Andrew, collapsing onto the wheel.

Back home, reality had fragmented again, as shown by the Beer Incident. Dermot explained that Leroy had pushed him into Simone Walsh and caused him to shed (a silent) beer upon her. Greg suggested that on the contrary, he had tipped the beer with slow and evil deliberation. Simone, in either case, displayed great politeness as she moistened Dermot with her own drink; baffled and soggy, the Oxford colossus withdrew into Andrew's company and discussed the use of titanium for lunar railway-lines (This item

courtesy of Kevin Smith Eavesdropping Services). Kevin then asked Simone her opinion of his STOP BREAKING DOWN LoC, which was largely addressed to her.

"Greg didn't show me that one," confessed the Overseas Editor.

Newsflash! Two Ratfan Groupies are required: a girl to be the plaything of the Ratfans themselves, a man to divert their wives. Explaining this need, Sheila stipulated that the male groupie be sensitive. "And the female," said Rob thoughtfully, "must have big tits."

For the latter post, Coral has apparently been considered and rejected (fear of kitten-contamination, perhaps: the dreaded syntax rot could decimate Ratfandom). The male? "Andrew," said Kevin. "He's sensitive."

Greg and Leroy (and later Ian Maule) reduced me to cringing embarrassment by extolling the virtues of TWLL-DDU; this issue should put a stop to that. Something else probably happened, which others will remember: not I. A trifle too soon, things fell apart and there was a move to the cars outside.

"Much better than Malcolm Edwards' party," said Leroy, maliciously aiming this comment at the finely-chiselled ears of Malcolm.

Outside, the recalcitrant Holdstockmobile was pushed by a team of non-athletes. Down the hill they went, panting faster and faster...with a sudden burst of power, Sheila shot happily away, pursued by Rob and Leroy with cries of "Wait for us---". They did not return.

By 2.30am, all the remaining chairs had been pulled into a tight, exclusive circle over which Dave Rowe and Kev Easthope presided. I went to bed.

The hard and (downstairs) insanitary floors suffered an overnight load of 17 dichards...their bleary eyes marvelled next morning at our huge garden, 145 feet long and about twelve wide. While Stan and Helen showed vast proficiency in washing-up, Vernon demonstrated that he and Pat were still on rather more than speaking terms. Mauler, devouring all the burnt toast with horrid relish, made euphoric threats to write up the event for CHECKPOINT. Good grief.

The last cars lurched away, Stan's with the plaintive moan of a dying fog-horn (rain had done something unlikely to the wiring).

Hazel and I slipped into a zombielike state which, despite the fiery joy of returning to (Civil Service) work, lasted until Monday evening.

It must have been a good party: I'm still convinced that all the attendees were pleasant, nice people. Plays hell with witty incisive writing, does an impression like that. It has to wear off soon.

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Afterthought. Several of those who came were not mentioned; my apologies are of course extended to all the others. Chris Morgan's bribe was so lavish that I've taken especial care not to bring in his name (C-H-R-I-S M-O-R...) or that of his companion Jenny. OK, Chris?

* * * * *

"Is this man's life one mad round of parties?" you will be asking. Well, I don't know why Bob & Mary Smith asked me to Brentwood the following week, unless it was connected with the fact that Dave Rowe was doing the actual inviting...

Long drive to Brentwood. Statistic: thirty overheated cars in as many miles of the M4. An ominous garage sign on the North Circular announces the trend of the future, CRYPTON ELECTRONIC TUN. Arrive far too early. Bob & Mary amazed that anyone remembers BLUNT. No Rats in evidence (screening procedure, perhaps). Boris: "The Mancon committee owe Owens Park £7000. According to the bill they've been overcharged by 3p...and they're arguing about it." Joseph Nicholas: "Even I Will Fear No Evil was better than Triton." We sound people out on the SKYCON bid for '78 (flyer should be enclosed): prognosis not too bad. General collapse. In the morning, everyone sprawls in the garden and watches ants. Brian Hampton imagines a budgie in the trees. Martin: "Someone's been respraying the sparrows." A quiet party.

* * * * *

"We must meet the challenge of the computer age," said the Prime Minister. All over the country, cash-registers and schoolbooks were modified for H-Day. "One, two, three..." the children chanted. "Light, nine, A, B, C, D, E, Eff!" Pause. "Ten?" Only by mastering the hexadecimal system could Man come to terms with Machine. "A firm new base for our economy," quipped the Chancellor. Housewives rejoiced: a box of matches at

16p would cost a mere 10p on The Day. Little did they know that /5/ retailers planned to round up 12 to F... There came a cry of "Pieces of seven!": a parity error (This was a Martin Hoare joke. Ugh).

Meanwhile, in the Tun, or the 820₁₆ pounds as we shall henceforth call it...

I can't keep this up, you know. It's time for

News

To establish the sf orientation of TWILL-DDU we turn first to Brian Stableford ("I use cliches an awful lot---but I do try to pervert them a bit"), who passes on this paraphrase of some hot news from DAW---

"Michael Coney's books don't sell. He tried changing the plots, the settings and the characters---it did no good---then we used different covers, different lettering in the titles---still no good. There's only one thing left. Michael Coney is going to change his name."

Jane Hoare, BSFA stalwart no.1551, is in fact Liese again, one of her little-used names having returned to torment her. She recently said, we know not why: "Pete Weston's big trouble was that Enid Blyton didn't write sf." H'mm.

SKYCON. Yes, our bid for 1978 is serious and (I think) fairly well-organised so far. It was intended to be sprung on the world at Novacon, but if the Harveys (who?) can start now...

Harking back to Mancon, an anonymous source has said of my conrep: "You could have said Chris Fowler was there and looking as beautiful as ever." Consider it said, Mr.X.

And in this obscure corner, where no-one would think of looking for it, are the credits. DUPLICATING by Keith Freeman again; COLLATION by Hazel, again again; ART by Deb Hickenlooper; ELECTRO-STENCIL by Martin; LETTERING for headings swiped from Civil Service magazines. TYPOS, such as "Brian Hamton" on page three (ha! thought I hadn't spotted it, didn't you?), by my perverse old Adler Electric, which renders all my brilliance less good, simply by typing it wrong. No use blaming me. No use at all. DYSLEXIA RLUES OK

LETTERS

GRAHAM POOLE, 23 Russet Rd, Cheltenham,
Glos., GL51 7NL

** The first part of this is extracted from several sheets explaining Gra's position in the Sfinx ripoff affair (see TD2)...

"Why did he do it? What possible motive did he have? Well, a lot of thought about this mystery after the hectic events of Mancon made me recall some of Tim's words when I revealed to him the existence of a real live and active Dave Langford. Timothy acknowledged his existence and said that he personally knew him because he was also a member of the Oxford group. He went on to say that Dave had had stories published in SFINX and that he and Tim were constantly satirising each other in their stories."

** Ahem. To you and Joseph Nicholas, Tim came from Oxford; to the Oxford group his origin was "Surrey University"; Keith Plunkett prefers to believe in Cheltenham Poly.
I wish I had satirised him before.

"The Ian Trent story stood as a Doc Smith parody in its own right. The idea of a rip-off never entered my head..."

"But is a motive revealed here? Does Timothy feel that he has suffered at the hands of Dave Langford in some way? Does Tim actually write stories? Was there a 'fued'? ..."

** In order: Dunno; Can't imagine why; No; No.

"I shall therefore end with a public apology to Dave Langford, Keith Plunkett and to any others who have felt offended..."

** I told you not to apologise!

"Incidentally, going through my notes I find the following: '1.10.74. MET: Tim came round to 23 Russet Rd after seeing Chelt SF Group advertised in SFM... Has written SF and had some published in AN-ALOG'..."

"Just call me Gullible.

"So you got Pete Weston's copy of ZIMRI did you? I'm still after the bugger

who got my copy. Lisa firstly tells me she's got one (ZIMRI) for me. Next thing I know I find I'm standing on a beer-stained envelope with Conesan script on the outside which turns out to be my name. A frantic search of the envelope revealed nothing apart from the culprits' footprints. Lisa consoled me by saying that she'd send me another but none has come and it looks as if this will be the second ZIMRI I've missed. Is this a fiendish plot by Bryn Fortey to prevent me from criticising the lovely Lisa? Has Timothy Titwillow Pseud made off with my copy...? Did Pete Weston receive a copy of Z despite Dave Langford having his? Will the World end tomorrow?"

** No: what's about to happen is far worse---

LEROY KETTLE, 43 Chesholm Road, Stoke
Newington, London N16

"If you weren't such an insensitive tit, Langdon, I'd think one or the other of your brain-cells had had a haemorrhage through hyper-activity in trying to keep up with your mouth. Fancy thinking I write like someone who looks like me. I don't even look like someone who looks like me."

** Studying this letter, Hazel announced decisively, "Nobody is called Leroy Kettle." Since meeting you, I think she concedes that you do at least look like somebody called Leroy Kettle. Congratulations.

"According to my barber I have a deformed hair-line. Have you ever tried to live with something like that? People stare at me in the street, lips curling with disgust. Parents turn their kids away. Negroes and Jews write slogans on walls about me. "Bloody hell; don't look now, Mable. His hair-line, it's---it's---aaagh!" I've been considering wearing a large sock over my head or not going out.

"Hitler had a deformed hair-line and look at his standing in Stamford Hill. Henry Smith, the juggling tumour (now appearing as the Pumpkin in Cinderella) had one and so Tony 'Shits' Gallonzo, the processed pea king. And they don't even exist. Think how much worse it is for me. My parents have disowned me. There is a big sign outside their home saying 'Here's two votes to bring back scalping.' I have to wear black glasses and a false moustache on my temples.

"God won't answer my prayers. 'Bloody

hell, your Godship, please give me a normal hair-line,' I ask, head bowed, knees akimbo. 'Fuck off, you deformed little pervert,' was the official Holy reply. 'Sic him, Gabe.' And this big poof with wings & a halo minced all over me...

"So don't accuse me of writing like I look. No-one could write that bad.

"Incidentally, I enjoyed your convention report. Someone you hardly mentioned was a tall thin wanker who wouldn't stop talking. He would start a monologue with one person and continue it with the nearest available victim when he had bored the first one enough. His name was Langyawn or Langwhatadrag... Funny you rarely mentioned how tedious he was. Other than that your report was good stuff indeed. I particularly enjoyed the joke."

** Bloody hell, Kettle---

No, wait. This is not one of your Ratzines. I will not be influenced.

My good fellow, when surrounded by mumbling alcoholics at cons, someone who's deaf like me has to keep talking or fail utterly to comprehend the (low) information content in the beer-sodden gusts which whistle all about him.

All the same, I love it when you treat me rough.

"I'm not here to feed your already obese ego, Langthrop. I'm sure the nearest Echo Valley can do that sufficient for your purposes. However, I really think you could become a Big Name Fan--- if you can get a deed-poll wide enough. Ho. Ho."

MARTIN EASTERBROOK, Physics Dept, Royal Holloway Coll., Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey

"I see that as I feared the episode of the lift has come home to roost. Your report is totally inaccurate and my seconds will be calling upon you in the morning. I did indeed leave you in the shit but your report is still totally inaccurate. Seeing the horror of THE MEN WITH BIG STICKS at the movement of the lift up and down some friends of mine were moved to wonder what their reaction would have been had we been able to take from side to side. Sadly while Batman and Robin were making sure that no-one stole the tower block Howie Rosenblum had his car broken into and his cassette player stolen and someone else had their door forced (wouldn't have been so bad if it

had been the car). All part of the friendly Owen's Park Service..."/7/

** I heard that the good Howie was also seen being frogmarched off the campus by said security men.

"I am still puzzling over a comment of yours at the Con---'You thought I should have produced a better zine than OFC 3'---neat Langford, very neat. I still don't know if I was being criticised or complimented."

** Seems a good place for a review of your latest:

"Martin Easterbrook has at last produced a better zine than OFC3. This (OFC4) is it."

BRIAN ALDISS, Heath House, Southmoor, nr Abingdon, Oxfordshire

** This was a postcard whose flipside bore the enigmatic message IF WE CAN PUT MAN ON THE MOON / BACON CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH.

"Cheered me considerably since I have to address a sixth form in Wallingford. Now I can read them T-D instead.

"It could be the best thing ever to come out of Basingstoke Hants. When I compile my Penguin Classic of 'One Hundred Best Con Reports, 1901-1976', I'll see that yours is included."

PETE PRESTFORD, "Ty Gwyn", 2 Maxwell Clo., Buckley, Clwyd

"How much of all this zine is for gwir, Anita (who read it first) says she does not recall Holdstock in any lift. And she is sure she would after the things he hinted at last time. Mind he was drunk & Sheila wasn't there."

** As I wasn't an eye-witness, I dunno.

"By the way you might mention the ConComm apologise to Ian Maule for his sore feet. We are writing to future Con Coms, to make sure they hire a red carpet for Ian. This will be unrolled in front of Ian when he goes to the bar, the pain the lad must have suffered."

GEORGE HAY, 38b Compton Road, London N21

"Walking down Chancery Lane the other day I noted some familiar faces drifting up past me. They can't, I said to myself, be going to the ONE TUN at 2.30pm? Then someone said "You going to the Auction, then?"...by sheer coincidence I had gone that way at the same time as the Sothebys

/8/ sf auction. I strolled in: the event was over, but the room was still littered with magazines etc of a quality enough to make one turn bright green, and equally littered with copies of Peter Nicholls, Dave Kyle and eke Gerry Webb, who got his face splashed atop the next day's GUARDIAN account of the event ...Ah well---there goes an end to any faint hope the impecunious will ever have of getting hold of early copies of ASTOUNDING, THRILLING WONDER or whatever. Except, may I add, in microfiche. You might care to point that out to the opponents of progress..."

DAVE ROWE, 8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex, SS12 9DH

"I got a letter from VOID, the Australian prozine, asking for some illoes. Payment on spec. In one case, the editor doesn't mention the size, but says it's of a man with one hand missing, and fails to mention which hand; when he does mention the size he says '8½ x 10 inches (...Drawing withdrawn width across)!!!! He also asks for a cover, 'preferably like a planet being invaded by flying saucers'. (sic)

"VOID is making a loss. I think I know why. I also think I know why it's called VOID."

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IN BRIEF...

Pamela Boal: "It's obvious that you do not really exist".....Jim Linwood: "Con-rep was superb---although I'm glad I wasn't there".....Dave Rowe: "Ho Hum".....Bob Shaw: "I'm continually being saddened and disappointed when I remember it's all over, and that the Mancon experience was it".....Lord St Davids: "I am, as you might guess, a Welshman".....Chris Morgan: "Bob Shaw and Jim White will have to look to their laurels ~~of their/their/11g/1edtes~~ with a talented humorous writer like you coming up fast behind them".....Martin Easterbrook: "Your reproductive facilities seem disgustingly adequate...I ink, therefore I am." Peter Roberts: "Enclosed is everything you might ever wish for".....Dave Jenrette: "Robert Bloch's hold on reality is not that strong, is it?".....Keith Plunkett: "This letter is not for reproduction in its present form".....Tom Jones: "I enjoyed it but it would baffle 75% of the BSFA members".....Dai Price: "Very readable even to those like myself who know so little about fandom".....end

ALSO...

David Bridges, Rob Holdstock, Joseph Nicholas, Tom Perry, Ray Harrison.

Letters were almost received from Kev Smith and Janice Wiles.

A possible joke ("itwill do") which I avoided for two whole issues has now been perpetrated by Pamela Boal, Chris Morgan and Ames. Shame. Kettle calls it Twiddleydoo and Dave Jenrette Twillydydoo ...no originality, these fans.

More than one person commented on Tim Titwillow-Pseud: this subject is now closed. Timothy was undergoing an identity crisis, and must not be allowed to shoulder the blame. He is the product and victim of his environment. Not he but society stands condemned. We are all guilty.

* * * * *

THE ADVENTURES OF PERRY HELLION no.326
Menace of the Tangential Zine Reviews.

INVERTED EAR TRUMPET 3 (Richard McMahon)

This came a little late: so therefore did my reactions.

Naughty Words still provoke the odd skirmish; here Richard McMahon denounces foul-mouthed Graham Charmock. 'Trouble is, the well-worn argument---That's filth---opens into endless definitions of what's filth. Filth is that which corrupts. Corruption? The effect of filth, of course. If GC didn't use his, ah, vigorous terms so artfully and well, a better charge might be "exploitation of natural resources"... Language tends to rigidity, crystallised in books: devalued words are becoming less replaceable. Over use of the good ol' Anglo-Saxon monosyllables is linguistic strip-mining. One day there'll be nothing left but blandness. The mists clear and I perceive a dictionary circa 2050---

"TUCKIN' (fu'-kin) adj. prominent, superlative: --- idiot; adv. particularly, superlatively: --- good; obs.sl. pertaining to coition."

See Eric Partridge's Dictionary of Historical Slang for one-time wicked words which have since sunk to neutrality or oblivion.

In the illimitably swirling despair there gleams a single light: the old words of power remain valid while Richard McMahon can be shocked. He and a few others (I do not mention Ted Tubb) hold high the torch of decency amid our sick civilisation... We need more like him, to

preserve the status quo, to keep our obscenities obscene. Go forth, Richard, and multiply.

K3 (Dave Rowe & Bernie Peek)

A straight review of this is forbidden by the presence of my own column (the one with the crumpled stencil) and an enclosed postcard from someone called John Brunner, requesting Bernie to shower me with praise...

Let's go straight to the trivia--- such as TERMINAL X, 49 issues of which were received by Dave and Bernie. Before everyone writes to Martin Hoare for sample copies, be it known that TX was produced by computer, largely to build up 98 copies' credit under Dave's and Bernie's one-for-one exchange scheme. The entire print run thus being owed to Martin, their only option was to fold (and staple, leaving the massed reviewers to spike, spindle and mutilate).

STOP BREAKING DOWN 3 (Greg Pickersgill & Simone Walsh)

Look, before I review zines like this I wanna practice a bit... Actually, SDD3 falls below the (admittedly high) average---not enough of Greg's this-is-the-last-word-on-the-subject reviewing, since an interminable con-report from Malcolm Edwards has displaced all else. This last item has excellent flashes---the insight into Don West's true, unnameable nature for one---but... As someone said of Wagner's stuff, it has its good moments and its dull quarter-hours.

THE SOUTHERN VOLE 1 (Liese Hoare)

Looking through this one, I note with clinical detachment that the Langford Syndrome is afflicting me once more: I cringe, shift-eyed, hands covering the face, gibber gibber. Liese does not believe in balanced opinions, evasions or urbanity; hers is the Assault Direct, uncompromising to the point of arrogance. Page 2, reporting certain sordid events at Mancon (more timorously covered in ED2), is a hatchet-job of such overkill value that--- Well, though agreeing with several of Liese's views, I was distinctly shaken...The response to TSV may well be rage, but never apathy.

In the now-imminent second issue, some home thoughts on Women's Lib are anticipated. This could plunge fandom into Total War.

CHECKPOINT 69 (Ian Maule)

A spark of controversy re the BSFA---or rather, that forgotten topic, the

fanzine library, disposal thereof. /9/ Rog Peyton, weary of the whole thing, recently said roughly this:

"Sure, the zines were sold. They belonged to Charles Partington, who'd had them for sale since Chessmancon. He bought them from John Muir, who bought them from Charlie Winstone, who declared that only duplicates were ever sold. So what do you do?"

** I'd better speed up. **

TABEBULIAN 28 (Mardee & Dave Jenrette): a nice mixture with a welcome attempt to rehabilitate Thorne Smith: with it comes FLAMENCO, a Mensa newsletter. Explanation from Dave: "Fans like to save little bits of coloured paper."

SCOTTISHE 71 (Ethel Lindsay): relaxed and chatty with some nice typos. I particularly liked Geoff Rippington's "TITLIAN", which begs to be teamed with Goblin's Giotto...

FANZINE FANATIQUE 19 (Keith Walker) was better produced than I expected...to say more would be to fall into the pit of reviewing reviews of reviews.

SUPERCRUD '69 (Bryn Fortey) spoofs zines mainly before my time...the part I appreciated was a wicked poke at the reviewing style of Greg P--- Why is it impossible to write for long without mentioning this man?

ONE-OFF 2 (David Bridges) is mainly notable for the free paper flying machine. LOGO 3 (Kev Easterhope) Fanzines are getting ever more like cornflakes...here the free gift is an incendiary device. Lead me not into temptation. Kev mutters about the vile Secret Fanzines, ie the ones he doesn't get. That xerox newsletter of Dave Rowe's is not (quoth Dave) a fanzine: like Darroll Pardoes's thing, it's for close friends only. Anyway, Kev, if people don't respond to LOGO you must consider the bare possibility, almos unthinkable though it is, that they don't want it.

O'RYAN 3 (Paul Ryan): in my LoC I mentioned the terrible word "excrement" which has duly become "sacrement". Bloody religious fanatics...either that or my handwriting is as bad as I feared. Ok zine.

I can't take any more. I shan't even mention BSFAN, Little Gem Guide or SF Yearbook '76. Buy your own.

At last, wrote the philosopher, I may reveal those three words which are the secret of the universe---ahh! they are at the door---the sec---I can write no more, my pen is running ou

SKYCON: GREAT IN '78



Britain needs a good Easter convention in the year before the hopeful Worldcon. We think that, with your support, we can provide one.

This sheet is simply to let you know of the bid--- fans should be aware of the alternatives. Full details will be announced at Novacon 6, so you'll have until Easter '77 to think it over.

The present state of affairs?

We have a hotel. South of Manchester (pew), north of Bournemouth and to the east of both. It is large (overflow hotels shouldn't be needed---but they are there); it is highly accessible by motorway, bus or train; the facilities are excellent. The usual restaurants and bars, plus 24-hour sandwich/coffee bar; swimming pool reserved for con members; a strong hope that Real Beer will be available...

Price? With due allowance for inflation, it should be cheaper than the De Vere.

We have a committee. (Well, obviously.) Persons currently incriminated are---

Stan Eling---whose experience of cons is a byword, whatever that meansLiese Hoare, Pangbourne's answer to Pauline Dungate.....Kevin Smith, an accountant yet.....Martin Hoare and his pet 2900 computer.....the huge Dermot Dobson.....Keith Oborn, who does not look at all like John Brunner.....Dave Langford (me).

AND: Ian Robinson, OUSFG President.....Hazel Langford, Hereditary Sticker of Labels on Envelopes.....Janice Wiles, of whom Dave Rowe once said.....Helen Eling (No relation) (sorry, a mistake).....

We have support---

---only in Birmingham, Oxford and Reading to date: naturally, since this is the bid's first announcement. If you'd like to go on record as supporting us, please send a note to me (22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading RG2 7PW) or Liese (5 Aston Close, Pangbourne), or sneak up on us at the One Tun. Alternatively, wait for Novacon and the complete bid information. Britain needs you.

*** BRITAIN IS FINE IN '79 *** SKYCON IS GREAT IN '78 *** BRITAIN IS FINE IN '79

38 Robertson
Great Ferry Street,
London W61 UK.

Alan & Sandra
London House
Mettleborough Sq
London W61
Kongon Road
Kongon Road

6 Albany St
3500 Kilmashilly
Happisburgh, WY11 767
715019

+ Reading
Berkshire
RG8 7LQ