

Welcome to yet another exciting edition of the:

WALLBANGER ANNUAL

Cunningly disguised as WALLBANGER 8 from Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH - available for all the usual things or 20p in stamps if you want to be that lazy.

HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY ROUND YOUR VERY OWN WALLBANGER ANNUAL

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Artwork credits (other than those illos I've filched) go to:
Shep (front cover - just how I felt when people kept on asking me when the next issue was due out, and P 37)
Dave Collins (P 18)
Glen Warminger (P 36)
Kevin Clarke (P 36)

EXCUSES... EXCUSES... EXCUSES... EXCUSES... EXCUSES... EXCUSES.

OK, I know - it's been a year... No, I'm not going to ramble on at length about how little time I've had, what with evening classes, exams, re-building the house, (perhaps a slight exaggeration) etc, etc. I had thought to pull a few heart strings, but then I read Jean Weber's diaryzine - if she can build bookshelves, write and duplicate fanzines, write letters and socialize all in one weekend, how can I uphold my pawltry excuses? I've just been too damn lazy. So what's prompted me into action again? Well, two things mainly.

Firstly, there's the growing enthusiasm for apas at the moment following the unmitigated success of the Women's Periodical. I have always feared that successful apas could drain fannish enthusiasm, and this was highlighted in Jack Herman's editorial earlier this year in WAHF - FULL 11. Here he was bemoaning the necessity to actual write an editorial, and mentions as one reason why he finds them difficult "You see all those messy details of my day-to-day existence see light of day as filling between mailing comments in the four apae to which I belong...". Taken to its logical conclusion, this could lead to most writing activity being aimed at apa and not to generally available fanzines.

The constraints on activity are not only time, but also imagination. If British apas do become successful, the situation could arise where there is such an overlap between apa membership and personal mailing lists, that reprints of apa contributions would be less than desirable; obviously a problem Jack Herman is already facing as far as certain topics are concerned. This could result in the number of original articles required of fan editors to maintain a presence in both 'arenas' being increased, possibly, to a level we couldn't sustain. After all, for most of us there is a finite limit to the amount that can be written and still maintain standards. One solution to this problem would be to denounce apas, or at least not join them, but that's no answer (and I haven't the physique for ostrich impersonations). The other alternative is positive action to disprove my worst fears. That is what I've decided to do; if I can only get myself organised, I'm sure I could handle the time constraints involved in juggling Wallbanger, Shallow End, BSFA work and any apas I may join - as for constraints on my ability, we'll just have to see.

Secondly, I've been dropped from Darroll Pardoe's mailing list! Not something I shrug off lightly. This has not only disappointed me, but has highlighted how much I depend on Wallbanger for continued receipt of other fanzines. Letter writing is not an answer since it's rare that a fanzine motivates me sufficiently to put pen to paper. The fault is not so much with the zines, more with me. Even if I thoroughly enjoy a zine, I don't always feel I can respond since I'm not very good at, and don't like, "thought A was great, didn't think much of B" style letters; I need to be stung into action. About 1 in 10 of the fanzines I read do this, and lethargy takes care of about 50% of those, leaving a response rate of 1 in 20. Added to this is the fact that often I write a loc but never get around to posting it. All this means that if Wallbanger comes out but once a year, I could be deleted for non-response from the more frequent fanzines. There's nothing like deletion to bring home the double standard of exhorting people to respond to your own zine but not reciprocating.

So, I've resolved to get my finger out and do something. I wonder how long this enthusiasm will last - hopefully longer than my resolves to give up smoking, diet, get better organised... and with that I'll put out my cigarette and climb over the piles of paperwork on the floor to have my supper of baked beans on toast.

BLACK ROD RULES, OK?

(AN EDITORIAL, OR SORTS)

Have you ever noticed how conducive to meandering but satisfying conversations driving in a car can be? As John drives home from the centre of London each night, our conversation spans a whole gamut of topics. A few months ago it started with the FA Cup Final (quite an event in our house this year since I hail from Brighton and John from Manchester), its networking throughout the world and, as conversations tend to, ours wandered around, ending up with the swearing in of an American President vs the opening of Parliament and the ceremony of the Black Rod. To me these ceremonies are extremely important, representing 'living history' in that they provide the most effective reminders of our fight for democracy. Each time the event is televised, the question, "Why's he doing that?" is answered by the commentators and once again the significance behind the pageant is highlighted; why the Queen is seated in the Lords, why the Commons is barred to Black Rod, why the Commons eventually have to go to the Lords and stand behind the rail, etc. I cannot remember being taught this at school, although I obviously was, but I receive another lesson each time the ceremony takes place. Democracy is a very fragile and valuable asset and constant reminders of the difficulty with which it was won are the first steps in ensuring its protection. This is one reason why I am opposed to those who wish to completely abolish the House of Lords; our rush to throw off the shackles of out-dated institutions by tearing down rather than remodelling could result in our throwing off these timely reminders of the principles on which our society is (hopefully) based.

When I started reading through the letters on Wallbanger 7 in preparation for this issue, the first I picked up was Larry Carmody's commenting (amongst other things) on Paul Kincaid's 'Day at the Races'. To me, the following is positive reinforcement for the above views:

"I envy Paul Kincaid. I am probably one of the few fans on this side of the Atlantic who enjoys horse-racing and goes at least semi-regularly. Over here, however, the day of the on-track bookmaker is long gone. My father and grandfather have told me stories of such goings-on at Belmont Race Track as Kincaid writes about, but I'm afraid that I've missed out on that scene. From the time I can remember first going to a race track (I was four and it was the summer prior to Sputnik), there have always been tote boards and parimutual wagering [EH: what's that?], no independent bookmakers at the track. This is true for Canada as well as the United States. The bookmakers strike me as something out of Damon Runyon and I would dearly love to get to Ascot to see them."

Very few people would lose any sleep over the loss of something so insignificant, I agree (except the bookies, of course), but to me America epitomises the 'modernist' syndrome and here, once again, a wistful tone is emanating from that continent for things long-since lost in the mad rush towards I don't know what. I'm not advocating stasis, merely that we check we're not losing more than is gained.

But now for some more comments on Paul's article - after all, this is supposed to be the Sports Section of the Wallbanger Annual.

Nick Shears, 9 Kestrel Close, Downley, High Wycombe

"My sole experience of the race course was a couple of years ago at Sandown. The company for which I work is more-or-less owned by the Managing Director who has a strong snob's interest in horse racing. One of the ways in which he indulges this is by letting the company buy race horses, which I assume get written off against tax somehow. Every now and then he invites a few people from the office out to see one of the horses run, and on this particular occasion I expressed an interest and trotted along.

With entrance fee paid, the members' enclosure isn't quite as daunting as it might otherwise be, and he kept champagne flowing non-stop. Unfortunately, he didn't supply the money for the betting, and I discovered how easy it is to get the betting bug into your blood - one pound bets aren't enough, they become twos and fives; bets on one horse don't suffice, they become bets on another 'just to cover yourself'. I won but once, and came away a fair bit poorer. I don't think I even enjoyed the experience, really, it just took a bit of a grip on me. I've self-control enough not to return, although perhaps not enough to restrain myself should I actually find myself there again. Mind you, maybe it was just the free champagne."

From that cautionary tale, we'll pass to a request:

Chris Bailey, 23 Clevedon Road, Penge-sur-Mer, London SE20 7QQ

"I hope that Paul Kincaid will deal with the dogs in a future issue. If he's unacquainted with this fine sport, then I'll be pleased to accompany him to Catford any time he chooses; he will be able to strike up a mutually rewarding relationship with Jimmy The Gent, while I will have the benefit of the company of a wise head that might be able to decipher the totalisator board for me. At present, I'm having to go by names and I've lost a fortune on Powerful Linda."

Well Chris, you made the offer - I'd love Paul to continue his series so it's up to you to make sure he has yet another sport to write about. For now, I'll let my imagination play with images of Paul's first encounter with Powerful Linda while we move on to Paul-a.k.a. 'Man from Atlantis'

A Life on the Rolling Deep

My Sporting Life - 2

Paul Kincaid

Never trust the Channel, it lies. There are times when it actually looks inviting.

It was one such dishonest day in summer when I was persuaded to try my hand at windsurfing. I mean it's hot and the sea looks good; and there are all these people flying across the waves on these sleek white boards as if it's the easiest and most natural thing in the world.

The starting point is a practice board on the promenade. A plank of wood is set up on an elaborate arrangement of pivots and balances with a full sail attached. It's meant to be like the sea. The instructor is young, fair hair lightened by sun and salt, ruggedly handsome like an illustration

for Mills and Boon. He hops onto the board and hauls up the sail in one smooth, fluid motion. The board hardly moves. It couldn't be simpler.

My turn. I step onto the board. It dips and turns drunkenly underfoot. I step off. Something's obviously come loose, the board's not fixed properly.

Only it doesn't look any different, and the instructor is urging me back on. Reluctantly, I comply. This time I know what to expect and manage to stay on. Now to remember all the points of the 30 second demonstration. Crouch, grab the knotted rope attached to the mast, haul it up, rising to my feet as I do so, cross over hands to hold the hoop around the sail, hold the mast close to me.

And by God I do it. It really is easy.

The bronzed instructor points out the clubhouse where I can get a wetsuit. Here, another instructor waits. He is young, fair hair lightened by sun and salt, ruggedly handsome and so on. He eyes me professionally, sighs, and hands me a suit from the rack. In the changing room I take off my clothes and plunge my legs into the pants. Ugh! It is cold, it is wet, it is heavy, and it clings like some particularly repulsive sea creature. Imagine easing yourself into a cold, wet octopus skin. With a stoical shudder I pull on the jacket and head for the beach. The pebbles have all been specially sharpened just for me. I am acutely aware of the crotch of my pants dangling around my knees, and the flapping tail of the jacket that refuses to fasten between my legs.

At the edge of the sea another bronzed instructor waits by the rubber dinghy. He is young, fair hair, etc etc. I paddle out to the boat. The water is unexpectedly cold. The instructor smiles: "It's okay," he says, "your wetsuit will keep you warm." I huddle in my cold, wetsuit and hope he's right. A few more shivering hopefuls join us and he starts the outboard motor.

Dotted around the offshore waters, seemingly at random, a number of windsurfers are anchored. He heads out for one, stopping when he still seems to be 100 yards away. "That's yours," he says. I look at him. He looks at me. Eventually I give in and slide over the side, entrusting my body to the deep. The deep is bloody cold.

The first thing they didn't teach us on the practice board was how to get onto a windsurfer at sea. I put my hands on the board and try to pull myself up. I stay where I am, but the board goes down. I try a sneak attack, jumping up out of the water onto it. You can't jump out of water, and I end up back in the icy sea. Finally I manage to flop across the board like a stranded whale, then squirm round until I am lying lengthways.

At last I can put those lessons to good use. First: get on my feet. That's not so easy. Every time I move one way, the board moves the other. At the third attempt I manage to kneel. Then I have to ease myself onto my feet. It would help if there was something to hold onto, or at least someone to hold the board still so it doesn't bob around like a trampoline. At length, though, I make it. Not too steadily, but at least I'm standing.

Now to crouch and grab the rope. Where's the rope?

It is, of course, floating innocently on the sea, just out of reach. Warily I resume my floundering whale posture then splash around a bit before I manage to grab the rope. Now back onto my feet. I'm getting good at this, that was much better. Now all I have to do is pull on the rope to haul the mast up out of the water, and I'm away.

Only the sail is full of water. I tug, and the thing doesn't budge. I tug harder, and suddenly it's free of the water. For a glorious instant there we are, the mast and I, both upright, just like the real thing. Except that the mast hasn't stopped moving, and I find myself falling backwards into the Arctic sea once more.

"Remember," my bronzed instructor had said, "always have your back to the wind when you pull up your sail." The sail, obviously, has fallen on the wrong side of the board. They hadn't told us about this. Somehow I manage to manhandle the sail around the board, then the floundering whale flops onto the board once more, and after a few moment's rest the whole rigmarole begins again. This time I don't even manage to raise the sail out of the water before I lose my balance. I am sure the sea is acquiring a skin of ice.

I spend 30 minutes in all in this exercise in windsurfing, of which I think I managed some five minutes actually on the board, including a whole 30 seconds standing up. At last the rubber dinghy noses through the icebergs once more, coming to a stop some distance off the starboard bow. Again I commend my body to the deep, and the bronzed instructor at the tiller helps me on board. He is young, fair hair, and all the rest of it. I wonder if I'd be better at this if I bought a blond wig.

And now we move from one extreme to another - from ocean to desert....

THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GAME

Keith Oborn

Our kilted cousins north of the border seem to think that they coined this apposite phrase to describe their own degenerate form of Golf. Nothing can be further from the truth. Golf is far more Royal and Ancient than is generally realised - indeed it is only through diligent research that I have discovered the origins, and the true form, of the game. Happily, I have also found that a modernised form of the game is still played in its birthplace. That birthplace is, of course, Egypt.

A variety of theories have been proposed by prominent archaeologists, such as Herr von Daniken, to account for the so-called 'Pyramids' which can be found in the desert, near the valley of the Nile. The most popular suggestion is that they are elaborate tombs, mainly on evidence of the occasional human remains found within them. As we shall see, the true explanation is much simpler.

The long researches leading to the revelation of this greatest of games need not concern us here. I shall simply describe the game as it is played today. First, however, it must be remembered that Egyptian and Scottish golf bear less resemblance to each other than Wimbledon does to Henry VIII's game, and so a description of the course will be useful, along with some constructional hints for those who may wish to try their hand at the game.

The first requirement is a large area of waste ground - several dozen square miles of it. You can forget about all those fancy lawns the Scots insist on - a spare patch of desert will do fine, but do make sure that there aren't too many large rocks lying around, as this makes life hard on the armoured cars.

Next, you will need a large quarry. Each 'target' will require about 7½ tons of stone. A few dozen megatons of sand will also come in handy - the neighbouring spare patch of desert will be useful here. Note that the sand is not needed for 'bunkers' in the sense used by the modern game. In the military sense, however, some bunkers might be useful. Lastly, you will need to make a trip to the local employment exchange, to take on about 100,000 slaves. It's a good idea to lay in a good supply of whips, to help control the shop stewards.

Now you can start building. This is simple. All you do is cut lots of blocks, about six feet on a side, and pile them up carefully in the familiar shape, using ramps made from sand to get the blocks to the top. It helps to keep the sand damp, otherwise it tends to collapse in an untidy heap at awkward moments. The only tricky bit is building the internal passages. These must have an opening at the top, and one halfway down one side, but the internal plan is up to you - the Egyptology section of your local library will provide some ideas.

Each target will take about 25 years to build using these traditional methods - this is not a game for the impatient - but you will only need half a dozen. The idea of eighteen holes is another Scottish invention. If you're a bit pushed for time a phone call to Wimpey's might be a good idea.

Finally, do make sure that the foundations are firm, or your course will sink out of sight in a few hundred years, before you've even reached a decent handicap.

Next we come to the playing equipment. A camel is the traditional means of transport between holes. The ball need only be roughly spherical, and should not be more than a yard in diameter. You will lose a lot, and remember the entire course is 'rough'. The 'clubs' are rather different to the modern variety. A five iron, after all, is of little help in propelling a ton of stone five hundred feet in the air from a mile away; the ancients used large wooden catapult affairs, which archaeologists mistakenly think were designed to knock holes in castle walls.

Nowadays, the transport/ball/club problem has been neatly solved. The local market has a good supply of war-surplus armoured cars and rocket launchers - an idea somewhat reminiscent of the ubiquitous American golf cart.

Now, at last, you can play. If you forgot the internal passages in the pyramids, nip out and hire some tunneling equipment and correct this omission. The basic object is to get the 'ball' into the hole at the top, thus scoring one point. Beginners find even this pretty difficult. If the ball rolls down the labyrinth and comes out of the side, you score two more points. (Pro's find that a loop tape of 'Pinball Wizard' helps calm pre-match nerves.) If, after emerging from the side, the ball destroys your opponent's camel (armoured car), score five more. If your opponent is in the vehicle at the time, you win by default.

That's the basic game. Now we move on to the more advanced aspects, where control of the ball is all-important. For instance, a 'cushion-shot' off another pyramid is worth ten extra points. Destroying birds in flight is worth one point per birdie, two birdies being the same as an eagle. This,

and all subsequent bonuses require that the bonus target is completely destroyed, either directly or by subsequent crashing, and the ball must then enter the correct hole without bouncing. Easy isn't it?

Private aircraft are worth five points each, civil airliners twenty, except DC10s, which are only worth ten, reflecting the considerable chance that they might fall out of the sky spontaneously. For the same reason, Egyptair planes are worth ten points. Egyptair don't have any DC10s, which is rather a good thing on the whole.

Military aircraft are worth rather more, and players at this level begin to appreciate my earlier remarks about bunkers. Egyptian military aircraft are worth only fifty points, for reasons similar to those given for DC10s. Israelis are worth five hundred. For other nations there is a sliding scale, up to 10,000 for MIG25s in Russian colours. If this rare opportunity should present itself, your aim will doubtless be steadied by the thought that, if you go and sit inside one of your pyramids and block up all the holes, you are reasonably safe against all but the most determined of nuclear strikes. Hence those human remains.

Having gone round the course, the winner is the highest scoring survivor.

Now we know what happened to that S. Korean plane - it was just a bad potting shot from a novice Russian golfer.

Keith's article was inspired by a picture postcard showing the golf course of a hotel at Giza, the perspective of which gave the impression that the pyramids were actually part of the course. Unfortunately Keith sent the original card to Kev Smith, who had no more foresight than to make a passing reference to Egyptian Golf in Dot. When John and I visited the Oborns in Cairo earlier this year, we hunted in vain for another copy, so you will all have to use your imagination.

Talking of Egypt, though, leads nicely into our Travel Section with 'Wot the Harvey's Did on Their Holiday'. Oh, the tales with which I could regale you, the images I could conjure up if only I had the talent....

The traffic noise, the dust, the monuments, the feeling of H I S T O R Y writ real big... the realisation of our own inconsequence...

There was the trip to the Valley of the Kings by donkey (imagine me on a donkey!) made even more hilarious by the donkeys themselves. We had to trot in single file, but my donkey kept on trying to nudge in front of John's, at first we didn't know why. Each time John's would make a break on the outside in a straight stretch, mine would start speeding up, so would John's... together they'd accelerate until we thought we'd be bounced off (a cushion for saddle and two loops of string as stirrups does not engender a great feeling of security). Soon we realised why my donkey insisted on being at the front... John's had diarrhoea... my donkey knew to move it's face out of the way and luckily it just missed my leg each time; it being a steaming green cascade - what had that donkey eaten?

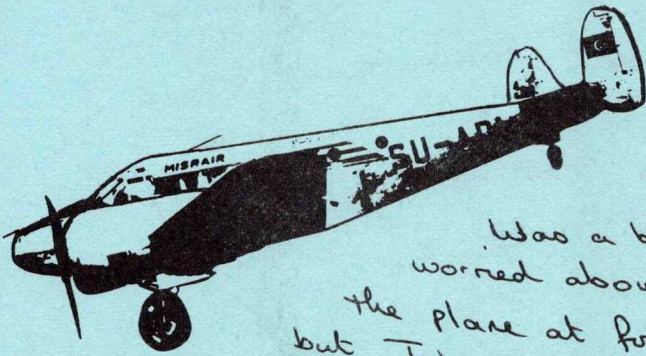
As the second time we've ever ridden anything with a mind of its own, it proved quite an adventure..... the first ride was even better, though, being on horse-back through the desert at the back of the pyramids at Giza - now that really is an experience.

I could go on for ever - it was the most exhilarating and stimulating holiday we've had so far. For now, here're a few impressions.....

Egypt

Climate: Warm and bearable. Violent changes in temperature are rare, although evening and night-time temperatures drop considerably. Seldom any rain in Upper Egypt, and as little as five or six falls of rain a year in Cairo. Even in mid-winter there will be seven hours of sunshine a day.

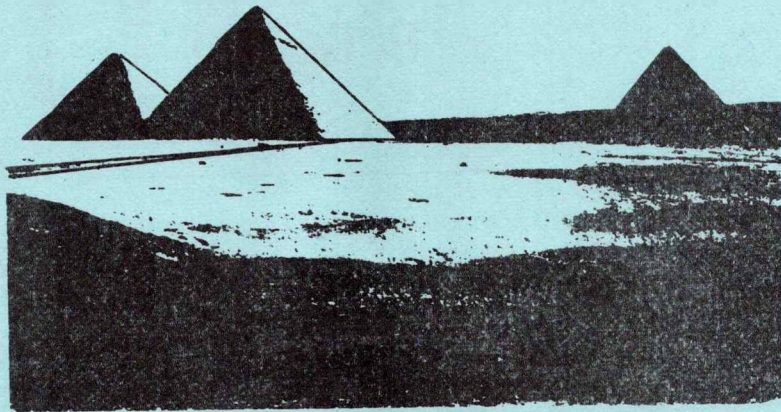
Tipping: Hotels and restaurants add ten per cent to the bill. Tip taxi drivers at discretion.



Was a bit worried about the plane at first, but John assured me the rubber band would hold out.

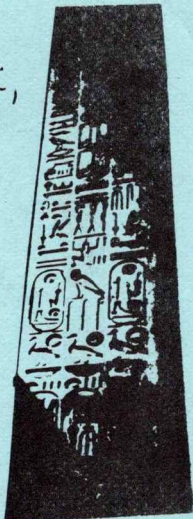
They must be joking! Unless we had all six falls of rain during the 2 weeks!

and everyone else at their discretion. One guide wouldn't let us out of the catacombs until we'd given him a tip

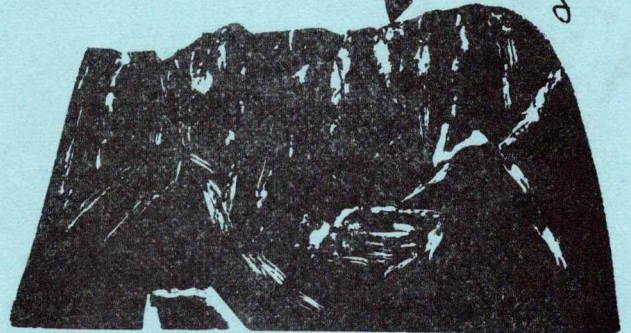


This was the view when we went for our horse-ride, it hides the bazaars and souvenir shops on the other side,

Some graffiti, eh?

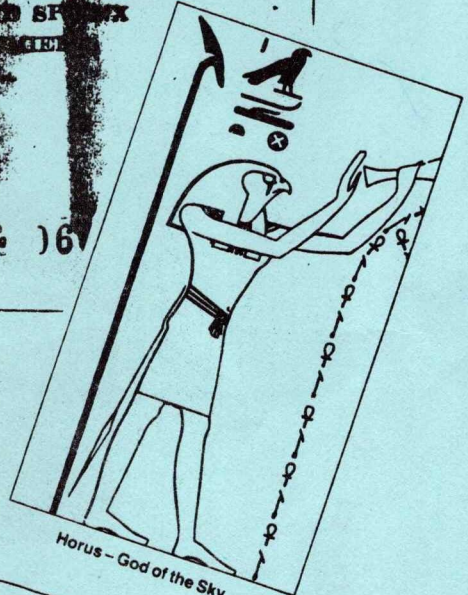
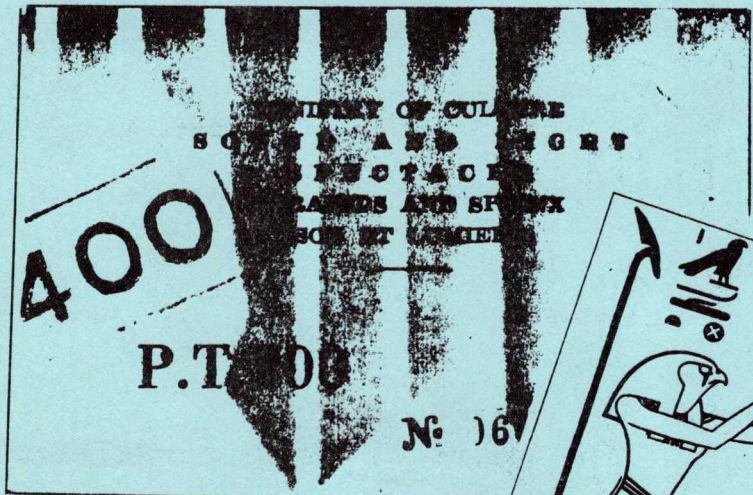


This was the temple we had to climb down to!



This was us on the donkey

My, what big feet!
Thought, the Egyptians
were mad keen on
cats, but this was
the only one we
found.



Not only did
it rain all night, but
only cost 50 P.T. if
you were Egyptian.
Talk about discrimination!

شيراتون القاهرة
Cairo-Sheraton

OASIS BAR

Check 27050
Date
Waiter R
Table No. 6
Persons 2

L 78n

1	2 - S. H. H.
2	
3	
4	
5	

We only kept on
going back 'cos
we liked the
Peanuts they
served, honest!

It wasn't our fault
you had to buy a
drink to get the free
nuts.

If the desert sun and 'loose' donkeys aren't to your liking, how about taking your holiday later in the year and staying nearer home....

SORRY WE'RE CLOSED!

Martyn Taylor

One of the desires of my adult life was satisfied when I moved to the Isle of Man on September 30th 1982. I returned to live by the sea. That day was the last of the Manx season and winter began the next, officially. Just for a change nature and officialdom managed to get together on October 1st, to forcefeed me my first taste of Manx winter. I cannot imagine why that taste should have taken me so much by surprise. After all, everyone knows it is windy beside the sea. Well, yes, of course I knew... As an infant I was flung out of my pram by the force of the great storm of February 1952 - one of those formative experiences you might say - and as an adult I had acquired an intellectual knowledge why the sea can generate such immense forces of wind and wave. Neither childhood experience nor adult learning prepared me for the physical impact of meteorological reality. On that first day in October I was walking home heavy laden with shopping. My route took me through a seafront collonade, and as I walked I watched waves smash themselves into spray against the sea wall. The wind was off - rather than on-shore. Had it been otherwise I have no doubt that those waves would have made that last fifty yards to where I was without too much difficulty, which would have been slightly too close for comfort, thank you very much. I came here to live by the sea, not in it. When I stepped out of the protection of the collonade I turned up hill. I also turned into the wind, which promptly blew me several paces backwards! Now, I am built along lines which might be described - generously - as 'solid'. The proposition that the wind might prevent me from going wherever I might want to go (my name is not Hempleman-Adams) had never before occurred to me. Of course, I had never before encountered an Atlantic zephyr. Since that first day I have grown used to the wind, but not so used to it that I do not duck my head when turning up Broadway.

The island is, according to my gazetteer, 'principally given over to tourism'. My first reaction was that anyone who would come here for a holiday must suffer from la vice angliase!, but there can be no denying that the island as it is now has been created with tourists in mind, just as surely as any of the tourist towns on the Spanish coast. Guesthouses crowd the slopes which make up the larger towns, hoping to catch the holiday-making eye of the working classes from the North of England, and Ireland. Over the last few years the tourist industry has languished. For all its many attractions the island cannot compete with the guaranteed sun, sand, sea and sex of Costa del Ripoff, and it's constituency of holidaymakers is precisely that area which has been longest and hardest hit by the current recession. As if this two way squeeze by forces outside the control of the islanders were not enough, the avowed intent of Tynwald is to 'raise the tone of the island' (suggestions as to exactly what that means on a postcard to the Government Offices, Bucks Road, Douglas) and the combination of stringent new licensing regulations and the draconian fire and building standards introduced in the wake of the Summerland tragedy has driven many of the more marginal guesthouses to close their doors for ever, not just for the winter. Some of these houses have been converted into private flats (I live in one such) but many of these flats remain unsold after up to two years and so they, too, turn empty windows to the winter world. This more

permanent emptiness has exacerbated the traditional winter somnolence of these towns, and added a curiously hollow tone to the winds as they chase through streets built with crowds in mind.

Of course the resort in winter is a traditional happy hunting ground for writers of tales of the horrific tendency. An imagination much less lurid than my own could quite easily take those empty houses, the constant moan of the wind, and the awesome beat of the sea to be a gentle hint being dropped to us mayfly humans by some incomprehensible force.

Not that I would recommend a gentle hint as the most cost-effective way of getting through to Manxmen. Put at its simplest, they are a bloody-minded lot, fiercely proud of the trappings of their independence even if some will privately admit that there is more to the trappings of this independence than to the substance. When it comes to respect for tradition the Manx can make the Japanese seem like giggling iconoclasts. For instance, tradition holds that the tourist season ends, as I have mentioned, on the last day of September. When the Manx season ends it does not fade away, it comes to a dead stop. On October 1st the Manx shut up shop (literally, which can be a bit tough if you want to buy something, anything), pull down the blinds, and studiously ignore the world even when the world wants nothing more than to throw money their way.

Here is an example. As is the way in many places of work, come Christmastime, my colleagues and myself decided that we would celebrate the festive season by having a 'do'. After much head scratching we decided to have a meal at one of the better hotels and then go on to that hotel's 'nitespot'. The Saturday before Christmas was our chosen day, and eight o'clock saw us all in our gladrags and sipping on something cold and cheering. The meal was pleasant if not inspiring and much of the time was given over to a whispered debate about whether the waiter really was Graham Souness. By the time eleven o'clock came we were pleasantly full and ready for bright lights and loud music. The party mood was abroad. Kevin, our rotund young arbiter of all things musical and terpsichoreal, assured us that there was no doubt we were there to party, while young David's already limited vocabulary had been reduced to just one word, 'boogie'. So far as we were concerned the night was but young and we were ready, willing, and eager to dance the rest of it away, especially Cathie. 'Bop til you drop' she advised. I had not realised until that moment, that I had had the inestimable good taste to marry a Ry Cooder fan. Kevin departed to negotiate the terms of our entry, en masse, into 'Diamonds', only to return a minute or so later, downcast. 'Diamonds' closed it's doors at eleven, at eleven o'clock on the Saturday night before Christmas when the whole world and his Uncle Scrooge wants to have a party. We were lost for words. I suggested 'All revved up and no place to go', and was lucky to escape in one piece.

Outside the hotel the gale was driving the rain along parallel to the ground.

As I have remarked, the Manx are keen on their history, and fancy themselves the descendants of Vikings. There have been moments during this last six months when I have wondered just what conditions must have been like in those fifth and sixth century Norwegian fjords for those wild eyed Bjorn Borg clones to have preferred this godforsaken rock to their own. Mind you, I have no doubt that they - being experienced tourists - knew better than to come to the Isle of Man in winter!

Not to your taste either? Well how about the Canary Islands in March? If that sounds OK, then read on....

Graham Koch

At last Monika and I went on holiday at the beginning of March. We'd planned to go in January - then the site where we'd booked a bungalow was being rebuilt, so we cancelled and rebooked for another apartment. The new appt block was overbooked, so we cancelled again and looked for another vacancy. After 3 days another travel agent found one, if we'd fly from Düsseldorf. We flew on March 7th and were greeted at the airport in Fuerteventura with the news that the appt. block was overbooked and we had been moved to a hotel at the other end of the island.

We tried it. Monika could hardly eat in the canteen (to call it a restaurant is overdoing it) since it was too crowded; only three or four guests a year were drowned on the beach we were told, so we did not go swimming; the wind was so strong I got acheing eyes; and the couples in other hotel rooms kept moving the beds around between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. At 5 a.m. the first water tanker arrived... Fuerteventura is a desert.

After a week we tried an excursion to the south of the Island, visited the apartment and bungalow group that had been rebuilding itself in January to find the building work completed, so we hired an appt for the 2nd week and moved south. On clearing my safe deposit box I discovered that Monika's Personal Answeis [EH: I think that's the word, can't read the handwriting Graham), driving licence and Post Office Savings Book had vanished! Yes, said the police - that's the third this week, we think it's the drug smugglers and lucky they weren't after passports isn't it.

In the south, there's less wind, very few people are drowned, but the sand dunes were 8km from the apartment, 1,000 pesetas by taxi - Monika did not want to hire a car, and we couldn't without a driving licence anyway! The hot water in the appts didn't work, the fridge was loud, but the neighbours were fairly quiet.

Monika does not want to go away from home for a holiday for a long time!

I'm not surprised... I've never had the bad fortune for holidays to turn sour on me, though they've had their worrying moments, not least of which was the one in Cairo this year. To cut costs we'd booked through a 'bucket shop' and flew Yugoslavian Airways via Belgrade. Now although I love flying, I began to have my doubts at Heathrow airport. Sitting in the departure lounge, I was watching a crowd of people worriedly examining the nose wheel of a plane when it was announced that our flight was delayed for 'technical reasons'. A quick double-take confirmed the plane outside did belong to Yugoslavian Airlines, but my fears were somewhat allayed when I noticed that two of the group examining the whele with enourmous spanners in their hands were the pilots. They're going to be the first ones to cop it if the wheel collapses, so if they say it's OK, we'll be safe.

My next fear was whether our baggage would make the transit. But this was allayed when we went out on the tarmac to board our next flight; all baggage had been off-loaded from the previous plane and unceremoniously dumped in the middle of the tarmac. The passengers then had to sort out their own suitcases and place them on a trolley which was loaded into our next plane as we ascended the stepladder. It's amazing how comforting that little escapade was.

ALL THE F's

(Of Fanzines, Foreigners and Faircon)

Eve Harvey

I often wonder (worry?) what it must be like to read Wallbanger if you don't actually know me and so it is with a certain amount of trepidation that I post off issues to these strangers who persist in their perverse habit of requesting copies. But what about people who not only don't know me, but don't even know about the context in which I am writing, viz. British fandom? This line of thought was sparked off by the realisation of how few fanzine review columns there are in British fanzines today, which led me to ponder the whole tenor of British fanzines in the 1980's, not only in isolation, but contrasted with what I felt Australian and American fanzines portrayed. At one time I even toyed with the idea of producing a comprehensive overview of the three nationalities...

A big idea that has since hit the dust due to my unwillingness to undertake the research and, more importantly, the realisation that even if I were willing and able, it doesn't matter two hoots anyway - it's far better to just get on and live in today's fandom than to constantly analyse whither it is going/coming to/from. The international comparisons were scrapped when I decided it was impossible to tell anything of significance from the small selection of fanzines that actually make it to me. The impossibility of this venture was reinforced at Silicon, when Joyce Scrivner and Linda Pickersgill both emphasised the foreignness of Britain. As they said, don't be put off by the similarity of language, the US and Britain are foreign countries, and I'm sure the same applies to Australia. I reckon the only valid comparison could be made, if at all, by someone who has lived an equal time in each fandom.

Even if that weren't so, it would still be an impossible task. One of the major characteristics of British fanzines in the early 1980's is the emergence of small zines such as Drunkard's Talk, Eta, Crab Droppings, etc. How many of these are sent abroad? By their very nature they are more personal and thus of a more restricted circulation than their larger, more general brethren, and so a possibly important characteristic of British fanzines could be virtually unknown to the world outside. If the present enthusiasm for apas actually materialises into anything significant, this would add to the problem. The same applies for Australian or American zines. How can I say with any authority that Australian fanzines, for example, seem far more 'heavy' in tone and weight than British (with the surprising exception of Thyme)? There could well be a whole sub-culture of which I know nothing. Perhaps these people who write me such interesting letters, but sound so much more dull and boring in fanzines, in fact have other outlets I don't see in which they are lighter and more in line with the first image I had of Australian fandom? Who knows? Perhaps when Jean Weber wins GUFF (note the positive vibes, Jean) she can enlighten me - I hope so.

The same applies to US zines, though I do find it entertaining to see the ancestor-worship and psycho-analysis at work when it concerns our own fandom here in Britain. A wry smile creeps across my lips when I read of people wanting to reprint the complete works of D West, no doubt with dissertations on their message for the nation, or read Bergeron/White discoursing on our worship of Walt Willis or Jim White. No offence to either Walt or Jim, but if only Ted or Dick would ask what we actually think, instead of telling us, they might realise we don't actually sacrifice virgins at full moon - well, not too often anyway. What better reason can there be to send D West over there than to watch for the articles coming out after he's told them

what it's really all about. So, in the interest of trans-oceanic relations, Wallbanger publicly declares its support for

D WEST FOR TAFF!

Let's get some excitement back into American fanzines, eh?

My short article last issue on Faircon produced an interesting response which has given me more food for thought. The vociferousness and vehemence of the defence of Scottish fandom in general, and Faircon/Albacon in particular, from some people was fascinating, except when it showed itself in the form of a 15-minute 'grilling' I received from some guy (I still don't know who he was) at Novacon. He demanded to know why I hadn't thought of Faircon as the best thing since sliced bread - he had. Joy Hibbert used a similar tone:

"Albacan/Faircon, like Unicons so far, consider neos to be a valid part of the convention, and a part that should be catered for. This is quite the opposite of such cons as Novacons and Channelcon, which put incomprehensible fannish items on the main/only programme, and, in the case of Channelcon move the video programme out of the way into a tiny room, and later claim they didn't know there would be much demand for it!! Faircons are a showcase for all types of fannish activity - I found plenty of people to talk to. To me a showcase of fannish activity involves a wide variety of programme items, a fan room with fanzines lying around and display boards with pictures of previous cons etc on, plus socialising. Generally Faircon provides all of these. You seem to feel that only the social side of a con belongs in the showcase, as I could already tell by the programme at Channelcon."

In her inimitable style, Joy once again is telling people what they 'seem' to be saying instead of what they are saying. In doing so, she is providing support for Rob Hansen's view that some people only see key words, adding their own inferences, and then pillory you for what they have decided you said. I went back to the article to check that my ideas hadn't changed without my noticing it, since from what Joy says the only difference of opinion between us is whether Faircon lived up to the ideal. I didn't say that the social side of fandom should be the only one in the showcase - I believe both the programme and social side should be given equal weighting, but from what I saw Faircon only gave one side - programming. What most of the more adamant defendants of Faircon seemed to have missed, was that I was giving my impressions as a neo - as one of those people Joy says they cater for. It's OK for Joy to say she found plenty of people to talk to - in that circumstance she was the established fan and I the neo. I knew very few people well; I'm not very good at initiating conversations with strangers, especially when they all know each other and I'm the outsider; I was, in other words, the typical neo and as such found the convention didn't cater for me as well as I had been led to believe. RaCon, on the other hand, did. At times at Faircon there was either nothing on the programme, or nothing that interested me (to be a neo you don't necessarily have to be interested in everything on the programme, you know) and then things fell down. Having seen the art show, looked around the bar at the sparse handful of people, I was left with very little to do. OK there were special interest rooms, but I'm a mainstream sf fan who isn't especially interested in star trek, et al. I did try to get in to play with the computers, but was fought back by the crowds, so even if I was interested, I wouldn't have had much luck. I wonder how many complete neos would have had the courage to open one of those closed doors?

As a parting shot to Joy, to a neo at Faircon, the Vagon poetry session (which I believe was on the main programme) was just as incomprehensible as anything I've seen on Novacon's or Channelcon's main programme.

Ian Sorensen quite succinctly sums up the problems I had relating to Faircon.

"For the first time in a long while you were an 'outsider' at a con. Whilst not a neo, you shared their 'lack of a friendly face' problem. In addition, while you are a well-known figure (no comment) at other cons, nobody at Faircon knew you from Adam! Thus you were not approached for a fanzine or assaulted with a Southern Comfort."

That's dead right - and if any other neo had come up and complained would they have been accused quite so vehemently of being wrong? I would hope not - it's just another example of typecasting, just because I'm a fannish fan, everything I say is interpreted by some in that light. They cannot seem to understand that in a different set of circumstances your role alters. As a neo, I have been very disappointed in the major reaction to my complaint - a reaction that I should heal myself, the con was great. Do that to too many people and you'll end up as pigheaded as some people say fannish fans are. Anyway, Ian then goes on to say more about Faircon.

"As for the neos; most of them were 'regular' con-goers. Every year around 200 people walk in at Glasgow cons. They are usually the same ones as walked in last year. PR's are wasted on this lot. They refuse to pay in advance. It's enough to break a treasurer's heart! They watch the films and videos all day and night using the bar as a pit stop only. As an organising committee we get a little frustrated with them, especially when trying to clear the video room at 5 a.m. I'm told by Dave Ellis that there were over 60 people in the video room all the time it was open; which was most of the weekend. The social life of these fans is different, but not necessarily inferior, to that of the Fan Room. They do meet and talk to one another (between films) and will someday have seen all there is to see. At that time they will either join 'us' or disappear into the electron clouds from which they came.

Anyway, you can be sure that you will have plenty of excellent company at Albacon. If you spend the weekend in the video room!"

Giving another organiser's point of view, we have Jim Barker...

"Up till 1982 Faircon had virtually no fannish elements, which was why I volunteered to run a Fan Room since I was doing the bulk of the work for Channelcon anyway. This was my chance to show Glasgow what it had been missing, but in practice the people at whom the Fan Room was aimed squirreled themselves away in the Video/Computer/Wargaming room and the room was attended mostly by those people who turn up at Eastercon Fan Rooms. I'm pleased that I seemed to keep you all entertained, but I'd much rather have succeeded in getting some neos introduced to Fandom. I managed to get rid of a vast part of my old fanzine collection along with the remainder of the Channelcon Fanzine Indexes at the freebie table. Again, where'd they go?"

Pascal Thomas looks at the same problem from a more general standpoint. Perhaps

"Which brings me to the subject of programming-vs-socialising in cons, a debate you touch upon in your Faircon article, and which I ran across at about the same time in the pages of Matrix - the lettercol controversy about the BSFA history, and all that. I agree with one of the contenders (can't remember who it was), that although programming may seem secondary, everything collapses when you take it away: one would seem to need a sort of psychological excuse to eventual socializing; and although, as you pointed out, heavy programming (or passion for it from congoers) may hinder such socialising, the absence of it may prevent it completely for many people: neos are shy - at least I was terribly shy when I was a neo - and need some occasion to be around people before

actually getting to talk to them. Don't we? Of course... by programming I don't mean endless boring presentations of the space programme (the worst example of the Glasgow style programming) and even less video. Video is really evil, precludes all direct human expression..."

I just hope that the plans for Tynecon-The Mexican manage to survive intact from drawing board to reality. I have fond memories of Tynecon 1 (my first convention) and Seacon (Coventry). It is most probably the rosy mists of time that enhance my recollection of them, but since they had only 1 main, though strong, programme, as neos we had a feeling of belonging. There were always lots of people, either in the main programme hall or in the bar - there simply wasn't anywhere else for them to go (apart from the book room and art room, of course). So, if you got tired of the main programme, you could be assured of plenty of people in the bar. It's so much easier to sit down and join a group in a crowded bar - you have the excuse, you see, that there're no other seats free. Keeping an ear on the conversation around, you can then butt in if you think you can add something. Faced with a half-empty bar, you need much more self-assurance to stride past all the empty seats and tables to sit with one of the few groups present - and usually all conversation stops at your arrival anyway.

Still, enough of that, only time will tell if Tynecon-The Mexican manages to succeed where so many others have failed. Let's move on now to the concomitant Faircon problem - the North/South divide that might, or might not, exist in fandom.

Moira Shearman, Top Flat, 25 Scott Street, Dundee

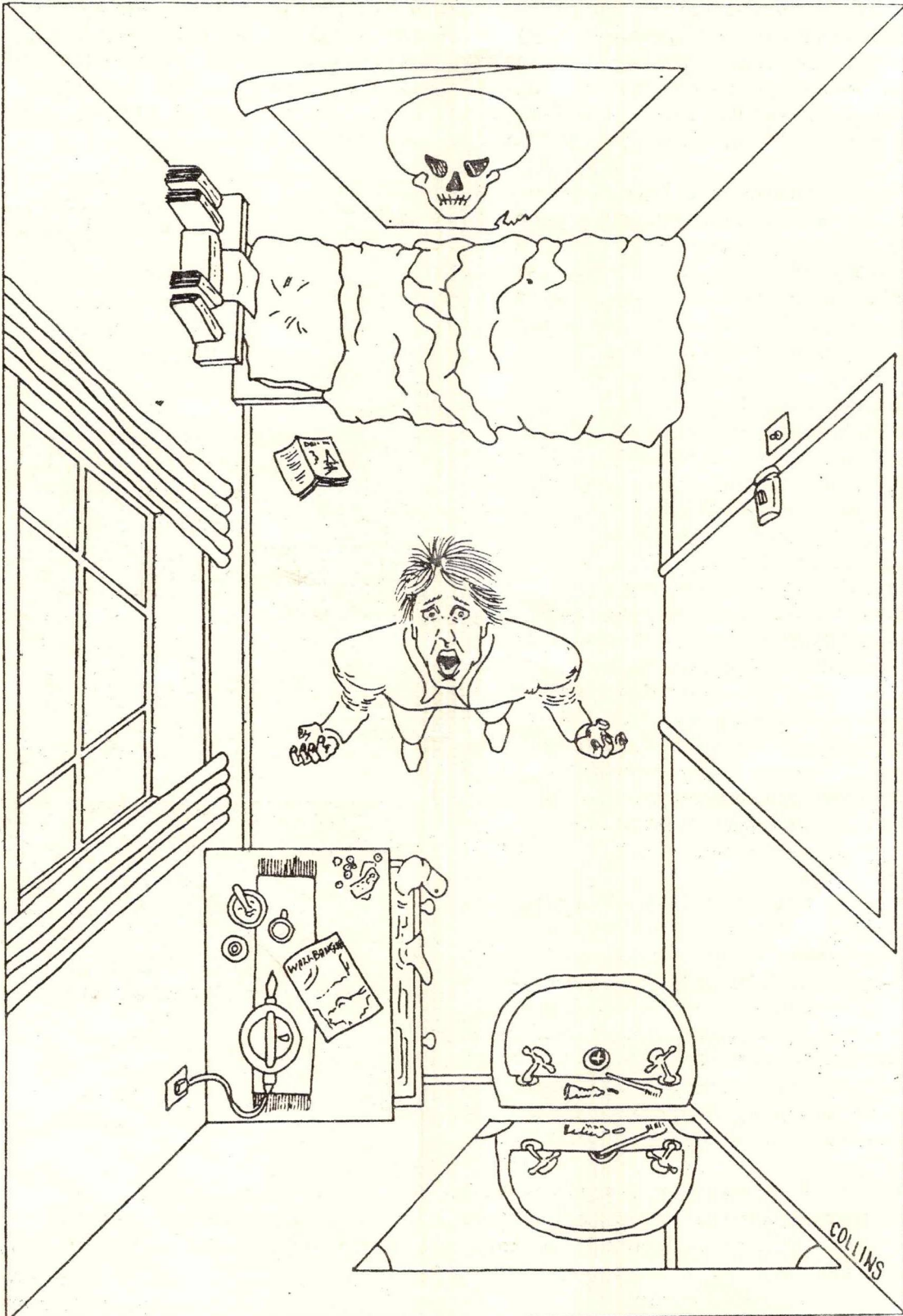
"I'm not sure that the entire blame for the Scottish/English fandom split can be laid completely at any one person's door - unless that person is Edward I of England. There has been such a split in thought north and south of the border that it is unfair to blame fandom. It is, after all, only a reflection of what goes on in the country (or countries) as a whole. Attitudes on distance and travel differ as do views and outlooks on most things. To many Scots 'England' means the affluent south. Most Scots would accept that most English north of the midlands are okay, but the myth of the typical Englishman and the typical Scotsman have been perpetrated for so long that the distrust of one side by the other is ingrained in the racial makeup. Otherwise the inference of one fan couldn't do much damage. We are, after all just fans, and as such belong to a group all our own, we shouldn't allow such outside influences to affect our opinions. But then you English... oops sorry. Seriously, just because Bob Shaw and Ken Mann come from up here doesn't mean we're all hostile."

That seems to be a good place to finish this discussion, and move onto someone else's worries for a change. Here's Brian Earl Brown giving us his fears for fandom:

"Fandom is obviously in some kind of transition, from what we grow up thinking it should be into something else. Just what, though, is hard to say. As Bob Shaw pointed out in The Zine with No Name, fans have an easier time of finding fandom these days. This tends to mean they're more socially ept, in contrast to fans of yore. They're less likely to think of fandom as something special, thus having little incentive to write for or edit fanzines and in fact would question the whole point of fanzines. There are better ways to spend one's money - like going to more conventions. They're also, I think, less literate, less literarily oriented. I've been a fan for 7 years. That's long enough for me to be part of Boring Old Far fandom but when I look around, I see faneditors from my older 'generations' and from my 'generation' but I don't see any younger fan-eds. It's like when the Hayden's, the Brown's, the Shiffman's

and Carmody's die off from old age or boredom, there won't be a fanzine fandom in the US. This is a little disturbing. And I don't think it's correctable. You can't make people become faneditors. It's something they have to want to do. At least in the UK there does seem to be succeeding waves of new fans."

I sure hope you're not right in that prediction, but could the problem possibly be smaller than you think? It might just be that as a result of being cast as part of 'Boring Old Fart Fandom' (what a disgusting term!), you just don't get on the mailing lists of 'Whizzo Young Burp Fandom' and, not being part of that social scene either, there is a thriving sub-culture beavering away unbeknownst to you.... Perhaps....



PATENTLY OBVIOUS

Darroll Pardoe

The British Patent Office publishes something like five hundred patents a week, mostly for rather less than world-shaking inventions. But around 10 years ago, a series of wonderful, crazy documents started to appear among them. They were all filed by a certain Arthur Pedrick, and rumour has it that he was a retired patent agent, who had a grudge against the patent office for some real or (more likely) imaginary slight. He used his knowledge of the procedures to file patent applications which would make the officials look like idiots but which, being in proper order, they could not legally refuse. I've selected a few of the best, starting with the not quite workable and building up to the absolutely incredible.

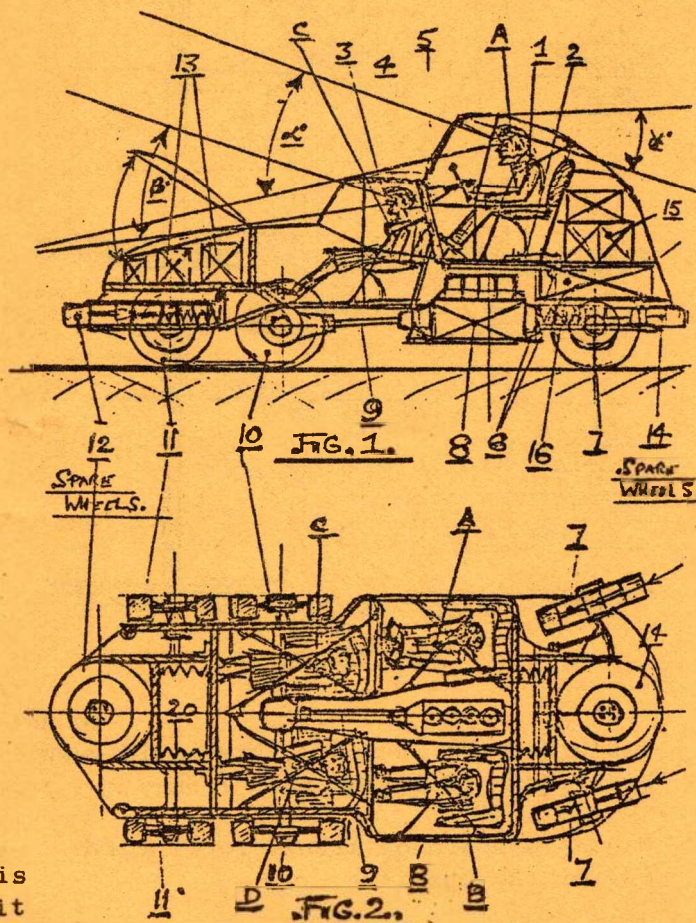
Anyone who's crossed the Atlantic on a Jumbo Jet has longed for a plane that was roomy enough to walk about in and avoid the sensation of being a sardine. Pedrick provided just such a plane in British Patent 1,439,086. He proposed to tie half a dozen Jumbo Jets side by side to create a super-large aircraft body, and then fit huge wings and engines on to it. He thought this might be a bit dangerous if there was an accident, so to give everyone aboard a better chance he specified that it should fly at no more than a hundred feet above the ground.

Improvements in transportation weren't confined to the air. Patent 1,394,639 described a car driven from the back seat. The idea was that the driver could see over their heads, and everyone would have a really good view of the road ahead. For good measure, the car was to be fatted with floats and a propellor to make it amphibious.

Soon afterwards, Arthur had another brilliant idea for improving the motor car (Patent 1,405,575). Energy crisis? - no problem. Just go back to the horse instead of those nasty internal combustion engines. This wasn't exactly a new idea, so to make it patentable a fresh approach had to be taken. This was to put the car in front, and the horse behind, pushing.

Fires in high-rise buildings are notorious for their danger and for the difficulty of getting at them to put them out. Patent 1,453,920 has the answer - giant roller-blinds at the top, activated by the fire alarm to fall

1,394,639 COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
2 SHEETS
This drawing is a reproduction of the Original on a reduced scale.
SHEET 1



down the sides of the building like a safety curtain and suffocate the fire by cutting off its air supply. "Such means," wrote Pedrick, "of extinguishing the fire in a building might also suffocate all its occupants," which was perceptive of him. To get around this minor problem, he cut holes in the curtain to let in air, so that the people inside would be able to breathe. He didn't mention that the fire would too!

Finally, we come to what I think is Pedrick's greatest triumph - the combination selective cat flap control and thousand megaton orbital thermo-nuclear bomb (Patent 1,426,698). It's the most glorious patent I've ever read, and features a certain ginger cat who "with increasing years is

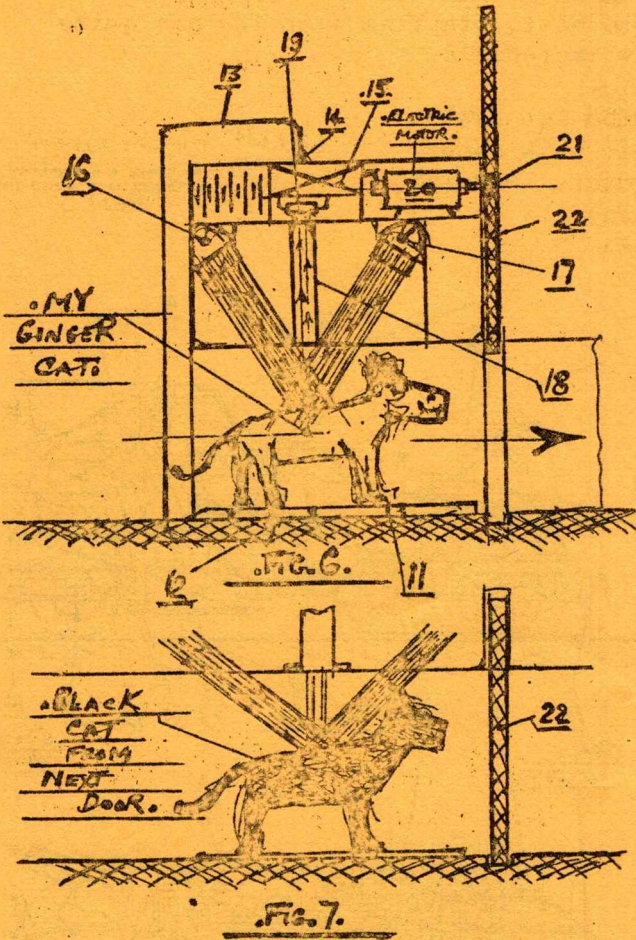
not as agile as he was, and quite often when coming in at nights from a bit of mouse hunting is, when the kitchen door is open, overtaken by the black cat from next door, who is much younger and more agile. The problem therefore is how to let Ginger in but exclude the black cat who belongs next door."

The solution is to invent (as the patent explains) a selective cat-flap that will open only to cats with ginger-coloured fur, and not to black ones. OK so far, but the story then continues (I kid you not), "Purr, purr, said Ginger, that's quite clever. I shall be able to get in to eat my food without worrying about Blackie from next door. But, said Ginger, there is a much better use for your detector device..." and the cat goes on to explain to (a no doubt astonished) Arthur Pedrick how he can incorporate the detector in a huge orbital weapon, which will perceive any launch of missiles

from the earth's surface and home in to detonate and flatten the country responsible for the launch. This would result in a reduction of the military budget, bring down inflation, and reduce the price of cat food.

Nobody's heard of Arthur for a while. Perhaps he's been bought off by the CIA or the Russians.....

1426698 COMPLETE SPECIFICATION
4 SHEETS This drawing is a reproduction of the Original on a reduced scale
Sheet 2



With the unemployment situation at its present dire level, it is always good to have a clear idea of what particular occupation you are most fitted for, and thus be able to convince prospective employers of the contribution you can make to their company's profitability.

For those of you who feel you might be 'cut out' for a management position, I print hereunder a small adaptability evaluation that you might like to attempt. But please, follow the instructions carefully.

SITUATION ADAPTABILITY EVALUATION
FOR MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

This test has been designed to evaluate reactions of management personnel to various situation. The situations are based on actual case studies from a well-known education institution and represent a cross section of test data correlated to evaluate both reaction time to difficult situations as well as the soundness of each decision selected.

You have 4 minutes.

(Do not turn this page until told to do so)

NOW!

1. You have prepared a proposal for the Regional Director of Purchasing for your largest customer. The success of the presentation will mean increasing your sales to his company by 200%. In the middle of your proposal the customer leans over to look at your report and spits into your coffee.
You:
 - (A) Tell him you prefer your coffee black.
 - (B) Ask to have him checked for any communicable diseases.
 - (C) Take a leak in his "out" basket.

2. You are having lunch with a prospective customer talking about what could be your biggest sale of the year. During the conversation a blonde walks into the restaurant and she is so stunning you draw your companion's attention to her and give a vivid description of what you would do if you had her alone in your hotel. She walks over to the table and introduces herself as your client's daughter. Your next move is to:
 - (A) Ask for her hand in marriage.
 - (B) Pretend you've forgotten how to speak English.
 - (C) Repeat the conversation to the daughter and just hope for the best.

3. You are making a sales presentation to a group of corporate executives in the plushiest office you've ever seen. The curried beans and Bombay potato you had for lunch react, creating a severe pressure. Your sphincter loses its control and you break wind in a most convincing manner causing 3 water tumblers to shatter and a secretary to pass out. What you should do next is:
 - (A) Offer to come back next week when the smell has gone away.
 - (B) Point out their chief executive and accuse him of the offense.
 - (C) Challenge anyone in the room to do better.

4. You are at a business lunch when you are suddenly overcome with an uncontrollable desire to pick your nose. Remembering this is definitely a No-No, you:
 - (A) Pretend to wave to someone across the room and with one fluid motion, bury your forefinger right up to the 4th joint.
 - (B) Get everyone drunk and organize a nose picking contest.
 - (C) Drop your napkin on the floor and when you bend over to pick it up, blow your nose on your sock.

5. You've just spent the evening with a supplier who invited you to an all night drinking party. You get home just in time to go to work. You stagger to the men's room and spend the next half hour vomiting. As you're washing up at the sink, the sales training director walks up, blows his cigar smoke in your face, and asks you to join him for drinks after work.
You:
 - (A) Look him straight in the eye and launch one last convulsive torrent at the front of his Saville Row suit.
 - (B) Nail him right in the crotch, banking on the fact he'll never recognize your green face.
 - (C) Grasp his hand and pump it till he P's his pants.

6. You are at dinner with a customer and his wife. Halfway through dinner you feel a hand on your lap. If you are resourceful you will:
 - (A) Accidentally spill hot coffee in your lap.
 - (B) Slip a note to the waiter to have your customer paged and see if the hand goes away when he does.
 - (C) Excuse yourself and go to the men's room. If he follows, don't come out until you have a signed order.

7. You're on your way in to see your best account when your zipper breaks and you discover that you forgot to put on your underpants that morning. You decide to:
 - (A) Call on the customer's secretary instead.
 - (B) Explain you were just rolling for queers.
 - (C) Buy a baggy raincoat and head for the school playground.

That was passed on to me by Kev Smith, who apparently was given it in all seriousness as an end-of-course test! Makes you wonder what sort of courses these accountants attend.

In it's original format, it was obviously aimed at an American reader (pick any one), and all I can say is, "Don't they have female sales executives in the US?"

From one intellectual exercise to another. On a 'slow news day' at the office recently, I happened to read that the foreign debt of Israel was the highest per capita debt in the world - \$21bn total. Mentioning this to my fellow colleagues the question arose of how far this would actually stretch if laid out in \$1 bills.

In case any of you may be interested, I display below the results of about 2 hours fevered calculations by the whole of our section:

Assumptions:

All dollar bills standard size - 6" long

Bills to be laid lengthwise (i.e. short sides together)

All bills newly-minted (don't have to allow for dirt particles increasing the gap between the bills)

Calculations:

$21,000,000,000 \times 6" = 1,988,636.36 \text{ miles}$

$= 1,242,897.73 \text{ km}$

Interestingly enough, this would span the distance from the earth (sea-level) to the moon (mare-level?) 4 times!

We were all rather proud of this exceedingly useful fact, but I was brought right down to earth when I mentioned my discovery to John on the way home that night.

"That's all very well, but if you put the bills one on top of the other, how high would the pile be? How heavy?"

Ah, shit.... Anyone any ideas?

Now onto the literary section of this publication with some reaction to Judith Hanna's piece in the last issue of which Peter Campbell says, "Easily the most provocative piece to appear. . . This type of subject is always explosive because there are no cut-and-dried answers." Well, explosive is rather overstating the response I received, but George Hay definitely took exception to the 'no cut-and-dried answers' aspect.

George Hay, London House, Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2AB

" Lateral Cliches: or, Hanna Revisited

Any prolonged reading of fan literature leaves me with the feeling that I've been run over by a posse of question-marks. There are, apparently, no answers - just questions. Indeed, I often suspect that if some super-being were to descend from the skies with genuine, workable copper-bottomed answers, fandom would retreat, screaming, to Ulan Bator, rather than actually accept and use any such.

This I write in the context of Judith Hanna's article on Cartland, Heinlein and cliches and the cliches they use, an article leading one to suppose our only choice lies in mindless submission to cliches on the one hand or total alienation on the other. Let me say at once that I have every sympathy with her resentment of the cliches passed off onto us in most sf. But, I have to ask: does Judith really want answers?

If so, why does she not present some? God knows there are plenty around. For example, it has to be pointed out that 'thinking' is only one way of confronting the universe. Has Judith considered the results obtainable by choosing any of the alternatives? To name but a few - trusting, doubting, believing, rejecting, emulating - well, let's stop there. A close examination of the humans about you will show that there are as many employing these attitudes to life as there are those employing the 'thinking' ploy. And not just among fans - consider the emotional attitudes that come through when one reads Jack Vance or Eric Frank Russell. This does not imply that these writers do not think - far from it - but there is a given and powerful emotional set that underlies the thrust of the thinking - the emotion comes first and the thinking is employed to back it up.

And what is thinking? One could say it is the subjective examination of objective phenomena. But most people who go in for this tend to do it on a ratio of about five minutes observation to fifty-five minutes of thinking. Whereas the best way to get results is to turn it t'other way round. Has Judith ever devised a questionnaire and got round to eliciting concrete specific answers from the cliché-ridden as to just why they love Heinlein, Cartland, Norman et al? Even if she has not, surely she can see that they do it because it meets a very real need in the readers? And therefore should not her first priority be to find out more about the nature of this need? Or is she going to remain for ever stuck in her own cliché, that of 'Puzzled Observer, Theydon Bois(?)

The trouble with being an observer is that you never get into the game. This leaves one frustrated: however much one may strive to convince oneself that an observer is intellectually more one-up than a player, the sight of the player bounding after the ball still gives a twinge. After all, why worry about Cartland or Heinlein? Because they are in the action, that's why.

I'm not just trying to be awkward. There is nothing stopping the observer from promoting himself or herself into the role of actor. True, it is

hardly likely that the critic can go from the position of fan to that of world-famous Name at one bound. But most will settle, I think, for a good deal less than that. And it is surprising what one can do, and that quite quickly once one has got down to deciding specifically what one is after, and what one needs to achieve it. I have suggested some lines for research and action that could be followed up, and there are plenty more. Why doesn't Judith start a fanzine dealing specifically with role-playing and specific sexual issues? I guarantee there'd be takers... Why should Norman, Heinlein and Joanna Russ do all the running?

Judith is right: all these cliches need busting open. But where are the non-cliches, the blinding attitudes which she (rightly) suggests are needed? Come on, girl - give!"

For someone who doesn't like being assailed by the question-marks in fan writing, George certainly raises enough unanswered queries himself. Well Judith, are you going to give?

Richard Faulder also takes Judith to task, somewhat - "piece of arrogant intellectual elitism", eh? That's not mincing words. Ah, but I've taken that completely out of context, which is hardly fair, you'll have to read the rest of what he says to do him justice.

Richard Faulder, c/o Department of Agriculture, Yanco, NSW 2703, Australia

"In her article Judith Hanna is dealing with two separate issues, although I'm not sure if even she is aware of this. Firstly, there is the long-standing complaint about the stereotyped portrayal of women in literature in general, and in science fiction in particular. This is a valid complaint, although to some extent forgivable in the latter case, given the historical development of the genre. There, for whatever reason (and, being historical, they are essentially irrelevant to our present situation, since we can change the present into a more desirable future, but can do nothing about the past - except in the artificial sense of 1984) writing in the genre was done almost exclusively by men during the genre's formative period. Indeed, as Judith went on to say (although she became a bit verbose at that point) every individual is an alien to every other individual. It is correct to assume a common humanity for all other members of our species, but, the assumption we make as to what 'humanity' means is almost always wrong. Additionally, while I have more than a little sympathy with Judith's not wanting to be identified with the cliched women portrayed in literature, there seems to be an underlying sexist assumption by her that men (and for the purposes of her philosophical position his has to mean 'all men') enjoy the cliches by which men are portrayed. I would be horrified to think that I could ever be a widowed hunk dripping arrogance, a striking profile is definitely not on my shopping list, and I know better than to think that flames of passion will last forever. Or am I supposed to be the exception that proves the rule?"

Judith's second issue relates to the value of certain forms of literature. Embedded in her comments is the piece of arrogant intellectual elitism that says "some forms of literature are more worthy than others, and anyone so inferior to disagree with this must be helped to see the light". So far as I can see, each person goes through her/his own personal evolution, and at any given stage different forms of literature are the most appropriate. As their personality evolves (and I use this in its truest sense, in which change, without any value judgement as to whether this change is an 'improvement', is what is meant) so does their taste in literature change. What people like Judith are saying is "the sort of literature I like now is the sort of literature which is best for everybody at every stage of their personal evolution". I reject this assertion utterly."

Powerful stuff, eh? Since I started by quoting Peter Campbell, it seems only fair to give him the chance to air his views in toto - and he seems to agree with Judith a little more than the other two. "Personally, I agree", oh, damn, there are those "But... but. . ."

Peter Campbell, 80 Royal Terrace, Thurso, Caithness, Scotland

" Personally, I agree with most of what Judith says: yes, women are treated as cardboard cut-outs by the media - as are men for that matter. Yes, thinking for oneself is difficult and at times (socially) dangerous but it's worth it in the end. Yes, McCaffrey is a passable mainstream writer who could change the attitudes of Mr & Mrs Average. But...but... who asked them if they want to change? Most people don't want to move out into the cold, alienating world of independent thought. They want to stay with the stereotypes, with the Cartlands and Heinleins because it's cosy and warm in there and they don't want to be menaced by nasty, cruel reality. Who are we to disillusion them? They genuinely like being in there where everything's so clear-cut and simple. I honestly don't think we've the right to drag them out of that cocoon."

Surprisingly enough, each time there has appeared something about women/discrimination/stereotypes etc in these pages, the majority of those responding have been men (and usually agreeing with the feelings being portrayed). Still, there is always dependable Joy to balance things out.

Joy Hibbert, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs

" In many ways I prefer the traditional background woman in adventure stories to the idiot-geniuses of Heinlein. Many people seem unable to realise that a character isn't necessarily a 'futurewoman' just because she's well educated. Spider Robinson, in typical anti-feminist fashion suggested that feminists don't like Heinlein's women characters because they have children and enjoy it. There is a difference between enjoying motherhood of a few children and the sort of mass breeding that Heinlein's women do. And you noticed how these broodmares always have advanced scientific techniques to ensure that they still look attractive (i.e. young). Apparently (in the abovementioned article by Spider Roginson) Heinlein's women characters are based on his wife, god help her. McCaffrey has two separate cultures living on the same planet. The Weyrs, with their sexual equality (except when there's only one queen dragon left - I think that's a reasonable exception) and sexual freedom, and the other part of Pern, with its culture that seems to be slightly backward of where we are. The ending of Helva I found disappointing, where she goes off with that bloke who is obviously going to be her husband. I find it unlikely that a woman in a shell is allowed to keep her sexual desires, I find it even more unlikely that she will suffer from the desire for passivity brainwashed into other women."

Of all the above views, I think I agree most with Peter Campbell's in that both women and men tend to be treated as cardboard cut-outs by some writers. I think it's more a total failing in the skill of the writer rather than a discriminatory statement, since those novels where women are stereotyped tend to be lacking in any depth of characterisation. Where there is depth of characterisation in portrayal of the male characters, you tend to find equal appreciation of female. So why get hot under the collar about it, bad writers are bad writers.

AT THE BAA R-----

I tried, I really did try to complete a fanzine without mentioning drink. I almost succeeded, too - well, page 27 ain't bad, and after all with people like Sally Beasley around what chance did I have?

" Somebody should produce a recipe book for fans' favourite alcoholic concoctions. I like Chromatic Dragons myself - any 8 of your favourite liqueurs & spirits, ideally in different colour levels and pipetted up through a straw. The favoured alcohol in W.A. would be Inner Circle - 33 OP rum. ((I don't understand that?)) Mixing it with Kahlua is, I've discovered from experience (Ratcon 3) a mistake. I know what you mean about remembering everything one has done or said next day. Still, I'd prefer that to being told!"

As if by telepathy, Ian Barrington comes up with the following :

I M Barrington, Helvellyn, GrainePark, St Ola, Orkney, Scotland

" From the dinkable,

The Black Frog

Pernod, SC, blackcurrant juice and a slice of lemon

The Sahara Polar Bear

Vodka, SC, lime juice and a slice of lemon

To the drinkable, but only to the inner initiates of the Fraternal Alcoholic Deviants, or F.A.D.s.

The Glaswegian Shandy

SC, Newcastle Brown Ale and a slice of lemon

Other variations of this drink include whisky, Carlsberg Special Brew and no lemon, this is not recommended for those who live in the South.

The Bums Rush

Equal quantities of Lucozade and SC and a slice of lemon, traditionally ExLax is eaten between sips.

It was at this point I was tempted to add The Bloody Harvey, made up from SC, tomato juice and the usual slice of lemon, but on a little reflection, I won't, okay?"

I've been a bit unfair, really, since Ian didn't just dream up these cocktails with a perfectly sober mind - nobody could! So I'd better let him give the background info...

" As the editor of "Southern Comfort's Rural English Atlas of Mimeography", or S.C.R.E.A.M., the following cautionary tale may be of some interest. In the far off days of the mythical early 70's, I and two other persons, of indeterminate sanity, connived to purchase a bottle of the legendary elixir Southern Comfort. Being inexperienced lay drunks we relished each distinguishing quality of fragrance, taste and sight of the golden fluid to such a degree that the bottle was finished within 5 minutes! Is this a record? Was it sacrilege?

This act of folly so astounded the drinking fraternity when the news finally leaked out (SC was then the outrageous price of a fiver; you may, of course, eat your heart out! but this is the stuff of which legends are supposed

to be made), that, in an effort for a slice of dubious acclaim, no expense was spared, no turn left unstoned, no time for weak stomach (and perhaps, the strong willed), every avenue of meticulous resresearch pursued. Resresearch is not an error, rather the result of meticuous research! Oh, well."

Then followed the list of cocktails. So it's not such a surprising list when you know what sort of idiot did the resresearch - Jesus man, even I can't get through a bottle of SC that quickly, a fiver a time or not.

And now for one of those 'interesting' facts that always come in useful when standing tongue-tied at the boss's cocktail party (I should be so lucky)...

"The term 'Booze' has an interesting origin I recently discovered. Seemse Booze was the name of a brewer back in the early 19th centurey who promoted his liquers by giving away small bottles of it to passersby. This was a remarkable discovery for the historian within me. It meant that those little bottles of booze the airlines sell in-flight ((there're called miniatures, son)) were invented before the aeroplane was."

Brian Earl Brown

Actually that is quite interesting, if true.

The fact that I was trying to get through a whole issue without mentioning my favourite liquid food may seem rather out of character to those who know me, but I was made to feel a right heel by Philip Collins, you see, and wanted to make amends. Ah me, maybe next time... excuse me a minute, I must nip to the off-licence and stock up for Novacon at the weekend; I'll leave Phil to keep you occupied while I'm away...

Philip Collins, 246 Higher Green Lane, Hither Green, London SE13 6TT

"Jim Barker's amusing piece 'Midlands Comfort' reminds me, from the various con reports I've read, that I seem to be the only tea-total sf fan in the entire universe, or even Scunthorpe! I don't drink simply because I don't like the taste of alcohol; even the smell puts me off. Most people are not bothered by my lack of alcohol consumption, but perhaps via the pages of Wallbanger I could contact the other tea-total sf fans of the world and we could organise a con in a nearby phone box."

You're not alone, Phil, quite a few fans are closet tea-totalers and though they may look like they're downing the pints, tea is literally as well as metaphorically what they're drinking. Anyway, why not start a splinter group yourself (or even an apa - they're all the rage, you know). I know, Wallbanger can start up a new service - "Contact" or "CND" - Contact for Non Drinkers.

Talking about CND, it was good to see so much media coverage on the nuclear question during the run up to the last election. We had 'The Peace Game' and its sequel(?) (although I would have far preferred it if they'd been shown on consecutive nights, instead of a month apart, so that both arguments could be compared whilst still fresh in the mind). Hugh Wheldon also did a very interesting programme about NATO and it's use of nuclear weapons. In this he raised an insightful point when interviewing somebody from NATO. (I'm a bit vague about the who of all this, it was some time ago now, you know.) He had just gone through the pros and cons of unilateral disarmament and followed with the effects on NATO if one country pulled its nuclear weapons out. The interviewee said that he did not agree with siting nuclear missiles in the UK for our own defence, but would still want to keep them in NATO's arsenal. "So what you're saying is that you're willing to follow your principals so long as the effects are felt on someone else's soil?", interjected Mr Wheldon. Right on.

The one thing that programme really taught me was that even in a conventional war Germany would be devastated. So why don't we get off our high horses and ask the people who have most to lose what they want? And then stick by them in their decision. It's all too easy to support causes on moral grounds when the brick-bats fall more on someone else than they will on you, and it's in this area that the present American Administration, in my view, is the worst culprit. They really get up my nose and I'd be willing to help Russians perfect their long-range missiles just so Americans couldn't sit so smug in their ivory towers knowing their sacred soil is relatively safe. Let's get the sphere of operations moved over to America and see what difference that makes. Just look at the fuss they made about Pearl Harbour; when taken in context, that was merely one little battle in comparison with the devastation in Dresden, Coventry, London, Berlin. My mother (who was German) was always very reticent about conditions over there during the war, but one image has always stuck with me - a medium-sized market town (Lemgo) devastated in one air-raid so that in her street only 1 house remained standing (her own) merely because there were military targets within a 20-mile radius. This was repeated all over England, Germany, France, Belgium... the majority of Europe, but the last war fought on American soil was the Civil War. So let's see how they feel if the so-called 'theatre' was slap bang in the middle of Texas instead of Europe.

The recent debacle in Grenada reinforces my fear that if there is another war, Reagan will be one of the prime movers. For once I was actually forced to agree with something dear old Maggie spouted: what right have any of us to go stomping into other countries because they don't have the political system we like? OK, that's a massive oversimplification, but isn't it tending towards the same actions we denounce the Russians for? And anyway, how come the Americans were able to get their nationals out almost immediately, but it was several days before the situation became 'safe' enough for the British to go in and see if their people wanted to leave?

Another conclusion I drew from watching all this media-coverage on the nuclear debate was that the basic difference between the pro and con sides was their opinion as to whether or not Russia is expansionist. The pro-disarmers don't believe Russia would take advantage of a weakened resistance and stomp all over Europe, the cons believe they will. Since no-one knows (not even the Russians, I wouldn't be surprised) it's all very hypothetical and so I find the continual diatribes incredibly boring. No-one is going to change another's opinion on the possible motives of the Russians, and even the 'facts' can be interpreted according to different rule books. Before you all go and stomp on me, though, this doesn't mean I'm pro nuclear weapons, and I'm definitely anti-Cruise ... I just get fed up to the back teeth with all this pontificating.

Eve now climbs down from her soap-box, having used her position of power to foist her own views on everyone else when they can't answer. Well, what else is your own fanzine for?

This is all far too serious a discussion to be having two days before a convention, so why don't we move onto the lighter, enjoyable things in life? Well, music seems as good a theme as any, so let's put on our 1960's gear and go for a trip down good old memory lane.....

* The Kitchen Cupboard (A Smeliodrama) by Andrew Dallmeyer. What happens when a French cheese is set loose in the kitchen cupboard. Cutlery, crockery, haute cuisine and a cunning plan of rat and mouse.
 Aug 11-12 (Sat Sun 7.30) 4.10 pm (Weds) £1.25

HARVEY AND THE WALLDANGERS

Venue 7-CIRCUIT ONE, HEROD WATY UPSTAIRS, CHINDLAY STREET, TAS 10.00 am, 2.30 11.00

Harvey and the W. Walldangers in concert. "Controlled hilarious" "spstick technical virtuosity" "Square words that describe five cats from a bridge, serving up an exhilarating cocktail, a head mix of jazz and jive that's wivier than a wivier wivier wivier wivier" "Superb" *Evening News*.
 Aug 24-Sept 5 (Wed Thurs) 10.15 am 6.2.00 £2.50 (1st concession at venue only)

John's article on the Rolling Stones seems to have sparked off quite a few reminiscences, although Peter Campbell made me feel really old with his "Then again, I never grew up with the group. . . so perhaps they don't have the same significance for myself as they do for you." What a put down! John Owen, though, isn't afraid to admit his age and remembers with nostalgia the old days...

John D Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks

" John's piece on the Stones' concerts made me reminisce about the oldie pop tours that I saw in my mispent yooof. They fell into two categories - the pure 'pop' tour as John described, with half a dozen artists all crammed into a three hour show, with normally only the top of the bill getting more than twenty minues. Most of those took place in the Adelphi in Slough ((gee, John, you really get to some exciting places!)), which is normally a cinema converted for the evening of the show only (now, alas, it's a bingo hall). Those shows were great, as long as you were careful to avoid the teeny-bopper idol ones, as they were murder on the ears. On the other hand, it gave me the opportunity of seeing bands like the original Manfred Mann, the Yardbirds, the Small Faces (on a bad night, when Steve Marriott couldn't get his guitar to work for more than a couple of chords at a time, a guitar was to be seen flying across the stage as the curtain went down) and many others, including what must have been the first British tour by the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and boy did he seem weird after all the others!

The best place to see bands in those days was the dance halls, if you went in large enough groups for safety. I got to see bands like the Hollies, even Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers (who got to the Can Can nearly 20 years before Bad Manners - I think I've still got the record around somewhere), plus others like Sounds Incorporated; all good solid entertainment, and often a lot better value than the top groups.

I even got to a very early (63, maybe 64) pop festival in Hayes, in the grounds of the local Roman Catholic church ((you've got to be joking!)), which featured an amazing list of top names of the day; a kind of mini-Woodstock, with Gerry and the Pacemakers, the Swinging Blue Jeans, the Searchers, Billy J Kramer, even Screaming Lord Sutch (who out-weirded even Hendrix) - and that was only the top part of the bill.

I eventually gave up the live music scene in favour of records, mainly because the volume of sound had increased to a point where it was physically painful for me to listen to them. The last time I ventured out was to Wembley Pool to see the Rick Wakeman ice extravaganza, which was fun but loud - my ears rang for days afterwards.

Ah, them were the days."

To give things an international flavour, Larry Carmody also reminisces...

Larry Carmody, 629 E 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218, USA

" John's column about the Rolling Stones brings to mind a concert of their's that I attended in 1972. The Stones were to play four dates at Madison Square Garden, and the general wisdom said that long lines for tickets would be the rule of the day. So, instead, a lottery was instituted. You mailed in a postcard and if it was bicked you would then receive a slip of paper informing you that you were entitled to purchase 4 tickets to one of the performances (although you didn't know which one or where the tickets were located...). As luck would have it, I sent in 7 postcards and 1 was

selected. The tickets turned out to be for the second performance and were in the centre of the 10th row, excellent. I ended up going with my then girlfriend as well as my sister (a longtime Stones fan) and her then boyfriend. But before the concert I was deluged by calls from people who wanted to buy the tickets and offered up to \$100 for a pair. You see, a friend of mine from college was working as a summer intern at the local paper and had given me a phone call to find out if I knew anything about the lottery. She freaked out when I said I had gotten tickets that way and set up for a photographer to come over and take a picture of me holding the four tickets in front of my parent's house. It was after the article appeared tht I received the numerous calls to purchase the tickets - all turned down because I couldn't disappoint my sister.... "

At that price I think I'd have sold my own tickets! I just can't understand why some people are willing to pay such an extortionate price just to see a group play. I wonder if the black market will die somewhat as more groups make videos of their concerts - surely it's almost as good to see a video, but then again, if you're willing to pay so much for a ticket, I suppose a video would come in a very poor second.

Being the miser I am, I doubt I'd even be willing to part with the price of a video, unless it was Dire Straits, that is. We went to see them recently at Hammersmith with Brian Smith and they were S*U*P*E*R*B*. By far the best concert I've ever been to, although it was marred slightly by the bloody video cameramen sticking their instruments up everyone's noses. If you have the chance to see them, go... definitely move hell and high water to go... unless you don't like them, that is, then it's not worth going.

Anyway, I'll leave the last word to Pascal Thomas... ((hey Pascal, that was a neat way to get out of conscription, just move to the States...))

" How come there's such an overlap between SF and 60's rock'n'roll fans (or maybe I'm wrong)? Or more precisely, that the musical tastes of so many British SF fen are oriented towards 60's r'n'r. However, I enjoyed John's reminiscences. I only came to like the Stones fairly recently, on the strength of their 1965-66 material, when I first got into rock music in the mid-70s. Then the Stones were really hitting a trough as far as quality was concerned. Their 1976 Paris concerts were coming on the heels of the definitely inferior Black & Blue album... Interestingly enough, they now seem to have returned to their 60s vein, throwing soul and reggae overboard, and very tellingly the two songs which respectively opened and closed their stage set - as well as their live album Still Life - were "Under my Thumb" and "Satisfaction" - exactly as on their first album, Got live if you want it."

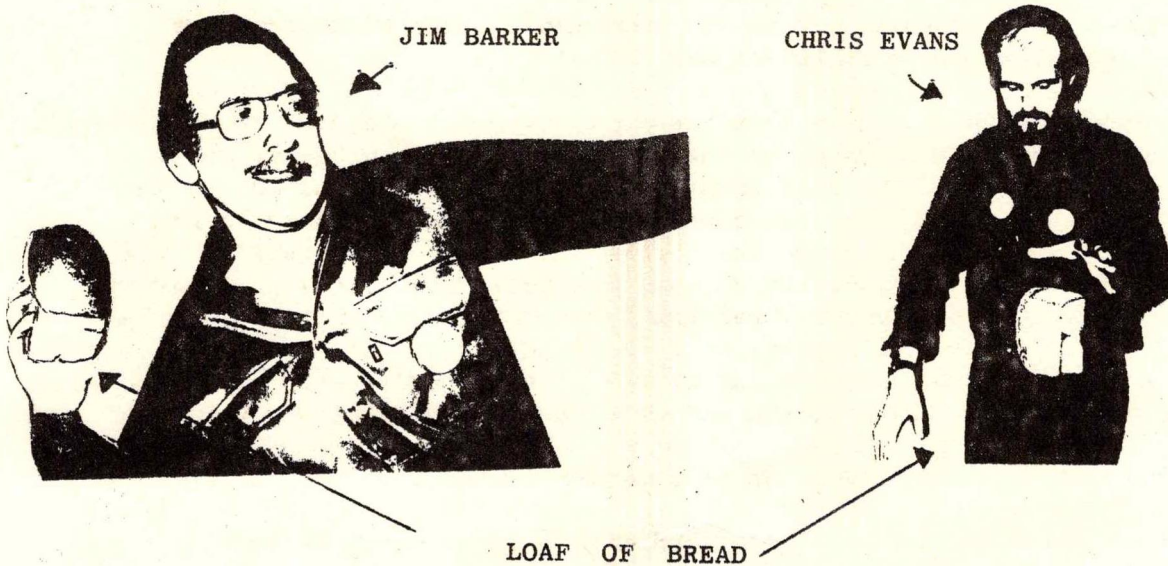
Actually, Pascal won't have the last word since I'll go back to something Peter Campbell said... "I regard pop as an essentially 'young' area - for the young in age and the young at heart. Ideally then, that should be true of the creators as well." Interestingly enough, Bill Wyman touched on this subject when being interviewed by Michael Parkinson about a year ago. His response was that rock'n'roll just hadn't been around long enough for there to be 40-year-old practitioners before and the situation was similar to the early jazz scene. Jazz started off as a 'young' area and no-one could conceive of 'old' musicians being involved, but Muddy Waters and Ray Charles were still active in the jazz/blues scene well after the age of 40, and hadn't lost any of their panache.

Interesting point that, I thought.

THE LOAF

In the dim, distant past, in a fanzine not unlike this, a secret was revealed. A secret that had been kept from us for many eons until.... at his peril... all was revealed to the awaiting public by none other than that winner of the Silicon Fannish Fortunes... ARNOLD AKIEN.

Since Mr Akien has survived the wrath of the gods for exposing one of their plots (well, almost, although he does have to wear a 'concrete collar' on occasion), he has summoned up the courage to reveal yet another mystery... but having been somewhat drained by the last experience, he has only managed the photographic evidence this time... we leave it to you to uncover the dastardly plot....



Please send your suggestions in a plain brown envelope, inside a special asbestos outer skin - you can never be too careful, you know.

As all true horror movie addicts know, many strange things happen in small country towns... none so strange as those now related by yet another intrepid reporter... Phil James... who relates the sordid details of:

THE HUNT

Returning to Wales on Friday I chose, for the sake of the car's suspension, to forgo my usual breakneck dash down the M4 and instead pilot my Land Leviathan at a more leisurely pace along the A- and B-roads; mile after circuitous mile of poppy-bordered rural turnpile.

I broke my journey first in Ampthill.

Ampthill is a small Bedfordshire town set on rising ground to the east of Junction 13 of the M1. The streets are narrow and winding, spreading out from the central feature of the town, the crossroads where the Luton-Bedford road meets that running from Woburn to Chicksands. The houses, many built from the local red brick, were festooned with bunting and gaily-decorated banners. Ampthill was hosting one of those innumerable small local fetes or festivals that spring up with the oil-seed rape in the English countryside in the summer.

This was the second time I had come to Ampthill. The first visit had been in passing, just another country town straddling the Queen's Highway. The significance of the name had registered only when I reached the crossroads at its centre. Once the connection had been made I reached my decision quickly... I would search for Katherine's Cross!

I had entered the huddled houses from the west, hoping to be able to continue to the east, so I began my search by taking the northern arm of the cross. I drove north, I drove south, then west and finally east, but no matter the direction I always returned to that crossroads. Tired and defeated I had pulled in to the side of the road, the engine idling, my brain racing. Did I detect undercurrents of hostility in the outwardly disinterested manner of the local populace? What unseen power had I stumbled upon? Disturbed? Was space itself being warped to prevent me from attaining my goal? Would I ever again see hearth and home; drink a jar or two at the Old Drum and Monkey; stagger home under the friendly glare of the sodium street lamps of Stevenage?

But of course I did, dear reader, as this letter testifies.

Long I pondered the options open to me and carefully my plans were laid. I would return to Ampthill bearing a small but potent device, a secret weapon capable of dispelling all defences of confusion and misdirection. Masters of Lore would instantly recognise it as Sheet 152 of the Ordnance Survey.

And so it proved. My second entry was this time from the east. Clutching my protective amulet decorated with its design of graticular cross and arrow none could withstand its power. Here, one woman turned into a greengrocer, there a group of studded-leather jerkined youths fled into a pub carpark. Passing the familiar crossroads I continued on to the west.

Soon I had reached the hidden entrance that led to the park that surrounded my objective and having parked my Leviathan on the lower slopes of the hill upon which stood the Cross, I began swiftly to climb its grassy slopes.

But, in my haste, I had forgotten the amulet! The immediate consequences were embarrassing but hardly fatal - those cowpats could hardly have reached their positions accidentally, I'm sure.

Having resumed my ascent, albeit at a more cautious rate, I soon discovered that the forces ranged against me had one last trick to play; when I reached the crown of the hill I was met by the sight of not one, but two stone crosses!

I chose the righthand monument. That was another mistake; it proved to be a war memorial to the 707 officers and men of the Bedfordshire Regiment who euphemistically "failed to return from the Great War".

With the citydweller's distrust of anything that looks like a cow but possessing horns, I sidled carefully past the brown and white beastie that separated me from Katherine's Cross.

Imagine the wild elation Hilary must have felt upon reaching the top of the World. Then imagine the deflation that would have resulted if Sherpa T. had replied to a request for the flag with the excuse that it must be in his other rucksack. Then perhaps you might understand how I felt on rounding the base of the monument to find a man (an ordinary man?) leaning forward over the railing on which his right foot rested. He was engrossed in jotting down the monument's inscription in a little notebook perched upon his raised right knee.

As my presence registered he spoke, surveying me intently from beneath knitted brows.

"Are you a Masquerader?"

I closed the gap between us and paused to survey the landscape. To the north the ground shelved steeply downward again. Below me lay a small pool, algae-stained stillness. Small boys tempted small fish; further along the slope two lovers lay, oblivious.

I lifted my eyes to the middle distance. They followed the curving embankment bearing the line from Luton; I heard the faint clatter of a goods train crossing the flat, open ground past the smoke-shrouded thicket of brickwork chimneys and the flooded clay-pits about Kempton Hardwick, toward Bedford lost in the distant haze.

Turning to answer the Man, I noticed that the ground in front of the Cross had been disturbed - only now was the grass beginning to grow, though patchily.

The Man was about 35 or 40, had grey-tinged hair and grey-white, knitted eyebrows above a face sunbrowned but rather nondescript. He was dressed in a chocolate-coloured double-breasted blazer with polished brass buttons and fawn trousers.

To his question, I replied that I didn't consider myself one. I hadn't read the book, though I had seen the plates in a friend's copy and had followed the Hunt's progress in the Sunday papers. I added that I had read the piece in the Sunday Times which presented two new clues (one true, the other false, I remembered).

"Ah, yes. It was that article which started me off. Not the Book."

Was this also a clue I enquired, gesturing at the inscription.

"No, I don't believe so, but one can never afford to ignore these things." he replied as he continued to scribble in his notebook. I examined the inscription. It ran

"In days of old where Amphthill's towers were seen,
The mournful refuge of an injured Queen.
Here flow'd her pure but unavailing tears,
Here blinkered zeal sustained her failing years.
Yet Freedom hence her radiant banner wav'd
And Love avenged a realm by Priests enslav'd.
From Catherine's wrongs a nation's bliss was spread
And Luther's Light from Henry's lawless bed."

Not bad, I thought. That's the sort of poem Miss Aldred would have chosen for Eng. Lit.. Full of obscure references and enough allusions to pass a lesson or two.

I pointed to the patch of disturbed earth. Is that where it was buried I asked.

"Oh, it wasn't dug up here, you know, despite what the papers say. I have reason to believe it was buried over a hundred miles from this spot!" he confided.

I expressed mild surprise at this assertion. Why, I wondered, should Mr Williams and the discoverer (whatever his name had been - I forget) falsify the account of it's unearthing. What could they gain?

"It's a Conspiracy", he opined.

He went on to explain how he had almost solved all the clues held in Kit William's book 'Masquerade' and how, ironically, the major stumbling block had been removed thanks to the revelation of Catherine's Cross as, almost, an extra clue. He now felt confident of locating the true hiding place of the Golden Hare.

I had read of the great dissatisfaction felt by many people at the discovery of the Hare - how some had even accused the parties involved of conniving to recover the treasure in an attempt to deprive them of their rightful reward! I never expected that they would be so numerous that I would encounter such a person on my flying visit to the monument!!

Before such strong convictions I was unable to muster any forceful arguments to counter his logic. Even when he explained how he had deciphered the extra clue presented in the Sunday Times article I dissembled and did not voice my doubts. His argument ran something like this:

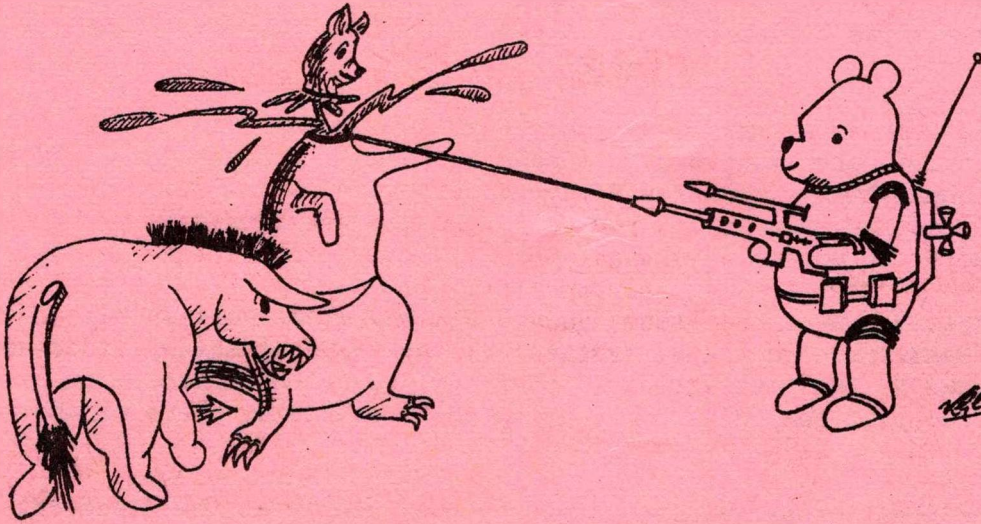
"...having dismissed the second clue as the false one I examined the Fish. Pinned to it was a note upon which was written the number six thousand followed by an A topped by a small circle. I decided that this must be a clue to the road the A6000. Well, after a lot of examination of the road maps I decided that this was a false trail and that the clue could not be as simple as that... perhaps it meant the A6001...well, sure enough, when I looked up the A6001 it led to the town of Bakewell. Now if you remember the pictures in the book, there is one in which a Bakery van can be observed driving down a road - and a Bakewell Tart is a specific type of cake!"

That was the flavour of it. My timid reply that I had interpreted the clue of the fish with the piece of paper on which was written "6000A" as a red herring (6000 Angström Units being the wavelength of red light - geddit) was brushed aside as a mistake, easily made by those who have not studied these matters.

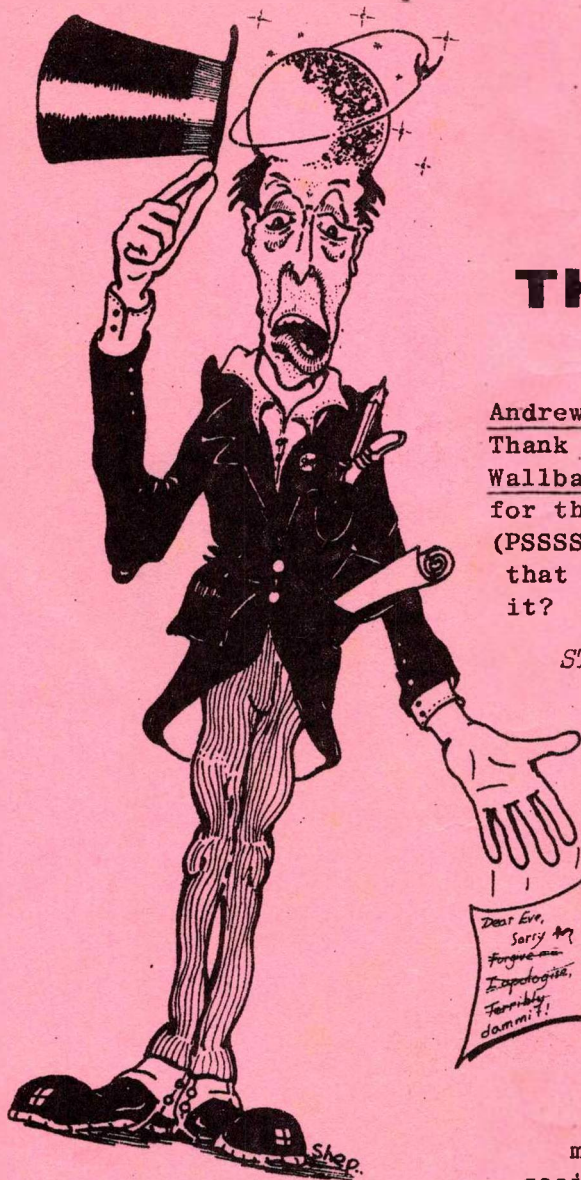
This final exchange decided matters. I wasn't going to hang around exercising the bee in his bonnet when I had plenty lying idle in my own headgear! Anyway, it's a long journey to Wales and I was beginning to get an inkling of eternity already. I asked him his name, adding that I would like to know it that I might follow his progress in the papers, should he find the proof he was searching for. "David Miller" he answered, "and yours?" I told him mine and we shook hands. "I'll probably write a book about the true location when I've tracked it down. Look out for that too." I replied that I certainly would as I hurried toward the carpark. I left him taking compass bearings on the distant chimneys.

Re-establishing myself behind the controls of the Leviathan I was soon passing the western limits of the town of Ampthill. A thought reoccurred to me; I wondered, who had knitted his brows?

KIDDIES CORNER



" HE KNEW ONCE HE HAD CAUGHT
BRIAN'S ATTENTION, IT WOULD BE
EASY TO SELL HIM THE
DOUBLE GLAZING.... "



THE LETTER

Andrew Rose, 19 Cathcart Place, Edinburgh

Thank you very much for the latest issue of Wallbanger which I have just finished reading for the umpteenth time and which is incredibly (PSSSST) good to read again and again. What was that (PSSSST) and what does it mean whoever said it?

STAGE LEFT - Isn't it a bit late to loc a fanzine you received 4 months ago, and what terrible language!

Who are you to tell me it's too late, and anyway you're probably right. What's wrong with the language. Get out of this loc.

STAGE LEFT - No chance mate, you're not sounding normal, apart from which you should say how you envy Jim Barker's time in that hotel room.

Who, you mean the BSFA in Scotland? the man who does all these meetings you keep seeing me at? No chance. Well okay, I would have mentioned it, nice one Jim.

STAGE LEFT - That's better. Now what about the rest? You're getting the hang of it now. What about the play you liked?

Well, what about it? How do you say you liked something - Come on smartie.

STAGE LEFT - Just say you liked it, but was it as good as "A Day at the Races"?

I could have thought of that myself, and nothing is as good as a day at the races; it's better than working.

STAGE LEFT - You can't say that, it sounds like you liked one better than the other and you've still got five articles and things to go.

What are you trying to say, whoever you are. Come outside and I'll thump you. Come on, say it straight!

STAGE LEFT - OK, you asked for it you pillock. You are supposed to loc all the articles with equal praise otherwise someone who wrote one might thump you. Are you into violence or something!

Well I would have done that if you hadn't interrupted you..you THING, you.

STAGE LEFT - Oh, you're so easily sidetracked! Would you have remembered to thank them for their support at RaCon, of course not!

Of course I would of, naturally. But I wouldn't put it quite like that. I would have said it was nice to see you, Eve and John, at RaCon. Sorry I never saw you to say goodbye... that was quite a party!

STAGE LEFT - Well, that's better. Now how about saying you wouldn't mind a go at an article for "Shallow Pool" if they'll give you an idea.

Well, I was thinking about saying something like that, but I thought it sounded stupid.

STAGE LEFT - See, I knew I was right, you're too daft to think of your own articles; can't even write letters. Where would you be without me?

STAGE RIGHT - SHUT UP! BOTH OF YOU! Why don't you say goodbye for now.

Never one to argue, I'll say, "Bye Eve and John".

Well, that's all for now, folks. Next issue will be out sometime, honest - BUT DON'T NAG ME, OK!

Just a final word to two WAHFs:

Steve Green - "Fandom's answer to Spare Rib" indeed - you obviously don't know me very well Steve.

Martin Tudor - "Beware Mrs Harvey, you're in danger of becoming bland!" Better this time? Oh, come on, at least give me 5 out of 10 for effort!

This has been WALLBANGER 8,
If undelivered, please return to:

Eve Harvey
43 Harrow Road
CARSHALTON
Surrey
SM5 3QH



Printed Paper

For return address,
please see other
side.