

WÄLLBÄCKER

4



'WE'RE OFF TO A
CONVENTION !' *fan's* progress



'I THINK I DRANK
TOO MUCH'



'I DID DRINK TOO
MUCH'



'THE HOTEL BILL'S
HOW MUCH?!'

WALLBANGER 4

A sporadic fanzine produced by Eve Harvey
but which will be seen on a more regular
basis from now on - honest boss.

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Once again my thanks to John for printing this
issue, and my apologies to all those (well, the
2 or 3) who wrote following Wallbanger 3. In
all fairness I felt I couldn't reproduce those
LoCs after such a long time - they just wouldn't
make sense. The next issue of Wallbanger is
in the "work-in-progress" file at the moment
and should be out by Novacon. Hopefully the
schedule will then become more regular and the
credibility of this fanzine improve; as to the
quality - well, I need your help for that.

IT NEVER RAINS

No, this is not a mirage; nor is it a dream so you can stop pinching yourself - it is, honestly, another edition of Wallbanger. What, I can hear you asking yourselves, has prompted this unusual occurrence? Ah, well, thereby hangs a tale.....

To set the scene, my father had a serious car accident in 1974 in which he was thrown through the windscreen and suffered severe and permanent brain damage. Since then he has been looked after by my mother in Brighton (50 miles from where John and I live).

It all started early in December with a phone call from my sister late one Sunday night.

"Mum has been taken to hospital, we don't know what's wrong."

This started daily drives to Brighton after work:-

Monday - Sorry, we don't know what's wrong.
Tuesday - More tests, but we don't know what it is.
Wednesday - It's stomach ulcers, she'll be out by the weekend.
Thursday - It's cancer, we'll operate tomorrow.
Friday - She's got 2 months to live.
Sunday, 28th December - She died at 11.30 a.m.

My sister was unwilling to look after my father, who didn't want to be put into a home, so John and I now have him living with us permanently. That, for those of you who might have wondered, was why we were pushing around a man in a wheelchair at Yorcon 2, and will be at Eastercons and Novacons from now on.

Unfortunately, our two-bedroomed flat was hardly big enough to house all 3 of us + offset litho machine + plate maker + duplicator + electronic stencil cutter + + +.....

Thus, we have moved to a nice big house - at least that's what it looked like before the removers started unloading the van! Wallbanger 4 has therefore been produced as a change of address notice.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Originally I had drafted an editorial for this issue which compared the present state of British fandom as shown by the fanzines being produced, with the state of the art when John and I entered in the early 70's. At that time there was a wealth of excellent reading matter being produced, or recently produced, by such people as Greg Pickersgill, Simone Walsh, Leroy Kettle, Pat and Graham Charnock, Kev Smith, Dave Langford, Dave Bridges.... the list goes on ad infinitum. As a neo these zines were a little difficult to comprehend, being basically about matters that concerned and interested a small group of fans who all knew each other, but perserverance was all

that was required. Soon names, occasions, views became familiar. Maybe memory tends to play tricks on people, but even for me, a person who notoriously never read fanzines as avidly as some, there seemed to be more substance to those zines.

The editorial then went on to bemoan the dearth of good reading matter today; yes, Kev Smith and Dave Langford are still on the scene, but they can hardly fill the whole gap, and Alan Dorey's Gross Encounters could never quite scale the heights of, say, Wrinkled Shrew or Greg Pickersgill at his best. Maybe, I thought, Seacon is to blame - a great effort was made on the fanzine scene for that occasion which could have burnt most of the editors out. There again, maybe a person has only so much to say and once that has been published, he is as empty as a can of beer that's been in John's possession for more than 5 minutes.

Then Malcolm Edwards thrust a copy of Tappen into my sweaty paw at the last One Tun. Reading this on the tube one morning I thought, "hell, there goes one of the basic tenets of my editorial - there is a good zine available today". The more I read, the more excited I became - this was what it had all been about back in those halcyon neo-days; the same excitement and interest was there, the same crucial mix of extraneous personal chit-chat and constructive thought; the same old names. Wait! Greg Pickersgill as well - that I never expected! As I read Greg's article I heard faint crashing sounds as another of the tenets hit the dust - maybe the good writers don't drain themselves, here was Greg writing about one of his favourite topics and sounding fresh, exciting, and not at all like the Greg of Stop Breaking Down in its latter days. Still, it was good and proved that if you have the skill, as he obviously has, you should be able to continue interesting your readership.

The next day happened to be the Friday of a BSFA meeting at the Rutland. In something of a drunken haze, Rochelle and I were talking about fanzines but next morning I mulled over what she had to say and decided my editorial should be torn to shreds - I was completely wrong in all the major points I was going to make. Rochelle was bemoaning the fact that, as a relative newcomer to British fandom, she had missed the 'golden age' (I hate that term, but can't think of anything more suitable at the moment) of fanzine production. She related a discussion she had had with Greg Pickersgill which boiled down to:

"Why don't you write any more?"
 "Cos I've said it all before."
 "But us newcomers haven't heard it!"

My apologies to Greg and Rochelle if I've distorted that somewhat, but through the alcohol that's the impression I got. Following hard on the heels of this, I was talking about producing this issue of Wallbanger and several people who were present remarked that they didn't even know John and I produced fanzines. OK, this is mainly a reflection on my somewhat lengthy schedule, but the old grey cells started waking up again.

Why are there so few fanzines today? Why is it that newcomers

BUT IT POURS

Time : 1.55 a.m.
 Date : Friday, 1st May 1981
 (Technically, I suppose, Saturday 2nd May)

Here I am, sitting in bed waiting for John to be released from the police station and thinking that you lot out there must be feeling very safe and happy. Why? You know how disasters always happen to someone else? well, John and I seem to be that someone else judging by the way we attract bad luck as if we were poles of a magnet. Therefore we must be suffering all the disasters meant for most of you!

To get back to the waiting and the worrying. It's not that I'm not used to waiting for John - anyone can relate endless stories of our notorious time;keeping. It's not even the latest I've waiting up for him ; there was the time he was driving back from Newcastle with an ETA of 8 p.m. By 1 a.m. I began to worry (we were not on the phone at this time) by 2 a.m. I couldn't understand why the police hadn't contacted me about his accident and by 3 a.m. I was a widow. At 4 a.m. the gate opened and I prepared myself to receive the nervous policeman, but it was only a very tired and frustrated husband. His car had broken down outside Birmingham and he'd caught the last train to London, having to wait an hour at Euston for a taxi.

Now it's 2.20 a.m. and I'm sitting in the police station waiting-room ; John's been here since 11 p.m., surely he'll be released soon?

3.40 a.m. - back home now and still no John.

4.00 a.m. - the phone rings; they've actually had enough of him and would I please take him off their hands!

What's it all about? It's John's story, so I'll let him enlighten those of you who haven't already heard the story ad infinitum.....

I don't think 1981 will go down in my memory as a particularly brilliant year. It has had its good points but I think the balance comes out on the negative side. And we're only halfway through the year!

For those of you who don't already know, I used to be employed by BOC Ltd (this sad little tale will explain why that's in the past tense). My job involved sewage treatment and - as I loved to say at snobbish cocktail parties - "I worked in shit". Thus it was probably only a matter of time before I was literally in the shit. It was the way it happened that came as a shock.....

One thing about BOC is that staff either stay for 4 years or 40, if you see what I mean. Thus, when a long-serving member of our department came to the end of his time the retirement party was at the company's expense. Food & drink was provided and all and sundry invited. Therefore, on May 1st, we gathered in the staff canteen and laid into the beer, wine and sandwiches. Now one of my colleagues in the 'shit shoveller' department (Ashley), was

nominally in charge of the 'party' and prior to the event had asked the site-services manageress (fancy title for the canteen manageress) what was to be done with the left-overs. "I don't want to see any of it again" was the reply.

At about 8 p.m., therefore, Ashley and I carefully shipped 96 bottles of Ruddles County into the back of his estate car and took them to the local pub where we distributed them between ourselves and the others who were left. Therein lay the fatal mistake - we'd been spotted by some miserable fork-lift truck drivers who, doubtless out of jealousy since they wanted to finish off the left-overs, told the security officer "'ere, they was shipping out crates of wines & spirits into the back of a van!". The snowball had been started on its downhill path and by 11.30 that night it came flying through my front door in the guise of two detectives from the local police station.

Eve and I had just got into bed to prepare for another thrilling episode of 'Outer Limits' when the doorbell rang - it was our local friendly etc who asked me to accompany them to the station (no, not St Pancras). Confiscating the 19 bottles of beer which had been my share, they took me away and by midnight I found myself locked in a police cell. By some fluke I'd forgotten my watch but I had remembered to bring a book (SF of course!) so I lost complete track of time. My mind was whirling in ever-decreasing circles: "How could this happen?" "Surely not to me!" "It wasn't my fault!" "What'll I tell my parents?" "How long will they put me away for?" Reading was proving rather difficult.

By 3.30 they had rounded the other three people up and taken statements, so they let me out - first in last out, buggers! What made it even worse was the gleeful expression on the policemen's faces as they announced "BOC want us to charge you! But we don't think it's worth while. Are you sure you haven't upset someone at work? It looks like a vendetta to us." We were let out on bail - would you believe it? - but at least it was 'on our own cogniscence', but had to report back at 9 a.m. on Tuesday (Monday was a bank holiday).

Thus the holiday weekend was one of frivolity and misery. How many times did I analyse my situation? How often did I assure myself that come Tuesday BOC would see sense and it would all be sweetness and light? - "Sorry lads, we got it wrong - have a beer, ha, ha!"

Tuesday brought another long wait at the station. "OK", said the Sargeant on his return from a 2½ hour trip to BOC, "who wants to be charged first?" Our jaws must have hit the floor simultaenously. "No, it's all right, we've persuaded them not to. Go back to work."

Even so, we returned with heavy hearts. The inquisition was about to begin....

If the police were good at keeping you waiting, BOC were even better. Two more hours went by hanging around the department before the appearance of our manager. "Go to lunch and see Howard (his boss!) at 2 p.m." Another exciting foursome in the pub as we looked glumly into our beer until 2 p.m. finally arrived and we crawled back.

"Where's Howard?"
"He's on the phone."
"Tell him we're here."
Half an hour later....
"Where is he then?"
"Gone to lunch."
"HELL!"

Eventually the summons came. Ashley and I grovelled, crawled, snivelled and glared! "Sorry, only one course of action - dismissed!
or you could resign"

I suppose at one time we'd have been given a gun and told to go and 'do the right thing'. I know what I'd have done with a gun in my hand! But there it was, no job from 4 p.m. that day, no money from 4 p.m. (yep, we didn't even get our three months' notice), no more company car, no more..... Bang, all gone for a few bottles of beer, which I didn't even drink.

What about the others, I hear you say. Well, to add insult to injury, BOC decided there was a fine deciding line between Ashley and I and the other two - we actually took the booze off the premises so we were the 'blacks', they received it off the premises and were therefore only slightly grey and got off with smacked hands. Ah well, since it's 1981 what more can I expect - surely never fairness.

So here I am 2 months later - unemployed. Not exactly the best period of the late 20th century to be unemployed. I suppose like a true SF fan I ought to use this opportunity to expand my literary talents and write that great SF novel. But then again.....

One coincidence that has occurred over this happened when the young lad who is buying our flat came round to see it before signing the contracts. We were rather worried since when he rang he mentioned that he hadn't signed the contracts yet because he'd "been having some problems at work". When he came we asked him what the matter was and, would you believe it.... yup, he'd taken something off the premises, security had reported the incident out of all proportion (not beer this time, but steak and eggs!) and management had threatened to sack him! Luckily he is in a union and they threatened to strike, so apologies were made and all is sweetness and light for him. I didn't believe very strongly in trade unions before, and others in my department were actively anti, hence we didn't have union representation for our staff, but I'm beginning to wonder what the result would have been had we been unionised.... and I know the others who are left at BOC are wondering the same....

The following article was sent to me by Bob about this time last year, and I send him my abject apologies for sitting on it for this long. However, as you will know from the previous article, there have been one or two things, besides merely the usual fannish activities, that have put another issue of Wallbanger out of my mind. Still, it would seem that perhaps this has been to the good, since there are some links between what Bob is saying and John's recent predicament.

So, once again with my apologies to Bob, who I am sure will never send me anything again, here is his tale....

THE SAUCY APPRENTICE

Bob Shaw

I have changed jobs twelve times in my working career. On eleven occasions the change was my idea, but on the other occasion it was my boss's idea. In other words - they decided to fire me.

It happened quite a long time ago, when I was about eighteen, but it still isn't easy to write about it because the Calvinist work ethic which was part of my Ulster upbringing still lingers in my system. The shame associated with being fired from a job was so great that some people in my circles wouldn't admit that it had happened to them.

One friend called Sammy was a commercial artist of such monumental incompetence that every time he was given an assignment which involved portraying the human figure he used to bring his sketch block to me so that I could draw the hands for him. Finally, his boss got fed up and chucked Sammy out, and Sammy was so anxious to conceal from the neighbours what had happened to him that he continued going to the office every morning at the usual time and returning home in the evening looking suitably work-weary. That may sound weird enough, but there's more to come. In the close-knit community in which we lived, merely going out and coming back at night wouldn't have fooled anybody for very long, so every day Sammy actually went into the building in which he had been employed, sneaked up the stairs and sat from nine to five in a disused room, on his own, possibly practising drawing hands. Honest to God! And that went on for several weeks until he managed to land a new job.

I wouldn't have behaved so stupidly, of course - being an SF fan and one of the Star-begotten - but getting the sack was definitely no laughing matter, and I can still remember every detail of what happened. The whole episode was spread over a month or so, and had something of the nature of a secret war between me and an elderly office manager called Eddie Barratt. He was small and portly, emitted an overpowering aroma of Johnson's baby powder, and had a large head and a puce-coloured nose deeply indented with pores. He possessed only five or six teeth, all of which projected upwards at divergent angles from his lower jaw, like those old posts you see around disused landing stages.

We both worked for a tiny structural engineering firm, and Eddie sensed my presence as a threat to his security, because until I

got there he had, as well as running the general office, been doing most of the "design" work with the aid of a heap of old engineer's handbooks. He saw me as a thrusting young whizz kid type because I was nominally in my third year of a National Certificate course. Little did he know that I was no threat at all in that department because I had discovered Irish Fandom and when everybody, my parents included, thought I was at night school I was actually in Walt Willis's house working on fanzines.

I'm also prepared to admit that much of what happened was my own fault. Eddie had a number of personal problems, not the least of which was angina pectoris of such severity that he was often unable to walk the two hundred yards from the bus to the office without stopping for a rest. I and the two teenage girls who made up the office staff thought that this was very funny. Anybody who happened to glance outside and see Eddie, ashen-faced and panting for breath, clinging to a lamp post halfway along the street would say something like, "Old Ed has conked out again," and we would crowd to the window to appreciate the spectacle. (I look back on that utter callousness with astonishment - can it really have been me? - but remembering it helps me bridge the generation gap every time today's teenagers shock me with something that seems to indicate lack of sensitivity. Healthy youngsters are wrapped up in their own world and can't even begin to understand illness, for the most part.)

I too had problems - one of them being a complete lack of interest in the work I was supposed to be doing. I used to sit in my windowless, airless cubbyhole of an office, munching disgusting confections called Coconut Cream Snowballs and trying to write science fiction. Eddie cottoned on to this habit very quickly, and the steps he took to combat it were the beginnings of full hostilities between us. His office was directly above mine and several times a day he would sprint - angina be damned - down the connecting flight of stairs, launch himself off the fourth step from the bottom, hit my door with his shoulder about three-quarters way up, burst it open on a descending parabola and land right beside my desk. No theatrical Mephistopheles could ever have contrived a more sudden, explosive or frightening entrance. It used to paralyse me with shock and I would be caught red-handed every time - sitting there with coconut cream smeared over my chin and the current chapter of Avenger of the Asteroids spread out on my desk.

I tried counteracting this devastating ploy by pushing the office door firmly shut, but it was slightly out of alignment with its frame and the tongue of the lock could never be induced to slip into the keeper. Eddie knew the door hadn't been properly closed for years and he kept on dive-bombing me, with cumulative effect on my nerves. Then one lunch-time - after a particularly harrowing morning - I got a good idea. I brought a screwdriver and some steel washers from home, unscrewed the keeper and packed it out to the right distance with the washers, thus causing the door to lock perfectly. Well satisfied with the job, I sat down to await results.

About an hour later, my senses abnormally keyed up, I heard Eddie leave his desk in the office above. There was the usual flurry

of his footsteps as he sprinted down the stair, a long moment of silence while he was airborne, then an appalling crash as he hit my office door. It was followed by a secondary thudding noise as he bounced off on to the corridor floor. A full thirty seconds went by without further sound before the door was slowly opened and Eddie lurched into the room, clutching his shoulder, mouth feebly opening and closing, his little row of brown teeth moving up and down like components of some antique farm machine that was gradually grinding to a halt.

Looking back on the incident with hindsight into Eddie's health, I suppose I was quite lucky that I didn't bring about his death. He slumped into a chair near the door and sat there for a minute, during which he had ample time to observe the bright new steel washers in the dark brown varnish of the doorframe - then he left without speaking.

We were at war.

It was a quiet and subtle war, almost like a game, but the stakes were my continued employment so it was a game I had to take seriously. I reckoned I had the edge in brains and flexibility, but Eddie had experience on his side - and also he cheated by recruiting Alec, the owner's son, as a spy. Alec was an ambling moron who whistled very loudly and continuously. He knew only one song - Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer - and he delivered it at a fixed rate of one note every two seconds, without every stopping. I was in that firm for ten months and never once encountered Alec when he wasn't whistling that same damnable tune. Annoying though it was, it worked to my advantage. Every time I heard strains of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer growing extra loud I knew Alec was approaching on assignment from Eddie and I had time to hide Avenger of the Asteroids.

Alec used to come in on some pretext, discreetly (he thought) note down the numbers of all the files on my desk and report back to Eddie with them. This was obviously intended to give Eddie an idea of my work flow, so I foiled the plan by regularly erasing the file numbers and putting in different numbers of my own devising. The confusion that caused rapidly led to friction between my two adversaries, and Eddie was forced into the front line. He had one ploy which I, as the author of the Fansmanship Lectures, thought quite brilliant. Having even less talent for the job than I, he often made mistakes in his cost estimates and when pulled up on one by the firm's owner, Old Billy, he would go straight to me and, speaking in very low tones, would begin to imply it was my fault. Eventually I would have to ask if he was blaming me, at which point - in a very loud voice - he would exclaim, "Oh no, Bob - I'm not BLAMING you."

The emphasis he put on the participle completely changed the meaning of the sentence, but I could hardly start explaining that to Old Billy, and my standing in the firm began to go down. I've written before about the morbid sensitivity that working in the pressure cooker of a small firm can induce in people, but the following example of what went on between Eddie and me is almost science fictional in its implications.

I was sitting in my office on a Saturday morning, doing some over-time, when I heard a surreptitious noise in the adjoining workshop. The shopfloor men didn't work on Saturdays and Old Billy was off on holiday, so I become curious about the noise. I

cautiously peered out of my window and was quite surprised to see Eddie out there, skulking around in his good suit in an area where off-cuts of steel were stored. As I watched, he retrieved a piece of 2" x 2" angle iron from the corner and measured it with his tape. That was quite a legitimate activity - he could have been looking for a piece of a specific size for a job at home - but the thing which intrigued me was that, having measured the iron, he took the trouble of clambering over a heap of scrap and putting it back exactly as he had found it, leaning against the wall. He then put his tape away, apparently quite satisfied, and disappeared back into his own office.

I returned to my desk and sat there for a while, pondering over Eddie's strange behaviour. There we were, just the two of us alone in different parts of that ramshackle old building, but I was almost telepathically aware of Eddie, and what he had done was causing me a strange uneasiness. Finally, and I still don't know what gave me the inspiration, I took the only defensive action that came to mind - I sneaked out into the shop with my own tape, measured the same piece of angle iron, and put it back exactly as I had found it.

The usual innocent pleasures of the week-ends of my youth - on Saturday quaffing countless pints of Guinness from the wood without having to worry about my waistline, on Sunday the long meeting of Irish fandom - all but obliterated the odd incident from my memory, and I was quite taken aback when Eddie made his move on the following Monday morning. Old Billy was back from his vacation and we were escorting him around the workshop, bringing him up to date with the progress of various contracts, when Eddie launched into a prepared discourse which was basically an attack on me and my role in the firm.

"All this theoretical stuff and fiddling about with slide rules is all right," he assured Old Billy, "but nothing can beat practical experience that only comes from year after year on the job. That's what really counts - the practical eye, the ability to size up a job just by looking at it. For instance..." He caught my arm and glanced all around the shop. "For instance, young Bob, how long would you say that piece of angle iron is?"

He pointed into the corner, at our piece of 2" x 2" angle iron, and I knew with a surge of unholy glee that I had him. I remembered the piece was 4' 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", but naturally I didn't come out with it like that.

I stared at the angle for a moment, through narrowed eyes, and said, "Let's see now. It's around four feet... a bit more than that though... getting on for four foot three. I'd say it's something like... um... four foot two and a quarter."

Eddie's eyes locked into mine for a moment and I saw in them total understanding of the situation, mingled with rage and hatred. It occurred to me at once that I had made a mistake.

"Not a bad guess," Old Billy chipped in, taking a sporting interest in the matter. "What length do you say, Eddie?"

"I've no time to stand around here," Eddie snapped, waddling away in the direction of his office. I watched him go and then, filled with cool premonitions, went to my own office and began writing applications for employment with all the other

structural engineering firms I could think of.

On the following Friday afternoon Eddie summoned me to his chambers, bade me sit down, and said, "Bob, a very unhappy situation has arisen. The firm has been doing badly for the last ten months..." He paused long enough for us both to reflect that that was exactly how long I had been employed there. "...and Mister Billy has decided there will have to be a staff reduction in our department."

"Is that right," I said. As there were only two people in our department - Eddie and me - I had a good idea of what was coming next, but Eddie had no intention of letting the precious moments slip away too quickly.

"Yes," he said solemnly. "Mister Billy has left it up to me to decide which one of us ought to go, and I'm going to weigh the whole thing up during the week-end. Believe me, if I decided it would be in the best interest of the firm for me to go I'll resign immediately. I won't let my decision be influenced by the fact that I've been here longer than you, and that I'm a married man with heavy financial commitments. I'm going to be absolutely impartial about this thing - and I'll let you know my decision on Monday morning."

I thanked him for his sense of fair play and wandered away in a daze, thinking dark fatalistic thoughts about the effects two quarter-inch washers and a short length of angle iron could have on an individual's destiny. The prospect of leaving the firm didn't bother me, but I was scared as hell of having to confess to my father that I had been sacked. And there wasn't even a disused store room that I could hide in from nine to five and practise drawing roof trusses.

I had a miserable Friday evening, but when I got up next morning there was a letter from Redpath Brown of Greenwich, London, offering me a job. Another door was opening...

To give him his due, Eddie looked quite relieved when I greeted him first thing on Monday morning with the news that I'd got a far better job "across the water" and was resigning forthwith, although I don't really believe he was planning to sacrifice himself for the good of the firm.

* * * * *

Years later I found myself back in Belfast and in the shabby vicinity of the old firm, and I got to thinking about Eddie and the old days. It dawned on me how richly I had deserved the sack. I had been lazy, uncooperative, thoughtless and devious. Suddenly possessed with the notion that it would be nice to drop in on Eddie and show there were no hard feelings, I drove towards the works and turned the last corner - the very one where, on my first day with the firm, the door had fallen off Old Billy's car and had nearly taken me with it. (See MAYA 15) The familiar grimy old buildings loomed ahead and I began to look forward to surprising Eddie and having a chat and a cup of tea with him.

As you might guess from the way this article is going, things didn't work out as planned. I found Alec still there, now promoted to manager because his father had retired, and he told

me Eddie had died of a cerebral haemorrhage about a month earlier, right at the desk where I had last seen him. It was too late to declare that truce.

As I was leaving the building I heard Alec begin to whistle, loudly as ever, one note every two seconds, but it was no longer Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer - he had graduated to the Tennessee Waltz.

Nothing ever stays the same.

* * * * *

Where are they now? - contd

don't seem to be inspired to produce their own zine today in the same fashion as earlier? At first I thought the BSFA could be the cause. Maybe I am putting too much importance on this institution since John and I are so intimately involved in it at the moment - but Matrix and Vector have, I feel, improved immeasurably under the respective editorships of Graham James and Kev Smith and perhaps these two publications are draining the talents of newcomers - there just isn't time to write for, say, Vector, and produce your own zine.

But there again, what about the newcomers who don't know about the BSFA or are not members? What are they doing?

It seems to me that there are far more local groups, university groups etc than earlier. Could this be channelling time and energy into other routes? Or am I just more aware of them now?

There are also more conventions these days with the growth in size of Silicon, the growing success of Fancon and the birth of Faircon and Unicon. Perhaps those who would normally have been inspired into participation in the fannish scene through fanzine production are now too involved in convention organisation to be able to write as well. This I feel could be quite a strong point. With our commitment to Channelcon and to the BSFA, John and I find it very difficult to find the time to produce a fanzine in the manner we would wish - once again, this issue is a rush-job, to be fitted in before the next BSFA printing session.

Maybe it is a combination of all these things. Personally, I don't know, but as I'm typing this my thoughts are being slowly clarified. Yes, I do think we are seeing the result of a number of things - all those points previously made are part of the root cause. But we have to return to Greg and Rochelle to find the foundation.

"But us newcomers haven't heard it!" That's the important phrase.

What is in store for neos today? They can attend conventions and sit around talking in the bar most of the time. They can attend meetings such as the One Tun or Surrey Limpwrist. They can help

organise their own regional meetings. What is discussed at these occasions? SF, conventions, social occasions, football... what about fanzines?

From my own experience, when the Surrey Limpwrist first started to meet, fanzines were a major topic of conversation. At least one new issue had come out between each meeting and was pulled to bits, raved over, mentioned in passing - no matter, they were discussed. Looking back over the last few meetings, it is a very rare occasion for a new fanzine to be out and to be discussed, even in passing. This must say something. What I'm not too sure of.

Fanzine review panels are not as popular today on the Fan Programme at conventions. Mainly this is because they have not been too successful in the past, perhaps, but I think they are likely to be even less successful in the future due to the dearth of material to discuss.

Back to the new fan - what image does he get of fanzines, then? Obviously there is always talk of the good fanzines of the past. If he/she is motivated enough these can be purchased in fanzine auctions but this hardly helps matters. What is seen then is the prime of the period and the result is likely to be negative rather than positive. The topicality of many of the articles will have been lost and thus their *raison d'etre* and so the reader thinks "what the hell was everyone raving about"; those articles that have withstood the passage of time are the top 1/2% of what was produced, the reader doesn't have the opportunity to compare with the majority of published matter, however and must conclude that all fanzines were this good - result, "Christ, I can't write anywhere as good as that - I'm not good enough to produce my own zine".

What potential editors need is an example, but we are not providing anything for them these days. Those people who have gone through the mill of producing crud and graduating up the ladder to the production of acceptable, good and excellent zines must continue to appear in print. They must remember that there is always a turnover of readership for any fanzine and newcomers to the mailing list haven't heard it all before.

Malcolm Edwards has proved that it can be done - hell, that's the first fanzine he's produced since I've been in fandom (I think, anyway) so I can relate my reaction to that of any other newcomer. I was impressed - but not over-awed. It was a good zine, it was good to see the old names again, but it wasn't one of the best of all time. Let's get more of this calibre with the occasional piece of excellence, and I think we'll see more people willing to get their feet wet.

At least I hope so.

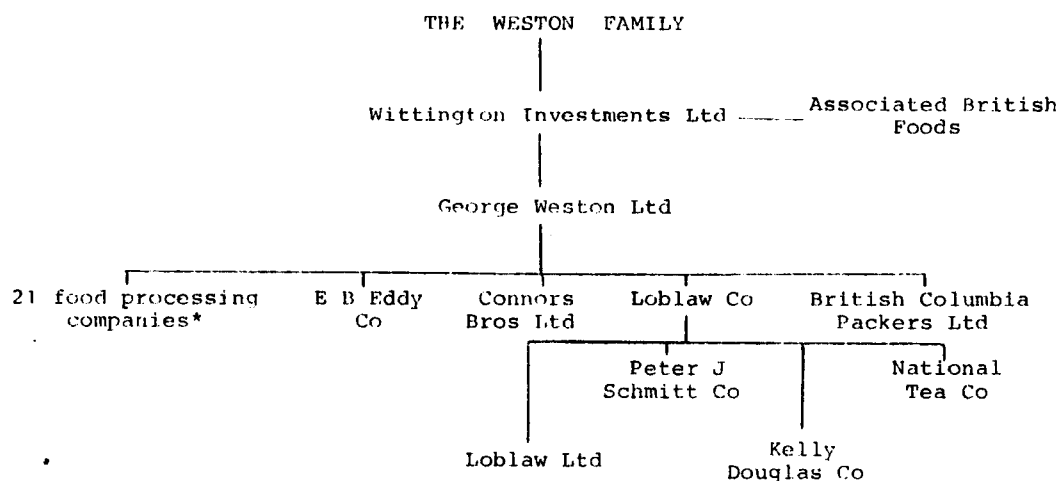
ODDS & SODS

Unfortunately, my inexhaustible supply of 'office notices' has now been drained, but I have managed to collect a few items of interest. I'm sure Dr Jackson could have a field-day analysing my psychoses as illustrated by my choice of material in these sections of Wallbanger, but I enjoy living dangerously.

That Ubiquitous Weston

It is said that there is no stronger binding agent than a common enemy; it is also said, in fannish circles, that those who have done least make most noise about their participation in fannish events. I myself have been a vociferous adherent to that latter view, so the continuing Weston/Seacon saga that has permeated the last three issues of Wallbanger might say more than I would wish about myself. The following two items were sent to me by John Steward, so at least I am not lonely in my paranoia....

Extract from The Economist, June 30 1979



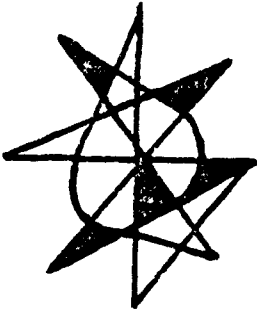
* including: Weston Bakeries Ltd, Soo Line Mills (1968) Ltd, McCarthy Milling Ltd, Weston Foods Ltd, Westcane Sugar Ltd

Clue from The Daily Telegraph Crossword, 10 June 1980

7 Down - Duality of Weston's resort (7)

John Steward writes: "The answer is not, as you might think, 'Two-faced' or even 'Brighton', but 'Twoness' (anagram).

The following letter I present, without further explanation, to promote, hopefully, a spate of pleasurable reminiscences from (if you'll excuse the phraseology) old-time fans, and as a glimmer of hope for all hard-pressed convention organizers today. For that latter group - read the first sentence, remember the escalating numbers at conventions, and take heart...



23RD WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

LONDON 1965 AUGUST 27th - 30th

Committee

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J. A. Groves
Publications
P. H. Mabey
Programme
R. M. Bennet

43, Wm. Dunbar House,
Albert Road,
London, N.W.6.

March 20th 1965

Mr. J.P. Harvey,
18, Carlton Crescent,
Ormiston,
Manchester.

Dear Mr. Harvey,


I must apologise for the delay in answering your letter.

The above Convention is to be held on the dates mentioned. Membership is 21/- and on receipt of your subscription, we will send you all relevant publications as they are issued. You will also receive the special hotel registration card which will enable you to book in at the special rates we have obtained for our members

We have quite a number of authors attending and I have no doubt you will meet some one with whom you want to talk.

If you have any further queries I will do my best to answer them for you.

Yours sincerely,


E.A. Parker,
CHAIRMAN

Silicon - The Malady Lingers On?

For past attendees of Silicon and the now-ritual trip to the local curry-house, the following ditty scrawled, in his own inimitable style, by a drunken Dave Langford on the back of a beer mat, needs no explanation.....

Kevin Smith
 Is not a man to trifle with:
 But he couldn't find the way to
 Account for a Bombay Potato.

It is an indication of the success of last Silicon, that at the time this masterpiece was composed, I thought it merited rescuing for posterity. The mirth it elicited was boundless... ah, those halcyon days...

I'm not sure if fate took a hand in the choice of beermat, but amongst the caution of the cost of drinking and driving, it displays the following message, proudly one might say, in large letters

"BE SENSIBLE, BE SAFE"

Need I say more, Kev?

* * * * *

Finally, a snippet out of The Financial Times that appeared on my desk some months ago. I have no idea in which article it appeared, what it related to, or even which copy it came out of or who put it there; however I'm sure it says something - I just don't know if I want to find out what.

"EVE has outlived the others because of a policy of fair play and value for money."

After that, there is little one can say, so I will end this issue of Wallbanger 4 there. Since the appearance of this magazine seems to be following a geometric progression rather than arithmetic, I'll see you all in 1983 - if you're very unlucky.

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