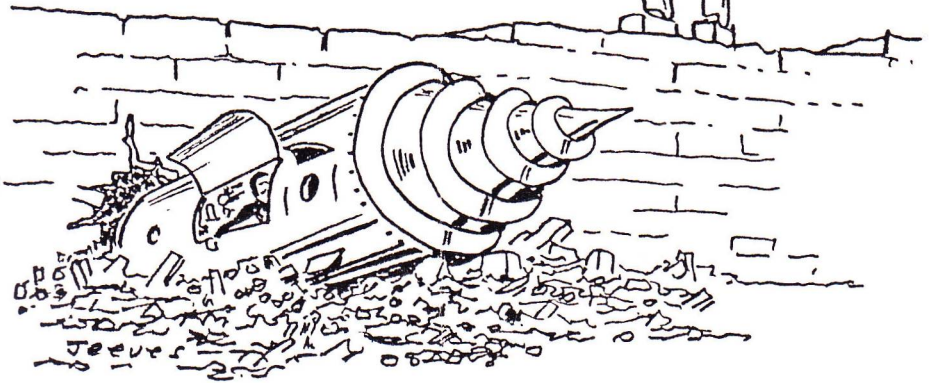
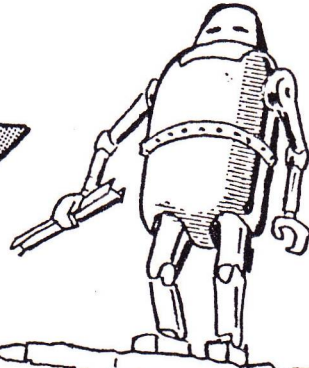


ERG

QUARTERLY

138

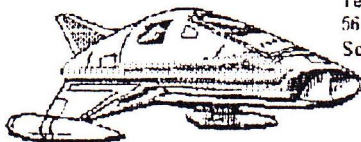
JULY 1997



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ERG 138
Quarterly

July 1997



Terry Jeeves
56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough YO12 5RQ
Ph. (01723) 376817

Dear Reader, you can get the next ERG by LOCing this one, what could be easier? I also look benignly on people sending me used (or unused) American Commemorative stamps. I'm half way through sorting my second album. I also appreciate stamps from any country, on a space or aircraft theme.

To keep the little grey cells working I've just finished a job involving another of my hobbies, bookbinding the latest set of ERGs. I now have four volumes of ERG standing proudly on my bookshelves. To be exact, I have six quarto-sized volumes of the mimeod editions and a further four case-bound set of the A5 sized issues - the complete history of ERG. Someday they'll feature on the antiques road show, "...er, um, late 20th Century, a time when amateur magazines were produced on paper. They have to be read visually so only trained readers can understand them. Value? I suppose around 2,000 EUROS." So, can anyone tell me a handicraft source for the special cover paper, 'Linsen'? My stock is running low.

Elsewhere in this issue, I expand a bit on my suggestion of cryptic crosswords to replace the Turing Test. Ken Lake doesn't agree, what do you think? Other controversial thoughts, are SF mags now the only main outlet for short stories, and are 'graphic novels' (non-comics) replacing the gentle art of reading (and thinking)?

Another suggestion. Boy scouts no longer need to hike into the country and scour trees for moss in order to find their direction. Simply look for the handiest satellite aerial. It will point unerringly South. I offer this tip to all lost souls. Truly, all knowledge is to be found in fanzines.

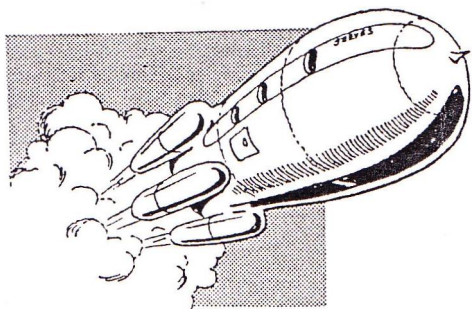
I'm afraid that owing to pressure of work and a recalcitrant printer, Ken Slater was unable to let me have General Chuntering for this issue. Fear not, all being well, Ken will be back with the October ERG.

In a recent review, ERG was slated for among other things, being firmly stuck in a long-gone era, totally out of touch with modern fandom and running boring material. It also panned the mag for its 'scrappy reproduction and varied typefaces. I'll not defend the comment on material, that's subjective, but must put in a word on repro and type faces. I use two machines for ERG, (Beeb and PC) as well as two different printers. Ken Slater uses a third machine. Result, varied typefaces - a fault not unique to ERG (or promags).

Repro is limited by my financial set-up. I either draw direct on PC or paste in pen and ink illos. Both ways give excellent repro. My third method used for 'First Issues' and my 'fag card' illos, was to photograph the subject, paste the resultant photo on paper and get a photocopy made. This is then sent off to the printer where further copying takes place. Obviously, reproduction can suffer but I can't afford a laser printer or scanner, so if my critic can do any better with such limitations, perhaps he'd let me know. We don't all have access to expensive equipment or sundry other helpers to kity in labour and money. ERG is a one-man band and while on the subject, I like ERG's old time rut.

All the best from the time capsule,

Terry

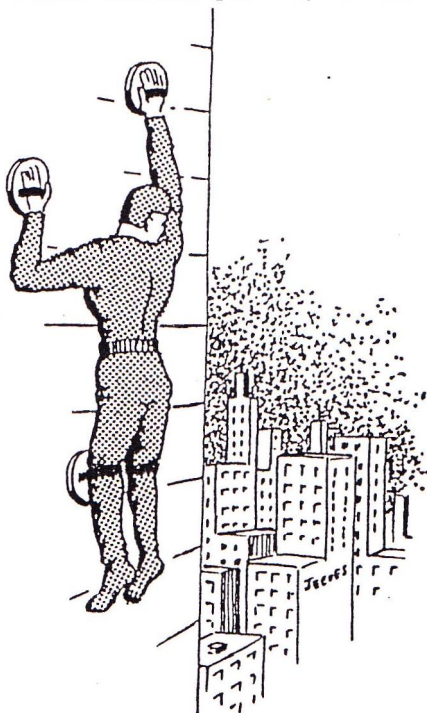


DOWN MEMORY-BANK LANE.2

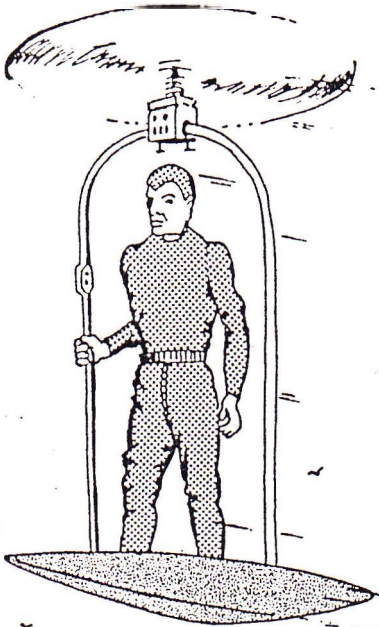
More BLOODS

For the less depraved reader whose parents carried out censorship duties more assiduously, we had the 'Big Five'. These were twopenny weeklies aimed directly at boys. Girls had their own strange publications dealing with ponies, hockey matches and orphan ballerinas with cruel guardians who treated them miserably whilst the parents were away planting tea, rubber, marihuana or some other exotic substance.

ADVENTURE came out on Monday, WIZARD on Tuesday, ROVER on Thursday, HOTSPUR on Friday and SKIPPER on Saturday. Some other company had grabbed the Wednesday market by publishing BOY'S CINEMA. This latter was a pale blue affair devoted to re-telling film stories, complete with 'stills' of their 'stars'. I'm not sure what saved us from a Sunday SPIFFER, unless some Lord's Day Preservation Society had managed to put the frighteners on the printers.

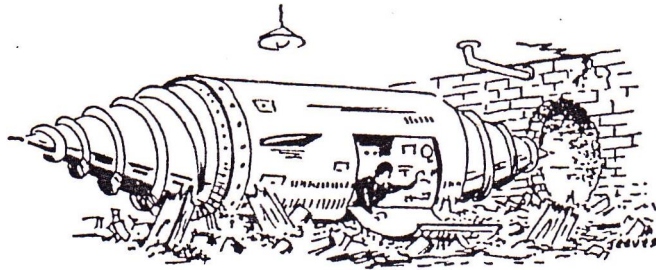


ADVENTURE carried such yarns as 'The Human Fly', a chap in a skintight black suit with suction pads at knees and elbows. So equipped, he could scale vertical walls or cross ceilings high above the heads of the crooks looking for him under the table and far too daft to look upwards. He could also cross bridges on their undersides, unseen by frontier guards above, as he pursued his fearless, gang-busting career. ADVENTURE also featured 'Captain Zero' who, in his skintight black suit (Patent Applied for) would charge hither and thither on his electrically powered flying platform. He remained undisturbed by sonic barriers, hail, rain, snow or low-flying pigeons as he went about his activities. I can't recall whether he specialised in gang-busting or bank-busting, but it was probably the former as these yarns had a strict moral 'crime does not pay' code. Heroes only broke into banks to emulate Robin Hood and dish their loot out again to the poor and needy. Even then, they were not allowed to make too good a living at the game.



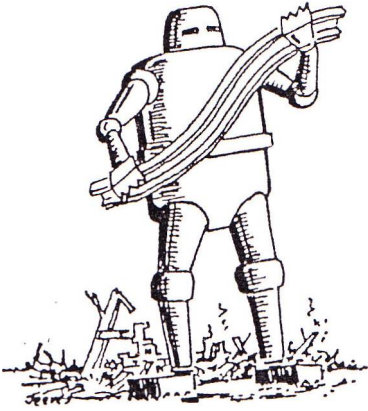
Each of these hero-villains would have a detective pounding along on his trail, only a gnat's whisker behind, but never actually catching him. Such an adventurer was the 'Black Sapper', (in the inevitable skintight black suit). He started out as a bank-robbing 'Baddy' but gradually converted to the Robin Hood role. His robberies were invariably foiled at the last moment by the dauntless Commander Breeze who always got there in time to save the loot, but too late to catch the Black Sapper. The Sapper, along with his trusty mechanic, Marot would travel underground in his marvellous boring machine 'Earthworm'. He could thus emerge undetected into vault or strong room for a bit of pick n' mix among the bonds, jewels and currency which always lie around in piles in such places.

The WIZARD often brought Martian Invaders onto the scene, but with a different gimmick. No black outfits for them, their skintight suits were coloured silver! Thunking to Earth at high velocity in their shell-like projectiles (H.G.Wells could have sued for plagiarism), their chief weapon was a paralysing ray-gun.



Unable to eat Earth produce, they also brought along their own food in the form of a fast-growing, giant plant which threatened to engulf Britain as it spread across roads, towns and cities.

Another WIZARD character was 'The Smasher'. A squat, monstrous robot who trampled a trail of destruction through page after page of Canadian backwoods. He was controlled by a group of nasties who didn't want the railroad to go through or a goldmine to be dug. Fire, rifle bullets, even dynamite left him unharmed - until he fell over a cliff into a rushing river. This stopped his gallop for a few issues before 'Return of The Smasher' saw him rescued. given a major



service, freshly oiled and naughty as ever. Many years later, after the 'bloods' had metamorphosed into comics, I recall seeing the Smasher yet again - in one of my son's comic papers. By now, he had become 'The Iron Teacher', and ran a school in the Canadian backwoods.

One very off-beat series concerned 'The Worms Of Doom' - these were a sort of supercharged termite capable of nibbling happily through iron and steel to the general detriment of the Forth Bridge, the Eiffel Tower and of course, the Empire State Building. The worms were the main weapon in a sinister Tibetan attempt to dominate the world. Their activities gave me a lifelong distrust of maggots and the Dalai Lama.

Then there was an unusual Western Sheriff who had thrown away his guns as nasty, banging things which could hurt people. Instead, he relied upon two wooden clubs which he could draw and throw with devastating accuracy, long before any gunman's revolver had cleared its holster. It was never explained how he managed to reload in order to cope with more than two opponents.

The WIZARD was also the home of the fearless 'Wolf Of Kabul' who broke by tradition by not gallivanting around in a skintight suit. Operating somewhere up in the North West Frontier, his exploits were probably based loosely (very loosely) on those of Lawrence of Arabia. The Wolf was a secret agent in a dirty dhoti. He had a trusty native servant called Chung. This chap was armed with a battered old cricket bat called 'Clicky-ba' with which he loved to go around cracking enemy skulls, all in the course of saving the British Empire.



In those days, my geography was not as accurate as it might have been. All I knew was that Kabul was hidden somewhere in India, one of those places way outside England where one could expect to run into hordes of howling natives. This sort of impression was still with me when I eventually did visit that vast continent, but sadly, I never saw the Wolf, or as much as a splinter of Clicky-ba.

Equally remote (in my mind) was the area patrolled by 'The Red Rider of The Rhondda' - although I had a sneaking feeling it was somewhere in Australia. He wore an all-red suit (the standard skintight version of course), his speciality was tearing up and down the valleys on a motorbike. Despite tin tacks on the road, sugar in his petrol tank, or ropes stretched across his path, he always came through in the end.

One unforgettable feature of all these literary gems, was the regular free gift. Whenever sales were slumping, one or other of the Big Five would offer a super-duper free gift. In retrospect, I fail to see the logic of this tactic, as all five publications came from the same publishing stable. Greater sales of one, were likely to be neatly balanced by a slump in another. I never worried my head over such esoteric theories, just accepted the manna. Far too often for sport-hating me, such gifts were sets of pictures of footballers or cricketers. Usually, these were sticky-backed for plonking into the free album which started off the series. Once, the pictures were even printed (in colour) on sheets of tin! I wonder if any survivors of such long-lived ephemera can be found around today. I'd love to see a long-hidden collection turn up on the Antiques Road Show.

The gifts I did like, were the small pocket books of cartoons, jokes, facts, aircraft, racing cars and the like. For years I had a box crammed with these goodies stowed safely away in a cupboard. Eventually, it was joined by a large pile of BOY'S CINEMA and a complete file of the short-lived SCOOPS. Sadly, my little treasure trove did not survive the war. No, they escaped bomb damage, but while I was away playing in the RAF, they were used as firelighters!

There were several other magazines aimed at youth of the day, BOY'S OWN PAPER, and the CHAMPION being two of them, but for some reason, neither appealed to me. For a time, I enjoyed reading the exploits of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh who had regular adventures in the tinted blue pages of the MAGNET. This was a periodical which featured one long school story and a short tale. The main novel always concerned the exploits of the ever-young pupils in 'The Remove' at Greyfriars public school. Despite their bravery, wit and intelligence, they never seemed to move further up the school. Wharton might have been the main hero, but the character remembered by everyone is the idle, fat, be-spectacled scrounger, Billy Bunter, who was always expecting a Postal Order to turn up. Oh yes, and I also recall Horace Coker, the school cad and the unpleasant Mr. Quelch.

All these characters were kept fully busy by the amazing number of spies, smugglers, bank-robbers, kidnappers and other nasty people who used to hang around Greyfriars in those days. If the writer, Frank Richards felt too many baddies had been bothering the school precincts, he would send his heroes off on holiday. One of them would be going to spend his vac with rubber-planting relatives in India, Singapore, Lower Slobbovakia or wherever. Naturally events worked out for all the others to tag along as well. This was a perfect excuse for events involving evil snake charmers, kris-toting Malays or natives puffing poison darts out of their blowpipes. Whatever the overwhelming odds, our brave lads were always triumphant in the end.

No doubt if such publications were available to the modern, non-reading youngsters, they would no longer be in solid masses of print, but be in the form of 'graphic novels'. The sort of thing we used to call 'comics', designed for the near-illiterate 'reader'. Ah me, how times have changed.

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Great Bookshops Of The World

Ron Bennett

I haven't visited Hay-On-Wye for some dozen years or so and for all I know the treasury of books to be found there may have gone, all bought, or even disintegrated. Quite a few of them languishing in old stables were already well on their way to dank-ridden oblivion. The Wye is a long, meandering river which winds its way through the bleak Black Mountains in the heart of Wales. Its valley is wooded, lush and beautiful. The drive takes one through the historic town of Hereford and North-West along the A438 trunk road which follows the Wye upstream in a long arc. A short side road leads into the centre of Hay-On-Wye.

At one time, Foyle's of London was credited with being the world's largest second-hand bookshop, which isn't surprising really when one considers the remark made by one of the Foyle twins who founded the store, that "books overflow". Few fans will disagree with that. No matter how much space one allocates to a collection... well, I constantly seem to be buying additional shelving and I'm certain I'm not alone.

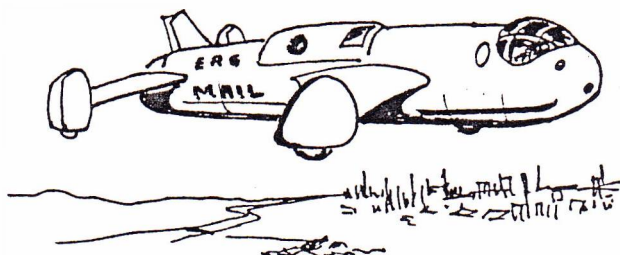
Some quarter of a century ago Foyle's claim was driven into the dust by one Richard Booth who opened a second-hand bookshop in Hay. I've no idea why he chose such an out of the Wye, sorry, way, location for his venture. He first bought the village cinema and converted it into a book warehouse, open both to the trade and the public. There were sections devoted to remaindered books, coffee table albums, pamphlets, paperbacks and hardcovers. All well labelled with special sections for high-profile authors like Conrad, Maugham, London, Wells and so forth, as well as shelves devoted to crime, mystery, sf, mountaineering, gardening and what have you. In no time at all Booth had bought the local manor house and converted the ground floor into an overflow shop where most of the coffee table albums and remainders were transferred. He didn't stop there. Round the corner were some old stables, these were bought and shelved. Unsorted cheapies were housed there.

I once paid £25 for a book which I found in the cinema, put it in the car, then moved on to attack the stables. The books there were an absolute jumble having been placed on the shelves unsorted. The books were three deep on the shelves. To have gone through the whole building would have taken a couple of days. However, my rooting did unearth a second copy of the book I'd purchased earlier - and in better condition. It even had a dust-wrapper! All the books in the stable were one price, 30 pence each or four for a pound. Why can't all bookshops operate on the identical pricing system?

Yes, the story had a happy ending. Richard Booth took back the £25 copy and refunded my money. That's not quite the end of the story. Other book dealers began to move into the village on Booth's shirt tails as it were. The village is now full of second-hand bookshops.**

** (I was there two years ago and there were some 16 bookshops ...T.J.)

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FANZINES & FINGS

QUEST FOR THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH \$5.00 Purple Mouth Press, Ned Brooks, 713 Paul St., Newport News, VA 23605, USA. Not so much a fanzine, more a labour of love having 26 pages, card covers, and some lovely Hunter illos. Opening with 'Quest Of The Starstone' by C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner, it features Jirel of Joirey and Northwest Smith presented in Weird Tales style. It is followed by the verses of 'Green Hills Of Earth', a section giving their background and also two sets of music - one by George Heap, the other by Joseph Kaye. Heinlein fans won't want to miss this and it's a limited edition of only 500 copies. A collector's item.

THE SPACE CADET GAZETTE.7 32, A5 Pages from, R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Ave., Apt. 110, Vancouver BC CANADA V6J 1J1. A cover reminiscent of Opuntia, natter on fantastic/SF movies, Convention doings, my 'First Issues', WWI memoirs, a Mayan Marathon and loads of LOCS. Nicely laid out and a friendly zine.

OPUNTIA 30&31 Two 16page A5 zines using a two column sideways format which always baffles me. You get LOCS, Ottawa fan history, future Torcon, radioactivity, biography of a philatelist a Maplecon Report an more. Nice variety, something for all. From D.C. Speirs, Box 6830, Station D, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 2E7

THE FREETHINKER.6 34pp from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39235, USA Review of a pirate yarn, pieces on Asimov, Fundamentalism, Dr. Who film, spellcheckers, car-buying, etc. and a hefty LOCCol. Nicely varied with a light hearted and cheerful style.

BANANA WINGS.5, Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Rd., Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA. A whacking 60 pages with a nice cover photo, speculation on fandom as a family, a lovely segmented Novacon report (why aren't they all like this?). Visiting Cambodia, some fanzines, TV SF, a lengthy article on SF and an excellent LOCCol. A Real Guddun.

SNUFKIN'S BUM 1.5 Maureen Kincaid Speller, has only 8 pages but it's excellent writing, birefly on Maureen's cat, then at long and VERY entertaining length on visiting IKEA. One of the best little items I've read in ages, so let's hope there's more to come.

SCIENCE FICTION has its own website! Dedicated to Forry Ackerman, it has news, articles, Con reps, photos, reviews etc. Organised by Alan White, 6244 Chinook Way, Las Vegas, NV 89108-1733. Pick it up at [Http://members.aol.com/forrysite/forfans.html](http://members.aol.com/forrysite/forfans.html)

ATTITUDE 10. from Pam Wells, Michael Abbott and John Dallman, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF One of the best covers I've seen in ages. Interior ar was also very good. Pieces on Conventions (just memories to me these days), 'Beta Fandom', Chuck Connor on Gibraltar, self-therapy, Novacon, Fanzine Reviews and lotsa LOCS, Excellent zine, get it for trade (3 copies of your zine) or the usual.

THE MENTOR.91 46pp from Ron Clarke, PO Box K940, Haymarket, NSW 2000, AUSTRALIA. Ron forgot to include it in the mag. He lists his umptean favourite books, there are two excellent stories, alove spoof on science, an item on Nuclear Holocaust, verse, life in South America, a couple of nattercols, travels in India, Governments, other goodies and excellent LOCS. Highly recommended.

It Makes You Think

Terry Jeeves

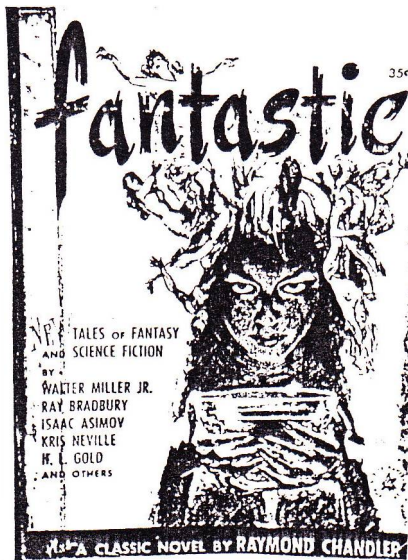
Whenever the subject of Artificial Intelligence is discussed, the 'Turing Test' is frequently mentioned. In its usual form this involves an interviewer connected via a keyboard to a human, or to a computer. By subtle questioning he must decide which. Obviously, there must be some restrictions otherwise the straight query, "Are you a computer?" would settle the question there and then. Similarly, asking, "What is the product of 4564 multiplied by 2839 and then by 7840?" would be a give-away if a correct answer came back in a split second, most humans would require several minutes to reach a solution.

To avoid this, the A.I. must be allowed to lie, dawdle, change its phrasing, or give evasive replies whenever it feels like it. Programs already exist which within certain limits can fool a human interviewer into believing they are corresponding with another human. However, straying outside these limits soon gives the game away. The snag is the fact that they are just programs or instruction sets. It doesn't take long before the interviewer realises he is getting the runaround in some long response loop. What is needed to demonstrate A.I. is some actual test involving logical (and illogical) thought processes to correlate umpteen seemingly unrelated thought processes.

I suggest facing the A.I. with a cryptic crossword puzzle taken from the Times or Guardian. If our would-be intelligence can sort out the variety of problems posed by the clues, then I'd suggest it is truly 'thinking'. Take a very simple example, what is the response to, ""Nine-lived feline (3)?"". A decent database should be able to correlate a three-lettered feline with its reputed nine lives and come up with 'cat'. A cryptic version needs much more thought. Try your luck with "Act out Dick's pet (3)". A database won't help much. The 'Act out' leads one to think in terms of performing on a stage and who is Dick? Is it Dick Turpin or Dick Tracy? It needs lateral thinking to realise that "act out" means put the letters of 'act' *out* of order and think of Dick Whittington. Get that far and it only remains to remember Whittington had a cat and a re-sorted 'act' would give the answer 'cat'. What program could do all that? Moreover, that was a very easy example. Here are a few other easy ones, "Respect from Paul" means you have to think of Paul Revere, "Mislaidd by Carlos Turandot" has nothing to do with an opera, it simply contains the word 'lost' buried in the clue. "Remuneration for a retarded artist" might stump a human solver until he decided an artist could be a 'drawer' and a retarded one (backwards) would become 'reward'.

These are simple examples compared with those found in the average cryptic crossword with a much wider range of tricks. None one these is accessible via standard database but require the correlation of seemingly totally unrelated information - languages, dialect, anagrams, homonyms, allusions, history, literature and much more, separately and in combination.

If a computer can do all this, I'd rate it as intelligent.



FANTASTIC

FANTASTIC's first issue for Summer 1952, was digest-sized, had 162 pages, cost 35c and was edited by Larry Shaw. The front cover was credited to Phillips and Summers. Backcover was a photo of an painting in the Museum Of Art. Interiors were by Summers, Stone, Stevens, Valigursky, Emsb and Finlay. The issue held ten stories.

SIX AND TEN ARE JOHNNY W.M.MILLER, When explorers land on a vegetation-covered world, it starts to take over their minds. One man has a silver skull plate and is immune for what good that is as the plant has other ways of attack which prove more effective.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE Sam Martinez, When a strait-laced spinster goes to Heaven she soon starts reorganising the place with results that do not please the All Mighty.

SOMEDAY THEY'LL GIVE US GUNS Paul W.Fairman, Alien supermen dominate Earth, opposition is cruelly stamped out and brin-washing the young is the order of the day - but given time, our children will eventually revolt.

FULL CIRCLE H.B.Hickey, In a world populated entirely by robots, the ultimate self-renewing device is created - it's a human being.

THE RUNAWAY Louise Lee Outlaw, Only a wife can see the strange shape which is growing out of her husband's back. It's a manifestation of his secret desire to run away. When he finally does so, he is killed by a non-existent train.

THE OPAL NECKLACE Kris Neville, A witch makes a spell and gives a young flapper a magic necklace. However the end result isn't quite what was intended. I'm afraid this one bored me to tears.

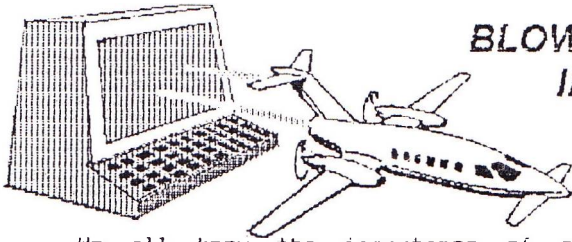
THE SMILE Ray Bradbury, Very much formula stuff as Post-Holocaust people queue to deface beauty in the shape of a painting. After some waffle, a young lad escapes with the smile off the painting of the Mona Lisa. (How did it get to a village in the USA?)

AND THREE TO GET READY H.L.Gold, A lunatic is firmly convinced that people will die if he says their name three times. It so happens that many of them do. Is it coincidence or is he right?

WHAT IF Isaac Asimov, A little man on a train shows a couple what might have been in a series of rather tedious flashbacks. Naturally, they were better off as they were in the first place.

Professor Bingo's Snuff Raymond Chandler, The snuff made people invisible so Pettigrew uses it for a locked-room murder.

One or two yarns are very much ritual formula tales which in the past, have surfaced in various forms. But in general, the mag presents a better than average mix with something for everyone



BLOWING IN THE WIND

We all know the importance of computers in aerospace engineering. The latest advances in cryogenically cooled semiconductor technology and microscopic sub-wafer assembly have made desktop MINS (Millions of Navier-Stokes Solutions) machines commonplace. We are also aware of the high cost of this aging technology. The most accurate prediction code available, FLO-1234.5, is so complex and expensive that it has never been run. Many other codes, if run to completion would take more than a human lifespan. Engineers attribute this to the time when writing aerodynamic computer programs was given to computers. We now have codes too complex to be understood by any human being. The cost of computing has risen exponentially over the years. If these trends continue unabated, computer solutions will soon be beyond anyone's means.

Fortunately, an exciting new technology may someday replace the computer for aerodynamic design. Workers at UNCAF (United Nations Computational Aerodynamics Facility) have made a startling discovery. By building a small wooden model of an aeroplane and blowing air past it in a tunnel, accurate predictions may be made of what the flow codes would compute. They call the device a 'wind tunnel'. At present, the method is still in a relatively crude stage and cannot be expected to produce precise results. For example, the surface of a model will never exactly duplicate the discrete nature of a computational grid. It may be especially hard to predict linearised potential flow in the tunnel. Nevertheless, the wind tunnel agrees surprisingly well with the computer.

Constructing a wind tunnel model is much quicker and less labour-intensive than all but the simplest computer programs. Shops such as MiniCraft complete even a highly detailed titanium model in a mere matter of months. Thus, many design iterations can be conducted in a fraction of the time required via the computer. Advances in wind tunnel technology and model making are expected to proceed at a rapid pace. Many promising new techniques such as the chiselling of facets in plaster-of-Paris models to more closely resemble computational panellings and grids are already being suggested by researchers. The future prospects of this amazing new wind tunnel technology are bounded only by the imagination.

But what will be the fate of millions of computational aerodynamicists presently employed? Is the wind tunnel a threat to their job security? It is true that some may lose their jobs but a brand-new demand will be created for those versed in wind tunnel technology. Engineering schools are already replacing courses in Finite Volume Methods and Grid Generation with curricula in Woodworking and Whittling. The Engineer will be freed from the drudgery of computational methods and given more time to concentrate on creative tasks. It is doubtful whether the computer will ever be completely eliminated; the thought of an aircraft designed solely from wind tunnel data without computer aid seems too incredible to believe. While the wind tunnel may never fully replace the computer, it is almost certain to become the most useful engineering tool of the future.

...Anon...

SAVE THE THINGY



Some people are always wanting to save things. Once it was just souls but nowadays the list has been extended to include whales, dolphins, hedges, ancient buildings, footpaths, trees, or whatever takes the fancy. These rescue missions seem fairly harmless - even those involving people in hanging from trees or chaining themselves to railings. However a few recent rescue missions strike me as being a bit on the dodgy side.

I read somewhere that wolves are now an endangered species. As a result, a campaign is being mounted to re-breed the critters and re-stock Northern Canada with the furry little darlings. A worthy cause if you don't live in that neck of the woods. I'm sure that the little kiddywinkies at Mrs. Dewdrop's Academy For Young Delinquents will be delighted to hand over their toffee-apple money for such a scheme. Whether lonely fur-trappers, loggers or isolated communities will share their enthusiasm is another matter.

Further South in the USA a rescue party is striving to bring back the vanishing brown bear. City dwellers or zoo visitors love the cuddly blighters but I doubt whether rural communities share their enthusiasm. I recall seeing warning notices in Yosemite way back in 1982. Visitors were told to avoid putting waste food in the litter bins as it encouraged the brown bears to come a-hunting. They're not so cuddly in the wild.

Take India (take it, I don't want it), I gather that world-wide rescue schemes aim to re-populate that Continent with oodles of tigers to build up the rapidly dwindling stocks. It must give one a warm glow to think that by donating a few quid it will help to keep the lovely looking creatures roaming the plains. On the other hand, I doubt that their enthusiasm is likely to be shared by the peasant crawling out of his mud hut on a warm sunny morning and coming face to face with a hungry tiger seeking breakfast.

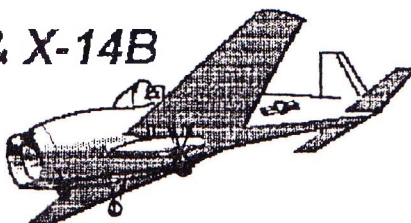
It isn't so euphonious but STAFB should be added to NIMBY, Such Things Are Fine But Not In My Back Yard. Saving things is a worthy cause, provided you don't dump your collection on somebody who lacks your enthusiasm. The spinster with a 30 cat menagerie is not usually a great hit with the neighbours and whilst I'm a great fan of aircraft, I am very glad I didn't live next door to the bloke who spent 20 years or so restoring a wartime Mosquito and kept all the bits on his drive.

Saving schemes could get worse. Oh, I don't mind saving an elephant, or three, the odd rhino maybe, and proliferating Pandas in Peking isn't a bad idea, but suppose they overdo these activities and export their surplus to England? Imagine following a howdah-bearing elephant around the M-25 or seeing a factory complex with the sign, "THESE PREMISES ARE PROTECTED BY GUARD TIGERS".

Of course, if we can't lick these protectors, why not join 'em? How about mounting a campaign to bring back that virtually extinct creature, the pulp magazine? I'd also like to see the return of cigarette cards - maybe packets full of 'em to replace the cigarettes. Let's bring back kids playing with peg-tops, Standard 8mm cine film, cheerful items on news programs and a few other goodies which we have lost over the years. Maybe saving some things isn't such a bad idea after all.

Terry Jeeves

The X-14, X-14A & X-14B



At first glance the X-14 seemed a fairly normal, tricycle-undercarriage, light aircraft. Indeed, for economy it used Beechcraft wings and sundry parts from other aeroplanes.

Closer inspection revealed it to be a two-jet, single seater with rather long undercarriage struts. An even closer look revealed it to be an experimental, vectored-thrust VTOL design. It was not a 'finished' aircraft being intended as a 'proof of concept' machine to try out the feasibility of simply diverting the jet thrust to lift the machine vertically.. It had been preceded by an earlier experimental machine, the ATV N-1105V which used two turbojets which could swivel from horizontal to vertical. Effective, but gave added difficulties in connections to the movable engines.

The next stage was the X-14 which used a couple of Armstrong-Siddeley engines with rotating deflector nozzles amidships as used later on in the Hawker Harrier. The first flight took place in 1957 but at first 'suck-down' air kept it firmly on the ground, a problem solved fairly easily by lengthening the undercarriage legs. Various ground tests were made before the first full VTOL cycle in 1958.

To overcome thrust deficiencies, the X-14 was re-worked into the X-14A by the addition of more powerful engines and improved reaction controls. In this form, it saw some eleven years of reliable service.

Further upgrades were carried out in engines and controls to produce the X-14B, the testing of which continued until 1981 when a hard-landing ended its flying career. In that time, some twenty-five different pilots had flown the machine. A very successful design, data from which were passed to Hawker to aid in the design of the highly successful Harrier.

What does surprise me is the undercarriage. Having seen what happens to a B-24 Liberator if too many people try to work in the rear end without shoving an oil drum under the tail bumper, I wonder why the X-14 main wheels were so far forward. One careless worker climbing on to the tail could have caused an expensive ground 'crunch'.

The X-14 had a span of 33 feet, a length of 26feet. a speed of 172mph and a ceiling of 18,000 feet. Not bad for an experiment. The damaged machine as headed for an Air Museum, hopefully, in semi-repaired condition as only the one machine was ever built.



LETTERS

BOUFF BARKER, 19 OLDFIELD GROVE, STANNINGTON, SHEFFIELD S6 6QR

What's the average age of your readers? → Dunno, how about it folks? ← Do any of them remember the Richard Shaver 'Lemurai' affair? → I still have OW No.1 Nov.'59 with the first yarn, "I remember Lemurai". I never could read it. ← You mention 'Paris' somewhere near Sheffield, I've never heard of it. Sheffield folk are the only ones who understand the saying, "You can live in Hope all your

life, but die in Castleton." → Paris is a one horse village somewhere above Holmfirth. Query, are they all penurious in 'Stoney Middleton'? ←

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD STH. WALLSEND, N.TYNESIDE, NE28 7RE

Comics, there has been some talk about the Beano's 50th, Anniversary and I foolishly bought a copy. Ah me, the dead hand of Political Correctness and feminism have descended on it. Gone is Desperate Dan, replaced by a single cowboy style mother and daughter.

Gone is Lord Snooty and the Bash Street Kids are laying nice politically correct tricks on a long suffering teacher. Oh for. the days of Comic Cuts, Bill and Ben the odd-job men, whose sole ambition is the consumption of fish and chips. As for SF, how a space rocket can be built in a back yard astounds me, but there was a strip featuring a 'steam man'. A poor girl was trying to build a rocket to rescue her Dad from Mars. The next scene shows her in an immaculate rocket built by steam man. Ah me, the dear dead days beyond recall.

→ PC and its stupid offshoots are ruining the world. I saw recently an African State wanting recompense and apology for our part in the slave trade. If that happens, we ought to sue the French for the Battle of Hastings and the Romans for their invasion. It's time these reformers stopped judging the past by today's standards. ←

KEN LAKE, 46 CHESTNUT AVE., BUCKHURST HILL, ESSEX IG9 6EW

Thanks to John Ollis for his egoboo. To make a dowsing rod, straighten a wire coat hangar into a Y, insert the two top ends into 8" pieces of plastic tube so it is loose and doesn't touch your hands. Hold the tubes, extend the rod before you. Walk slowly and wait for the end to pull up or down. Can't accept cryptic crossword test: as a Mensa member with a vocabulary larger than 95% of fandom, → Does that include 'modesty'? ← I can't do these at all: they're a test of a particular type of mind, not of intelligence or intellect. → But if you're NOT intelligent, you can't do 'em - and if you CAN do 'em, then you are. Incidentally, would you say a half-wit is NOT intelligent? ← Agree re abortion-clinic bombers.

Ireland is different: the British Government gerrymandered the six counties in 1921 and refuses fair play to Catholics. → Does that justify indiscriminate bombing and murder? ← We should leave the two sides to sort it out in a United Ireland → Hollow laugh ← but we send in the Army and arm the police. Peace in Ireland can only come from withing, not by imposing martial law.

Special news. In April I'll be marrying Gillian Taylor and moving to 46 Chestnut Ave, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 6EW. → HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS and all the very best to both of you. ←

RON BENNETT, 36 HARLOW PARK CRESCENT, HARROGATE, N.YORKSHIRE HG2 0AW

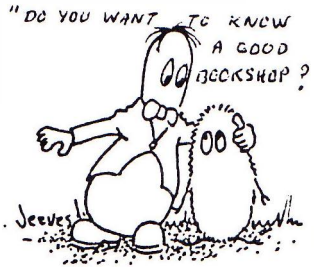
I seem to remember that Weary Willy & Tired Tim began life as Weary Waddles & Tired Timmy and appeared, not in JESTER, but in CHIPS. \Rightarrow Well I did open, 'As far as a rather doddery memory can recall.' \Leftarrow As one who actually goes to Conventions (one in the past four years), I'm not at all sure the fault lies with people like Ken Bulmer who can't enthuse about going to a Con, as they might have done in the days of their youth. What if some bright spark organised one just down the road from Ken. Would he rush out, slap down his money and attend? Perhaps so, but I don't think the enthusiasm would be there. If not, it can be the travelling is the deciding factor. It could be age of course but I think a good part of it is in the manner in which Cons have changed since the days when you and I could travel down to Kettering on the same Friday morning train a mere forty or so years ago. A hundred attendees was an unheard of figure and everyone knew everyone. We were friends. We attended Cons as much to see one another as for the sf. I'm certain that there are many who attend Cons for the same reason, but they, some might say, are too big. The mind-blowing of a Con has replaced the intimacy. \Rightarrow I fully agree, there were several thousand at Noreascon in 1980 and I couldn't find anyone except by sheer chance. \Leftarrow

TED HUGHES, 10 KENMORE RD., WHITEFIELD, MANCHESTER M45 8ER

Bloods and Comics. Happy Days! My standbys were THE WIZARD, THE ROVER, THE ADVENTURE and THE HOTSPUR. I remember the first issue of the HOTSPUR, it had a huge vulture on the cover. My dad used to bring all four comics home for me - with an injunction not to let the other lads see them - several days before they were on sale in the shops. He also brought me MODERN BOY--which was a cut above the WIZARD and Co. I treasured a set of glossy train photos they gave away. The one I remember was the Hush Hush--an engine with its boiler, funnel and dome hidden under a streamlined green overall \Rightarrow Wasn't that the Mallard? \Leftarrow Like you, I also strained my eyes over the blue pages of the BULLSEYE. In particular, I recall a series of tales about 'The Phantom Of Cursitor Fields' - who may or may not have been the same character as your 'Phantom Of Blackfriars'. \Rightarrow Very likely, I said my memory was rather dodgy. \Leftarrow Incidentally, I notice a small figure on a flying platform in the heading cut. Didn't a man on such a platform feature in one of the big four's stories? \Rightarrow Yes, meet him again in this issue's DBAL.2 \Leftarrow

VINCE CLARKE, 16 WENDOVER WAY, WELLING, KENT, DA16 2BN

Nice cover, bears going over with a magnifying glass, the number of bits and pieces there. I particularly liked the dog (?) with six legs. But, 'Britain in '99', You jest. I have a bit of sympathy for politics infiltrating fanzines, but politics, the decisions of ruling bodies affects all our lives, like it or not. And fandom was never politics free. \Rightarrow I can accept that, but my real objection is to abusive politics as in the title of FFT. That sort of attitude and language is NOT needed. \Leftarrow 'Chunterings interesting as usual. Amused at Ken's remark, re distance that one would have to go to find a bookshop. Certainly the local (2 miles away) has packed it in during the last year, leaving W.H.Smith lording it over the surrounding district. \Rightarrow In Sheffield, I knew of only one 'old' and three 'new' stores. Here in Scarborough we have 5 new and two old plus a further two just up the coast. Two of the old ones are real goldmines. \Leftarrow



PAPERBACKS, HARDCOVERS and MAGAZINES. I must dispose of my collection. Most items are in 'as new' condition unless listed as otherwise. Send an S.A.E. for lists, (say which you'd like). Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough YO12 5RQ

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST., NORTON, MALTON, N. YORKSHIRE YO17 9ES

Excellent timing for your reprint of your DMBL chapter: *Bloods & Comics* to arrive in the middle of National Comics Week. How do you do it? Θ *Sheer fluke* $\&\#$ I suspect that someone else might have fond memories of the Bullseye and Phantom Of Blackfriars, how else can you explain one of the serials in 'The Two ronnies' of *The Phantom Raspberry Blower of Old London Town*? Going back to an earlier ERG, and Ted Hughes comments. It's struck me that the evidence of authors disappearing from the mags is only one of the signs that the publishing emphasis has changed. It's more lucrative now to sign a contract for a series of books than a series of stories; and that the magazines which once reigned supreme have now been pushed up a bakwater to mix metaphors. It was always part of my Golden Age to see Doc Smith share the same pages as Poul Anderson, Murray Leinster and Phillip K. Dick; but now authors like these are more likely to go straight into paperback. There's still a place for the magazines as nurseries for new talent, which is one reason that I'm still a devotee; and the occasional 'old' author does make an appearance. Like Tom Godwin (*The Cold Equations*) in Asimov's or Jack Williamson in *F&SF* Θ *Worse*, story outlets are vanishing - the non-reading 'Graphic novel' is taking over. $\&\#$

TOM PORTER, 25 GREENWAY, CHAPEL PARK, NEWCASTLE ON TYNE NE5 1SU

After more than 30 years GAFIation it's great to return to fandom. I remembered ERG (along with HYPHEN, WARHOON, YANDRO etc.) from its early days when I used to borrow fanzines from Alan Burns and Jim Cawthorn. It would be nice to hear from any fans who were around in the late 50s-early 60s. If you're still around, drop me a line, and if you produce a fanzine, could you let me have a copy. I'd be grateful and willing to subscribe. Θ *What about it Alan Burns, Ron Bennett, Vince Clarke, Derek Pickles, Dave Cohen, Alan Hunter and all?* $\&\#$

LLOYD PENNEY, 1706-24 EVA RD., ETOBICOKE, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

I remember the British comics my grandparents used to send me, the Beano, Dandy, Wizard and Hotspur. There was another I used to get, a kind of tabloid comic compilation instead of the little 'books', the aforementioned titles were. I think it was the Wizard which carried the story of a man named Wilson who was taught how to brew a life-extension elixir, and who lived from the 18th. Century clear through to WWII. Does the story line sound familiar at all? Θ *Sorry, but I was too old for the 'bloods' after the way. Anyone else remember 'Wilson'?* $\&\#$ Long after my grandfather passed on, I found out that most of the exciting stories in these comics had been recycled several times to entertain future generations. Θ *Logical, it must have saved 'em oddles of cash.* $\&\#$

BILL DANNER, R.D.1, KENNERDELL, PA 16374, USA

I enjoyed your 'Bloods & Comics'. While we didn't have such things for kids as you describe, there were magazines for boys (and some for girls). One I got for some years was 'Boy's Magazine'. It was a sort of poor relation of 'The American Boy', a very high class magazine with writers such as C.B. Kelland. It was decently printed on cheap white paper and published stories, serials and had departments. One of these was for construction articles. I won a small prize of \$3.00 for a tiny crystal radio receiver I'd thrown together and got a few faint signals with. The magazine wanted me to take it out in extending my subscription, but Dad told me to insist on the cash, which I did. Ah, then wiz the days. Θ *I sold a ZX81 computer program to a magazine back in 1990 and they offered me a choice of a ZX81 or £50. Having got a ZX81, I opted for the cash -- and never got it.* $\&\#$

