

HEAD! # 11



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Art

This issue's cover was brought to you by the Astounding Steve Stiles. All article headings are by Amazing Steve Green. Ice-hockey themed art by the Uncanny Taral Wayne. Artwork on pages 4 and 12 (as well as the robot brain photo on page 22) by the Ultimate Brad Foster, the CAMRA-themed art by Invincible Rob Gilvary and the graph by Man-Sized Jim Mowatt. It was a Marvel we got this issue out at all.

All the rest, is the fault of the editors.

Head! #11 is brought to you **by Christina Lake** and **Doug Bell**, the letters L, S and H and the number 247. Letters, love and locs should be sent to:

doug_bell@tiscali.co.uk
christina.l@virgin.net

or alternatively:

35 Gyllyng Street
Falmouth
Cornwall
TR11 3EL, UK.

It may not look like Easter, unless the post has been slower than usual, or you're accessing this from the back files of e-fanzines. Though actually Easter looked more like summer than this rainy night in August does, even though it's the end of Falmouth Week (big yachty event with fireworks. Supposedly. If it wasn't so wet.)

However, be that as it may, this is the Easter edition of Head! Just slightly delayed due to work, holidays and negligence. I blame Darwin, though don't tell my PhD supervisor, as she thinks Darwin is beyond criticism. So perhaps I'll blame Samuel Butler instead. But it's definitely one of them, because every time Doug suggested I should get on and write an article for this issue, I'd shake my head and go back to trying to work out why Butler fell out with Darwin.

Anyway, as I was saying, this is the Easter edition, and the proof is there for all to see in the form of Steve Stiles's fabulous Easter Island cover artwork.

It is also the Easter edition because this fanzine needs you (yes, YOU!) for the next Eastercon, as the Head! team will be running the fan programme. We're on the scrounge for ideas for programme items and volunteers to be on panels, run workshops or join in in any way you please. Or just come along if you're going to be at the 2012 Eastercon. We've already got some tasty items lined up, and lots of ideas that sounded good when I wrote them in my notebook down the pub. Though I'm still not sure about "Why do Furrries prefer lager?"

Finally this is the Easter edition, because we're not likely to get out another one before next Easter, unless we do a sneaky slimline "Headette" to keep us going, as there is only so much fanac you can fit into your life when you're meant to be living the laid-back surfing dream in Cornwall, and the fan programme is going to have to take priority. Unless we give up our jobs (very tempting. Can you get sabbaticals for Eastercon duties I wonder?) Except if we gave up our jobs, we probably wouldn't be able to afford to attend Eastercon, let alone publish another issue of Head! So it goes...

Christina





They say travel opens the mind to new possibilities. In my case, I've proved it to be true, as after spending several holidays falling in love with Cornwall I decided to move there. However, I often find on trips I have more exotic dreams, ones which can't be achieved in real life. I'm talking here about ideas for science fiction stories inspired by travel.

Let me give you an example...a number of years ago Christina and I went on holiday to the Basque Region. We flew in to Bilbao for a couple of days, nipped across the border to Biarritz to take in the French Basque provinces, before finishing off the trip with a hedonistic weekend in San Sebastian. It was a lovely holiday, mixing stunning beaches, culture and good food and drink. I'd been to Spain before so knew my way around a Spanish menu, and had some rudiments of the language but was quite unprepared for just how different a region this is from the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Some of those differences were little things, like the stylish yet blocky Basque sign typography or how exotic the tapas (or pintxos) were. Some were more major – huge amounts of salt cod everywhere, pelota frontons that existed in every small town or the TV sports that were based on moving rocks, wrestling sheep or chopping wood where you might have expected bullfighting or football. Then of course there was the ETA graffiti and pictures of modern Basque martyrs we saw on walls and in the town squares.

This last really brought home that this wasn't just an exotic part of Spain with really good food and stunning beaches. It was, whether you agree with the Basque separatists or not, a region of Spain/France with its own culture, traditions, history and language, and one which some people were prepared to die for. That got me thinking, might this be the perfect setting for a science fiction story? After all, some of my favourite SF novels are set not in the standard Western locations but in Brazil or India (both Ian

MacDonald), Antarctica (Kim Stanley Robinson) and Thailand (Paolo Bacigalupi), so somewhere as familiar but strange as the Basque Region should work too?

Partying in the crowded tapas bars of the old town of Donostia (or San Sebastian, as it is known outside the region) I realised this would be a great backdrop for a story of espionage and intrigue. Before the holiday I'd read that there was an independent Basque Republic that existed briefly during the Spanish Civil War. All that was needed would be a little tweak to some historic occurrence and we'd have an alternate timeline set up. The logical starting point would be the early removal from office of Neville Chamberlain as the British Prime Minister, say through ill-health. Chamberlain is often credited with keeping Britain from coming into the Spanish Civil War on the side of the legitimate Republican government. This probably wouldn't have led to the UK's direct involvement in the war, but might have meant a better supplied Republican army. It would also have made Germany think seriously about deploying the Condor Legion in Spain. A better equipped Republican army, and one not being carpet bombed out of existence would have meant the Republicans being able to stand up to Franco's coup d'état for longer. I'm still not sure that they could have won outright, but the Republicans might have been able to hold onto Catalonia and the Basque Provinces, resulting in a long-term stalemate. Using this as a backdrop, my story would be one of political assassinations and sabotage by Francoist agents as they set about destroying an alternate history free Basque state in the 1960s.

Since then I have been fantasising in this fashion on a lot of my holidays. After several holidays in the Low Countries I came up with a similar story to the Basque one, this time a neo-noir thriller involving a right-wing Flemish separatist cell trying to bring down

the Belgian government in a gritty cyberpunk future. At the centre of this would be a depressive alcoholic private investigator caught up in the murky world of the boozy Belgian brown bars and Dutch vice dens. The finale would involve a bloody shootout outside the crumbling ruined EU headquarters.

A trip through Prague, Dresden and Berlin was particularly fruitful territory. Prague is ripe for steampunk, with Kafka, Golems, ornate Gothic buildings, trams, funiculars and the claustrophobic old town streets. In Dresden, the newly reconstructed Baroque buildings inspired a story where the city was being rebuilt in a virtual world by the last living legitimate heir to the Saxon throne, as his own personal fiefdom. At first his nationalistic virtual serfs love and adore him, but as his plans turn increasingly insane something must be done to remove him from power. In Berlin I dreamt of two possible scenarios. In the counterculture district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg a disenchanting group of dissidents were recreating the communist era lifestyle by setting up their own autonomous district centred around three or four city blocks, against the democratic government's wishes. I also imagined a story in which all the data the Stasi gathered on the population was being fed into a giant computer which became sentient; in my story, the fall of the Wall was actually a side effect of a small band of adventurous dissidents defeating the controlling AI.

Sometimes my daydreaming is less elaborate - in Austria I imagined the whole country's population had been replaced by helpful, happy, healthy people as the first steps in an alien invasion - a kind of Stepford Wives in lederhosen. All the locals I met were just too scarily helpful.

Of course there are some holidays that don't give me any inspiration. Recent trips to San Francisco and Paris didn't yield any such SF fantasies, as these places are too iconic in their own right. Quirky films like *Subway* and *Amelie* define the French capital for me, while in San Francisco, being an old Deadhead, I had problems seeing past its beat/hippy past.

There is however no pattern to which trip will or won't start me daydreaming as holidays in the UK have just as much effect as some of the more exotic places where I've travelled. Prior to moving south of the Tamar, we holidayed in both Newquay and St Ives, and spent a fair number of weekends camping in North Devon and Cornwall. Tales of Cornish Wreckers (who never actually existed) conjured images of outlawed spacers placing false guidance beacons in the space-lanes to lure starships into dangerous asteroid filled sectors with hopes of looting their precious cargoes.

Walking amongst the beautiful countryside filled with ruined chimneystacks and engine huts around Cape Cornwall made me try and shoehorn Cornwall into an early Ballard disaster story like *The Drought* or *The Drowned World*.

A couple of years ago I spent a few days doing the Edinburgh Festival before heading up to Fort William for some hill-walking. Out of this I imagined a near-future Scotland after the banking collapse where Scotland's economy is reliant on the creative industries. With the growth of high-speed communications the designers and artists were leaving the cities to set up shop in the long abandoned glens, rebuilding houses destroyed in the Highland Clearances. Tribalism sets in with different artistic communities taking against each other, corporations move in to try and buy up the land and eventually a saviour is needed to unite the Highlands in keeping them free.

All these half-formed ideas are, I think, good settings for some form of story, whether short fiction or a fully-fledged novel. Being me though, they will probably never be written. I am at heart an ideas man. This isn't through some form of snooty high-mindedness about the actual hard graft of writing being beneath me, but just plain laziness. It is a trait that has stopped me in the past writing *The Novel*, or recording *The Album*. However I'm not writing off my chances entirely, I keep travelling and keep dreaming. It may be heresy to say such things in a Science Fiction zine but my favourite novel is Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* about travel and writing (amongst other things). Who knows, perhaps someday I'll sit down inspired by Ti Jean with his 120 foot roll of paper and type out one of my ideas into some form of story in one long sitting...maybe.



Back in the mid nineties, I spent a lot of my life watching the Murrayfield Royals, who were then the worst ice-hockey team in the UK. Most of my weekends were spent in exotic parts of the country like Blackburn and Basingstoke watching the team lose badly.. So when Taral offered me an article on his relationship with hockey, I knew I had to publish it... (Doug)



by

Taral

Wayne

I love hockey. I hate hockey. What *is* it about hockey, anyway?

Let me explain. When I was a kid, my father usually had the TV on twice a week, all winter, whenever *Hockey Night in Canada* was on the air. I didn't want to watch it, so I would go into my room to read or fool around, leaving command of the television to my father. But the sounds of the opening music, Foster Hewitt's rapid-fire commentary, the cheers of the crowd and the echoing slap-slap of pucks hitting the boards followed me. Twice a week. Every winter. It gets into your genes after enough years.

As I got older, I still didn't like to watch The Game. I didn't play it either, even though most kids my age did. Even in summer, when anybody's driveway or a stretch of quiet suburban street was as good as a rink, and a cheap red, white and blue rubber ball stood in for a puck, they *all* played hockey. I was no good at it, though. It was probably ordained that I wouldn't be... ever since I was five or six, when I was a spectator at a game between a number of older kids. One moment I was watching – and next moment I had the taste of rubber in my mouth. Hockey pucks do not taste good. And, unless inserted into the oral cavity very slowly, they hurt a whole lot! Luckily, I didn't loose any permanent teeth.

But if I had no interest in watching or playing The Game, it was part of my environment. As well, I possessed

the sacred tradition of The Game, in common with every other Canadian kid. But in comparison, I was somewhat limited in how I could express my national identity. For instance, from time to time, I did own a hockey stick. It was never put to any good use. It was too bulky to fish around under the fridge for lost items, and not sufficiently believable as a sword or gun. I also owned a puck once or twice, and had even less idea of what to do with *that*.

When I was around twelve, I got a pair of old ice skates from somewhere. They were too tight, and there was nowhere to skate except a shallow, rocky creek next to where I lived. Once in a while I'd work up enough interest to slide back and forth with trembling ankles. But, the distance between the open water and where the ice had heaved was perhaps twenty feet, so boredom set in faster than Gordie Howe could rush a goalie.

Also, like every good Canadian family, we had a table-top hockey game. It was in the shape of a real-life rink, with boards all around and a net at each end. The "ice" was only heavy card or fiberboard, but it was painted white with regulation red and blue lines. What immediately caught your eye were the six grooves cut through the "ice" on both sides of the center-line. A metal post stuck up through each groove. The posts were connected to a set of levers behind the goalie's

net. By manipulating the levers you could move the posts up and down the ice, or side to side in the goal crease.

What was most glorious about the board were the players that attached to those posts. In the old days they were stamped out of steel. The edges were not usually machined, and they could slice salami with ease – never mind fingers. If you had a cheap table-top game, half the players were painted with generic uniforms in one colour and half in another. The very *best* sets had all six NHL teams painted in their *official* colours. Most sets had only two. In Canada, of course, they could only be Toronto and Montreal. When you're engaged in the serious business of pretending to be Punch Imlach, coach of the *Maple Leafs*, and a miniature replica of the Stanley Cup is at stake, you want to leave nothing up to the imagination.



Table hockey comes as simple

More's the pity, I was never very good with even this surrogate for real hockey. My uncle Ray could clean up the ice with me.

My dad had a knitted, blue, wool sweater with a zipper in front and a white hockey player on the back that I greatly admired. It was in *Toronto Maple Leaf* colours, and very much in style for Canadians in the 1950s. I envied him, and wished I had one of my own. But the selfish so-and-so never thought of spending *that* kind of money on his only son. He bought me a lousy wind jacket for school, instead.

Perhaps I couldn't dress the part of a fan, but when it came to bubble-gum cards, I could give heart and soul to hockey. Collecting cards was addictive in itself, and never demanded anything of me but powerful, gum-chewing jaws. The card's design was simple: a full length photo of the player and a primary colour on one side; stats on the other. In 1967, the background was Ferrari red for the *Leafs* – to set off the Royal Navy blue of the team uniform.

I had the whole 1967 team. On another occasion I had all six NHL coaches. 1967 was the best year of all, too. It was the last of four Stanley Cups for the *Leafs* in six years... and their very last Cup, ever.

Whatever catastrophe deprived me of my original collection of cards, I no longer recall. My suspicion is that it was neither fire nor theft nor even alien abduction... but simply neglect. The time usually comes when young men foolishly throw away all those things that they once treasured. For the next few years, they seek sex and money instead. Finally, they realize their error and spend the rest of their lives recovering their comic books, their toy soldiers, their bubble gum cards... their *Rosebuds*. But it is too late... too late.



or as elaborate as you want

During that period of life when I sought sex and money – acquiring very little of either, I might add – I found hockey a bore. The NHL had expanded beyond all reason, establishing teams as far away as torrid San Diego and tropical Tampa Bay, Florida, where most people are unfamiliar with any ice outside of a mixed drink. The new teams had names with no magic to conjure with, uniforms designed by board rooms and players with strange-sounding Russian or Finnish names, instead of traditional French and Polish names like *Beliveau* and *Mahovlich*. Worse, the new teams were backed with oil money, and just as the Saudi Air Force flew America's best fighter jets, the new teams of the south and west bought the contracts for Canada's best players. It was all wrong, wrong, wrong.

But, since the *Leafs* never won any more, why bother? The Game was never more pointless.

Unfortunately, hockey wouldn't go away just because I wished it would. With the longer playing seasons,

it was in the news from about September to May. Despite the lousy record of the home team, one of my sisters became an ardent fan, and was determined to watch every game. Once more, I fled to the privacy of my own space, but I could never get entirely away from the sounds of out-of-tune trumpets and “he *shoots*, he *scores!*” Though still living in Mom’s basement, I was grown up then. I had my own TV, and didn’t have to watch with the family. If I turned *Newhart* _or *WKRP* up loud enough, it drowned out the alien American accents announcing The Game upstairs.

I was learning to despise hockey.

I have my own place today, of course. The crappy black & white TV in the fake wood-grained tin box that I bought for \$25 from the Sally Ann has long since been replaced by a modern 30-inch colour set. No more sounds of The Game invade my privacy from upstairs or next door. Instead, as I pass my neighbors in the hall they greet me with, “*Sabres beat Coyotes last night in Phoenix!*” What? A picture pops into my head of the U.S. cavalry with swords attacking a pack of ravenous canids. A moment later my mental framework shifts, and I realize that the African woman in the maroon and green jilbab is talking about a hockey game. There is no getting away from The Game.

What drives me right up the wall, though, is the twice-weekly broadcast of the Game, increasing to *every night of the week* during Playoffs.

I don’t *have* to watch *Hockey Night in Canada* anymore, but I’m a news-junkie and depend on watching CBC’s *The National* every night at ten. CBC is also the *only* channel that I can pick up without cable. And just as sure as God makes little black pucks, for half the year the news is pushed into an unpredictable time slot! Isn’t it massively irresponsible to allow something as ephemeral as an athletic event to take precedence over the news? It steams me up, it does! Has one of Japan’s leaky reactors exploded? Has the United States declared war against Iran? Has it been discovered that Obama is actually a Sikh and was born in Canada? No matter... the CBC must satisfy the public’s need to watch 12 overpaid jocks batter at a piece of rubber for two hours! When *that’s* over, they show a second game that was played in another part of the country. Between the two games, there’s often an awkward ninety minutes or so that can only be filled by an all-important after-game analysis, interviews with sweaty team captains and coaches, and a half-hour of listening to a jackass named Cherry shoot his mouth off in a yellow-and-mauve-check jacket that would shame a circus clown.

We’ll just let the world find out what happened that *really* matters whenever there’s a spare moment in the schedule, eh?

And yet, I love hockey despite all this. It may not be the *only* thing that makes Canadians “not Americans,” but it’s the easiest thing to explain to them. It’s all very well to cite the French Canadian experience, the fact that we never had Indian Wars or Slavery, but by then their eyes glaze over and you know you’ve lost your audience. Hell, I don’t sound all that convincing even to me. So how can I *love* The Game in spite of hating it?

Incredible as it may seem, it’s because of 8-inch action figures.

There have been action figures for decades. At first, it was a re-packaging ploy to make playing with dolls acceptable for boys. After a few years, G.I. Joe and his imitators shrank from fully-articulated 12-inch figures to 4 inch pygmies with far more limited movement. In the 1980s, McFarlane Toys revolutionized the action figure by returning to a larger size again. Their 8-inch figures weren’t very poseable, but were far more detailed, and clearly aimed at young adult collectors. The initial series portrayed Todd McFarlane’s own comic book creations. Later series included The Simpsons, popular rock bands like The Beatles, combat soldiers, and – here’s the point – *notable sports figures*. Basketball, baseball and football figures do nothing for me. But hockey players caught my eye immediately.

I refused to buy any, of course. I don’t *like* hockey, remember? But I so much *wanted* to take one home, anyway! The detail was incredible. Phil Esposito really looked like the Boston player. The uniforms of Chicago *Blackhawks* and Montreal *Canadiens* were perfect, and accurate to the era. Players were sculpted in dramatic action poses on a slab of “ice,” complete with a reproduction of the his personal stick – each uniquely taped! – and a puck.

If I couldn’t buy one, I reasoned, I could buy them for my sister Karen, who was the hockey nut of the family, and *still* satisfy my collecting urge.

So I did. Wal-Mart was a wonderful place to buy toys at the time. You could buy anything you wanted... eventually. Just wait for the fad to die down and for production over-runs to turn up at Wal-Mart for a fraction of the price. Hockey players that were normally \$15 to \$20 were sometimes

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as cheap as \$2.

It goes without saying that I bought nothing else from Wal-Mart. It is *just as* politically correct to snap up any loss-leaders and leave the profit-makers to rot on the shelves, as it is to *not* shop there at all.

For three years, I surprised my sister at Christmas with two or three of these remaindered collectables. Since I never watched The Game on TV, I hardly knew who they were – Joe Thornton? Paul Kariya? Sheldon Souray? Who the hell were *they*? I couldn't even recognize some of the team uniforms. Was that a shark on that logo, and what could a mountain peak possibly stand for? I don't even know what *that* orange and blue blur is, let alone what team it represents.

I would hardly have chosen those particular players, of course, and simply couldn't care less about parvenu teams than hadn't existed forty years ago. Maybe *nobody* did, and that's why Wal-Mart had them marked down.

Just when I thought I had my Christmas shopping problems solved for sister Karen, she handed me a

Sport

surprise. Her immaculately furnished and stylishly accentuated suburban split-level home didn't have room for vulgar plastic toy figures.

Oh... Who knew? And I had another half-dozen stored in the closet for the next two Christmases!

That was how I got a head start in collecting hockey figures myself. It's also how I decided that perhaps I don't hate hockey quite so much after all.

The good thing was that McFarlane honoured a great many hockey players with collectable figures, including some of the greats of the '60s and '70s that I remembered. Better still, in those days, players didn't wear helmets and plastic visors. You could see the puck-scarred faces of Stan Mikita, Maurice Richard and Johnny Bower, in *all* their rugged glory.

Whenever I sit down to a meal, I need only look up from my ravioli or beans and there they are, on the shelves above the kitchen table. Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull, Mark Messier, Wayne Gretsky... the greats of the All Canadian Sport, the knights of The Game, the Warriors of *Hockey Night in Canada*. At moments like that... how can I *not* love them?





In my early days as a fan, I thought I was destined to be a part of a wider European fandom. I discovered fandom in 1980 when I was studying French at university. I then went on to do a postgraduate course in French and German for marketing, and followed this up with learning Spanish. Equipped with all this linguistic baggage, I was naturally keen to find out what was out there in Europe. I already knew that the French were keen on science fiction and had their own vibrant SF *bande dessinée* culture, but fandom as we knew it in the UK, seemed harder to find. In fact the only person trading fanzines that I could discover was Pascal Thomas, who sent me *A&A Infos*, a lively genzine full of reviews, news, and opinion, followed later by the more fannish *Dernier Salon Avant L'Autoroute*. All in French of course, which was part of the attraction for me. I might be a mere newcomer who'd missed the glory days of British fandom in the 1970s, but at least I could read French fanzines. I did try for some German ones too, and picked up an issue of Waldemar Kummig's *Munich Roundup* from a fanzine table, but didn't find it too exciting (maybe it was too dated, or contained too much English material in translation for my elitist tastes!)

Anyway, undaunted by my relative lack of success in finding traces of European fandom in print, I determined to track it to its source, and go to the 1982 Eurocon in Mönchengladbach. Apparently I was the only British person there apart from John and Marjorie Brunner (though over the years I've erased this memory, and somehow thought that the usual crowd of British Eurocon attendees must have been there, or at the very least Paul Dormer and Bridget Wilkinson). Marjorie Brunner wrote it up for *Matrix* but the only intersection between her convention experience and mine seems to have been John Brunner's guest of honour speech. Much to my surprise, Marjorie reported that there were over 1,000 members, and that it was all being filmed for German TV. I remember it being quite small, and disorganised as you can see from what I wrote in *This Never Happens 2*:

I knew the reputation of European conventions for seriousness; I knew that Eurocon VII was being held in

the local grammar school; I knew, after being sent off to sightsee in Mönchengladbach (!) by the committee for the first afternoon that the organisation might not be very dynamic, but I'd neither suspected nor contemplated the full enormity of the situation: there was NO BAR.

The programme made very few concessions to the concept of Eurocon. It was predominantly in German, except for a couple of undubbed American films, and a talk or two from East Europeans read out in English. However an illusion of internationalism did pervade the lectures (for that, in effect, was what they were), which seemed to have only two titles: "Science fiction in XXX" or "Czechoslovakian (for which read any other East European country, except Albania) Science Fiction". Most were overviews of some description, at their worst a sterile list of unspellable names, at best a propaganda exercise, like the speech from the eminent Russian delegate (I don't know what he was eminent in, but he incontrovertibly radiated eminence!), read stumblingly in English by his interpreter. When he wasn't singing the praises of the Moscow S.F. circle he busily stressed optimism over the future, world peace and the dawning of the age of reason.¹

John Brunner's speech was a bit more lively and turned into a debate over nuclear disarmament, and a good old bit of Margaret Thatcher bashing. But the main interest for me was meeting up with other fans from round the world and hanging out with them in various cafes. I met Pascal Thomas, and another up and coming European fan-editor, Roelof Goudriaan from the Netherlands (whose fanzine title *Shards of Babel* I've stolen for this article). There was also John Foyster from Australia, over to sell the 1985 Australian Worldcon bid, a number of Americans, and Ahrvid Engholm, who was wearing a beanie and seemed to represent all that was strange and anachronistic about Swedish fandom. We formed an international, if rather English-speaking

¹ According to Marjorie Brunner, this was Alim Keshokov. I've looked him up online, and he appears to have been a poet, and a deputy of the supreme Soviet, but with no obvious connection to science fiction.



gang, and although the convention was nothing like any of the British conventions I'd been to, it felt like I was breaking out from my comfortably British niche, and that I would very much like to go to more European conventions.

Two years later I did go to a Beneluxcon in Ghent. This event was much less earnest. There were more British fans there – Kate Solomon and Malcolm Davies who I knew from London fandom, Dave & Jenny Raggett (who I was later to know very well in Bristol) and maybe even Paul Dormer! I'd been travelling round Europe before the convention, and stayed with Roelof Goudriaan, so there was some continuity with Eurocon, but my main memories of the convention are going sightseeing with the British fans, and late night parties at the university halls of residence.

But I didn't go back to a Eurocon (at least not one that wasn't part of an Eastercon or Worldcon), until June this year when I went to Eurocon 2011 in Stockholm. As I prepared for the trip this summer, I found myself wondering why not? My interest in Europe and European languages has never totally disappeared, though it did get dented by many years of trying to learn Russian, and then never finding the right moment to go to Russia (somehow post-Communist Russia never shaped up as well as I'd expected). But in fannish terms, my internationalism was highjacked, first by tales of Australian fandom (John Foyster, followed by Justin Ackroyd) and then by meeting American fans on my TAFF trip. By comparison, European fandom seemed a little dull and worthy. I couldn't forget that high school in Mönchengladbach, and all those talks about Eastern Europe.

But in recent years, European fandom has approached me from a different direction, somewhat to the north of my linguistic competence, in the form of a bunch of enthusiastic Swedes. The spectre of Arhvid Engholm, fan feuds and excessive use of the fannish "h" has been long banished by numerous Scandinavian room

parties, and getting to know Swedish fans like Lennart Uhlin, Anders Holmström and Ylva Spångberg has made me curious to see Swedish fandom in its natural habitat. Lennart in particular seems to have bonded with Doug, and they are now best-buddies at conventions. I think Doug will be heart-broken if Lennart moves to Bostwana! So when the Stockholm Eurocon came up, we decided to make a holiday of it, visit Sweden and attend the convention.

One of the reasons why I've never been to Sweden, or indeed any of the rest of Scandinavia before is because I can't speak the language. I know that didn't stop me from going to Holland and Belgium, but technically French is one of the languages of Belgium, even if no-one in thanks you for speaking it in Ghent or Bruges, and the project to learn Dutch for the Den Haag Worldcon was defeated not so much by lack of application (though there was that) than the unwillingness of the locals to speak anything but English. Not to mention my fear of accidentally mispronouncing words with a German accent. No, the Netherlands is a place where it feels genuinely impolite to try to speak the language. Of course I've been to lots of other places where I can't speak the language either, like Asia, Eastern Europe, Greece and even parts of Tyneside, so I thought I'd got over this particular complex. But somehow with Sweden it was different. All my Swedish friends could speak English, so it felt like I should make an effort. Even Lucy Huntzinger was learning Swedish, and would be at the convention, demonstrating her expertise, while I, the one-time linguist, would be left on the sidelines. But inevitably I ran out of time, and after getting sidetracked by the peculiarities of the Swedish noun system, didn't make much headway with learning anything actually useful ifor day to day life.

So when I arrived in Sweden it was with a sense that "hej!" and "tack tack" were not going to be enough to get me very far. Immediately I developed a complex about the superior (I imagined) way that the Swedes spoke English to me. Yes, we've bothered to learn your language, they seemed to say, but you don't know ours. That's when I realised that I was never going to win. English has become so dominant, that anywhere I go, people will speak English far better than I speak their language. I will never shine as a linguist, because to a Swede, the fact that I speak French, German and Spanish is irrelevant, I'm still an English person who hasn't learnt their language. They only have one language to learn to be understood outside their culture, I have hundreds.

While I was struggling to accept the death of my inner linguist, I found myself a bit underwhelmed by Stock-



holm. It seemed like a pleasant enough Northern European city, though with rather high beer prices, but nothing special after Prague, Berlin and Dresden. Also the long hours of light, which I had imagined would be a bonus, turned out to be a real pain as I found myself waking up at four in the morning to broad daylight, and unable to get back to sleep properly. But gradually Stockholm began to win me over. Maybe it was the boat trip out to the Viking settlement on Birka and feeling that I was passing not islands but submerged mountains? Or perhaps it was the bike tour round the island of Djurgården, a nature reserve a stone's throw from the city centre? Or seeing elks and reindeer at Skansen, the nineteenth century theme park that Lennart took us to on our first day? Or the daytrip out to the Swedish archipelago, where we passed literally hundreds of islands? Stockholm may not have the tortured history of Berlin, or the middle-European prettiness of Prague, but it has an outdoors life that makes it surprisingly green for a city, masses of water, and a central area that's pleasant and easy to get around in.

Arriving in Stockholm a few days before the convention was definitely a good move. It helped us get our bearings, and not feel torn between convention and sightseeing. Besides, it gave us time to go to the SF bookshop where Lennart works, and Monks Bar, where Anders is paid to hone his beer expertise, and which was the venue for the Thursday night pre-convention pub meet. When the committee advertised this meeting, they were only expecting 20 or 30 fans, rather than the hordes that eventually turned up. By the time we arrived, the pub was so crowded that after scouring around inside for seats, noting many familiar faces from UK fandom, we retreated outside. This was a good move, as we had the chance to talk to a couple of Danish fans, then Tobes turned up, followed by Lennart, and Clarrie and Tim Maguire from Bristol. Gradually, through steady vigilance and other fannish powers of mind control we managed to acquire enough chairs to seat our ever growing party. And finally all those extra hours of daylight came in handy, as we sat under the blue skies of late evening, trying the strange beers Anders periodically brought out to us, and talking to random international fans.

The next day was raining, which didn't matter since we were going to spend it all indoors anyway. With the German high school experience still in mind, I was relieved to find that the convention was being held in the local student's union, and that yes, there was a bar! Indeed, a bar which sold beer at far cheaper prices than anywhere else we'd found in Stockholm. And the programme was a far cry from the ponderous formality of my previous Eurocon experience. There were several streams with a range of panels, speeches, in-

terviews, quizzes, workshops and other activities. There were three writer guests of honour: Elizabeth Bear, an American writer who I didn't know much about, but who turned out to be an interesting and engaging speaker; Ian McDonald whose books I feel I should like more than I do (though perhaps I just haven't read the right one yet?) and John-Henri Holmberg, a Swedish science fiction critic, better known now for his connections to Stieg Larsson. John-Henri seemed to have some quite pessimistic views of present day science fiction and fandom, and didn't rate many current writers (apart from Ian Macdonald) by comparison with the New Wave and feminist writers of the 60s and 70s. Holmberg's written a two volume book exploring his critical views on science fiction - which unfortunately is only available in Swedish. This turned out to be one of the only flaws of the mainly English-language programming. I was impressed and envious at how well the fans from different countries expressed themselves in their second language, but they would keep talking about these really interesting sounding books, which unfortunately hadn't been translated into English. But then maybe that means there is still some point in learning languages after all!

The convention worked its guests pretty hard – each had a GoH speech slot, and also an interview, as well as appearing on numerous panels. But they seemed to work their unofficial guest Charlie Stross even harder. Charlie was just at the convention as a fan, but being a big name, he was soon set up with a signing session in Lennart's bookshop and given copious space on the programme, along with his Finnish friend from the Edinburgh writer's group, up and coming writer Hannu Rajaniemi, author of *The Quantum Thief*. There were some excellent panel items on the main programme using the guests and other attendees like Cheryl Morgan, Kari Sperring and many very able and interesting fans from other parts of Europe to talk about science, gender and writing and pursue an on-going dialogue about the meaning and importance of science fiction. While that might sound a bit heavy, the panels themselves were very lively, but somehow kept returning to what makes science fiction different from other literature, in particular its engagement with the process of change. There were also some good panels about European fandom which I was sorry to miss, particularly the late night one on Swedish fandom which if Doug's description was to be trusted, was a free-flowing exchange of stories and repartee from many legendary figures of Swedish fandom.

The programme was good enough to not to feel at a loss for entertainment, but there was also a very healthy social side to the convention, as there was

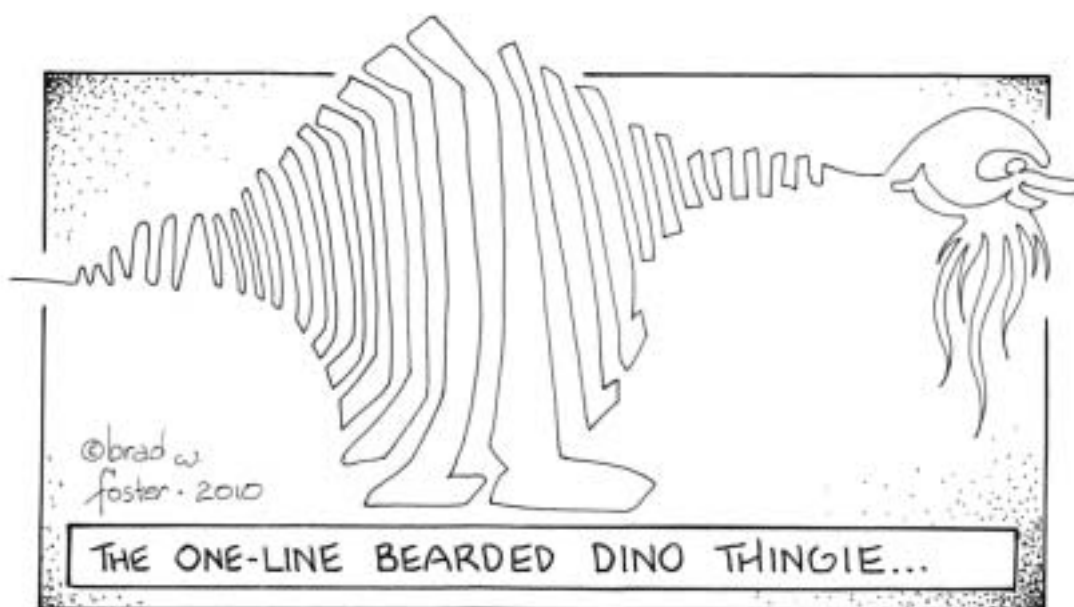
plenty of space to sit around in the bar, or hang out at the tables next to the dealers area. This layout and the 45 minute running time in the one hour programme slots made it easy to mingle; I soon caught up with the British contingent who were out in force, Eurocon stalwarts like Dave Lally, and Bridget Wilkinson, first-timers like Ron Gemmell, various members of the Plokta cabal, a plane-load of fans from Cambridge, and definitely Paul Dormer this time. I didn't get to talk to Lucy Huntzinger as much as I'd hoped as she was commuting in from some beautifully rural part of Stockholm, but she recounted how she'd already had a chance to use her Swedish on the flight over. Also, as the weekend progressed, we found ourselves socializing with various Swedes, Finns and others, particularly at the Saturday night party. The party was actually a number of bid parties, all in one room, with their own stalls, offering free food and drink, such as Croatian fortified wine, Pimms, Schnapps, salt liquorice, herring and other weird and wonderful concoctions. The parties were still going strong at two in the morning, when we finally forced ourselves away in an attempt to get back to bed before the early morning sun came up again! I was surprised and impressed to see that the T-Bahn was still running.

The Dead Dog Party on Sunday night was meant to be held in the Belgium Bar near the main station, but as with the pub meet, the venue proved hopelessly inadequate for the size of the turn-out, so latecomers like us were shunted over into the English Pub, there to suffer the indignity of an English Pub Quiz (oh, the shame!). Jukka Halme, Fan Guest of Honour from Finland commented that the Swedes never were any good at organizing Dead Dog Parties, but I think it was more

the sheer size of the convention that defeated them, as there were over 700 attendees, rather than the expected 300-400.

In the course of all this socializing we managed to talk to quite a few Swedish fans, and other Scandinavians, and discovered inter alia that Finncons were free (subsidized by the government), and that some of the Finns thought they'd like to run a British Eastercon in Brussels (now, if they could get a government subsidy for that, they might be on to a winner!) We also learnt a lot about Swedish fandom, not least that Bellis the half-Greek Swede is a fantastic auctioneer, and can talk bouncers into letting a motley crew of fans into their establishment when the pubs close, and Kaj truly is the king! The longer we stayed, the more we wondered why we didn't go to more European conventions. It might not have been quite as alien an experience as my first Eurocon, but Europe has changed a lot since then, and I suspect so has the role of the Eurocon. Nevertheless it was good to see so much enthusiasm, experience how other fans run conventions, and hear about science fiction from a different set of cultural viewpoints. We enjoyed it so much that we've signed up for the next Swecon, and are wondering whether we could make it to Zagreb for the next Eurocon.

Doug, inevitably, wants to move to Sweden, and I'm trying to see if it's possible to learn Swedish just from watching Wallander, but I think it might be a while before I can hope to read the works of John-Henri Holmberg in the original Swedish, or make myself understood on a Swedish language panel. But I can dream! Maybe my inner linguist is not quite dead after all.



Ian Millsted and I had a fairly serious conversation about genre fiction, and in particular Westerns and Science Fiction at Clarrie O'Callaghan and Tim Maguire's wedding. As a follow up he sent Head! the following as a loc. We felt it was so good we've promoted it to full article status. (Doug)



There has always been an overlap between the western and science fiction, both in personnel, such as Leigh Brackett who wrote highly regarded western screenplays, and in themes but we often look at the western in literature as a lesser thing.

In the film 'The Third Man' (1949), the main character, played by Joseph Cotton, is a pulp western writer. Early on he is invited to give a talk to an ex-pat literary circle who show polite disdain when he gives his favourite author as Zane Grey. There are reasons why this would not have worked had the pulp author been a science fiction writer whose favourite author was, say, Edgar Rice Burroughs. Firstly, the Cotton character is an American in a British film with an Austrian setting. A western writer reminds us of the western hero. He represents the lone traveller in a potentially hostile territory although he is somewhat more bewildered and hopeless than the usual western protagonist; perhaps due to Graham Greene wanting to subvert the idea of a hero figure in which I don't think he ever really believed. Secondly, westerns were hugely popular in 1949 and the audience would side with the writer of their favoured genre against the snooty ladies and military types. A writer of science fiction would have been seen at the time as a bit weird.

I have a theory that different genres each have their own ideal media form. The superhero story, for example, works best in comics. That is not to say that there are not good superhero stories in other formats (the Wild Cards series

in books or some decent films in recent years) but that comics are their natural format. Science fiction, for me, works best in prose form. I'm sure there are many good western novels (I've read fewer than a dozen western books although that includes 'True Grit' which is now getting some well deserved attention) but for me the western has always been best suited to the cinema screen.

In the 1950's the western was hugely popular in all media forms. Radio had the Lone Ranger and, in Britain, Riders of the Range. There were masses of western comics and novels. But, it was in film that the western achieved respectability and status. All leading film actors in America at the time made westerns which was not the case with science fiction films of the era. While I personally feel that a film like 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' benefits from having a non-star like Kevin McCarthy in the lead I'm sure the producers would have jumped at the chance to have someone like James Stewart starring. Would an A list director like Howard Hawks have been happy to let another film maker have the credit for his work, as he did with 'The Thing', on one of his westerns, say 'Rio Bravo'? It seems unlikely and we know that he never did. John Ford publicly described himself as a director of westerns, although he made many other types of films, and was held in the highest esteem by his peers. The same recognition was not extended to someone like Jack Arnold who, at one time, seemed to specialise in science fiction. The western was mainstream.

Something happened. The western as a mass genre died. Despite attempts to keep the genre fresh by doing realism ('Will Penny'), comedy ('Blazing Saddles'), more violence ('The Wild Bunch') and the influx of spaghetti westerns, by the end of the 1970's the western was largely a thing of the past and viewed as a curiosity when one surfaced. Long running television series such as 'Bonanza' and 'Gunsmoke' were cancelled in 1973 and 1975 after 14 seasons and 20 seasons respectively. In 1976 John Wayne made his last film, a western, and Clint Eastwood released 'The Outlaw Josey Wales', after which he would not return to the genre for nine years. Most bookshops in Britain stopped having a western section, usually only a shelf by then anyway, by the mid 1980's.

As a genre, the western seemed to have had a complete life cycle. The early examples are exuberant and youthful. The series westerns of the 1930's and 1940's starring the likes of Roy Rogers and Gene Autrey are fast paced and confident if not exactly subtle. We then get the more mature studies such as 'High Noon' (1952), 'The Searchers' (1956) and the original '3:10 to Yuma' (1957). The final phase of the western seems to be openly acknowledging it's impending death: the last ride of 'The Wild Bunch'(1969); the fatalistic ending to 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'(1969); John Wayne daring to be old and fat in 'True Grit'(1969) or even to die in 'The Cowboys' (1972) or 'The Shootist' (1976). If science fiction is a literature of ideas then the western is a literature of the elements and the particular environment of the traditional setting. The historical period of the cowboy lasted ten to fifteen years. The fictional western, always based more on an accepted mythology than reality, lasted a good deal longer.

Genres can die. I don't think this will happen to sf, which in any case is more a collection of genres and settings than a single, identifiable genre, but we do know that publishers are not too keen on real sf. We may find ourselves taking machetes to the ever grow-

ing piles of high and dark fantasy to find increasingly rare mass market science fiction. I don't think it will come to that but I do think it is possible. We might also reflect that the quality of the relatively few westerns made recently has been of exceptionally high. I mention the Russell Crowe version of '3:10 to Yuma', 'The Assassination of Jesse James' and the recent remake of 'True Grit' as supporting evidence. I've not seen the 'Jonah Hex' movie but feel free to throw that against me if you want to knock down the case I'm trying to make.

There was always an element of science fiction that has been westerns in space, whether it be 'Star Trek' being pitched as Wagon Train to the stars, in order to get commissioned, or, more recently 'Avatar'. At a deeper level there is the question of how much we can know about ourselves through either genre. Did Jack Williamson, travelling in a covered wagon as a seven year old, develop his sense of wonder looking up at the sky?

Cormac McCarthy has written in both westerns and science fiction, although some would qualify that statement. Would the following feel out of place in either genre?

They rode out on the high prairie where they slowed the horses to a walk and the stars swarmed around them out of the blackness. They heard somewhere in that tenantless night a bell that tolled and ceased where no bell was and they rode out on the round dais of the earth which alone was dark and no light to it and which carried their figures and bore them up into the swarming stars so that they rode not under but among them and they rode at once jaunty and circumspect, like thieves newly loosed in that dark electric, like thieves in a glowing orchard, loosely jacketed against the cold and ten thousand worlds for the choosing. (All The Pretty Horses) 1992.



I don't know if the Bristol SF group was the only fan group with an "official" position for beer festival organiser, but with even Banana Wings publishing articles about beer, there's no doubting a certain synergy between beer and fandom, so we're very pleased to be able to publish this article on Mike's adventures as a C.A.M.R.A Man.

How I 'Pubbed' My Other Ish ^{by} Mike Meara

LURK: 7 issues, 1972-75, 250 quarto pages. KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE: 6 issues, 1975-78, 246 quarto pages. 11 assorted one-shots and minor zines, 1972-84, 79 mostly quarto pages. And as far as most fans know, that is the sum and extent of my fan-publishing career until I started again earlier this year. A couple of dozen zines and 575 mostly quarto pages is hardly a major chapter in The Big Book Of Fanzine Fandom.

But after this modest effort I continued to be involved in a different kind of fan-publishing, and my output in this second phase was rather more than I ever achieved as a faned: 81 regular issues, plus 3 specials, totalling 581 A4 pages. The publication in question was the monthly newsletter of the Derby Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, of which I was the editor and publisher between July 1982 and March 1989. I say "after" because although on the face of it the dates overlap a bit, in practice my printed fanac after KfN#6 in August 1978 was almost nil.

This was because my interest was moving away from science fiction fandom and towards real ale fandom. In 1978, Derby CAMRA organised its very first beer festival. Pat and I went along as customers, and were so impressed by everything we saw and tasted – or, if you insist, drank - that we started to get involved in local CAMRA activities from that point on. So when in due course the newsletter was looking for a new editor, I was the ideal candidate – or so I thought, anyway. Because there are numerous parallels between science fiction fandom and real ale fandom, I hope that the story of my editorship may be of some interest.

Most CAMRA branches publish a free (funded by advertising) magazine of real-ale-related news, typically bimonthly, available on the bar of local CAMRA-friendly hostelryes; Derby CAMRA's version is called,

unsurprisingly, DERBY DRINKER, but the Branch is unusual in also producing a newsletter specifically for local (i.e. living within the Branch area) members as opposed to the general ale-drinking public. The very first issue, which went under the rather dull title of MILD & BITTER (and still does, to the best of my knowledge) appeared in November 1975, not long after the Branch itself was formed. It and the 17 issues which followed were edited by Tim Williams, who could have been a very good fan-writer in different circumstances. (He is one of the co-writers of Derby CAMRA's annual dramatic venture, of which I wrote in A MEARA FOR OBSERVERS #5.) My immediate predecessor, Rog Robinson, another guy with (usually) a good sense of humour, did 23 issues. In between these two there were, as they say, divers hands, and so I became editor number seven. Lucky for someone, perhaps.

Tim wrote about the newsletter's early days in an article entitled "M&B: Man vs. Machine" for its special 100th issue in February 1984. I'm reproducing this article here, because both the tale and its telling are really rather fannish:

"M&B started because the redoubtable Dave Johnson bought for the Branch a duplicating machine. This was no ordinary duplicator, it was no less than an Addressograph Multilith Offset Litho Model 500, made redundant by British Celanese, before they became Courtaulds, and made people (including Dave) redundant instead.

"It was a 200lb miracle of 1950s hi-tech – solid, with scores of solid metal (bar one) high-precision gears, levers and widgeits. It came complete with gallons of operating solutions, some samples of which were murky, and looked capable of spontaneously generating some new life-form – or microbrewery porter (I don't like porter).

"Working the miracle was a monthly nightmare. To start, there was 30 minutes' basic alchemy; mixing the solutions and spilling them into the right, inaccessible, places. To finish (I'll leave out the middle bits) there was the installation of The Master. This was a special sheet of coated paper on which the typing had been done (it took me about four hours per page since mistakes could not be corrected). One end of this precious sheet hooked on easily to the rotating drum. The other was secured by a set of crocodile-like teeth, loaded by a particularly powerful spring --perforated fingernails seemed almost inevitable.

"To get the machine running, I've since learnt from countless disaster movies, was only slightly less complicated than landing a jumbo jet when the pilot's dead/drunk/made an excuse and left. There were a whole series of levers and wheels to operate in exact sequence and timing. The penalty of failure seemed a lot worse than with the jumbo -- half a day's typing would be ruined.

"The Monster of Micklover, as it later became known when Nick Meakin* (another Courtaulds casualty) had it, worked on the principle that oil (or rather, oil-based ink) and water do not mix. This long-established, scientifically irrefutable fact breaks down completely when publication deadlines are rapidly approaching. In such circumstances, but at an unpredictable moment (actually it predictably occurs at the moment you least expect it), the master gets totally smeared with ink, the blank sheets of paper get stuck to it and start to accumulate on the rotat-

ing drum, and the whole thing jams up, saved only by the slipping clutch provided for that purpose. By then it's too late -- another half-day's work ruined.

"The only way to prevent this was to crouch over the machine with finger poised over the off button, waiting for the tell-tale sounds of incipient disaster. You had at least 50 milliseconds in which to react, but I seldom made it -- partly because of the machine's strangely hypnotic rhythm, and partly because you had to keep a weather eye out for Sogat82 pickets. ("Trouble at Spondon Chapel, brothers -- only one man on that CAMRA machine, should be seven.")

"But it only really let me down once. One fine Sunday afternoon, just back from the pub, and with readable (for once) copies singing through the machine at 90 per minute, the particularly powerful spring broke. The crocodile jaws, now limp and helpless, flew out under some Newtonian force, and got jammed in the works. The slipping clutch, for reasons best known to paranormal science, failed to slip, and the one gear wheel not made from solid metal stripped its teeth.

"The repair man charged fifty quid -- a major financial burden in those days. "Oh yes", he said, "that's a special gear, it's supposed to strip if all else fails". He remembered the machine from its Celanese days as one of the best of its type. I remember it with affection too -- but only because I no longer have it."

* Nick is Tim's co-writer on the Derby CAMRA Christmas Show and, despite everything that has happened, still lives in Micklover to this day.



Nick and Tim, caricatured by Rob Gilvary for M&B 100

We've all been there – or somewhere close by. I, however, didn't go to hell in this particular handbasket, because I had my own reproductive system to offer – my rusty, or as Ned Brooks seems to think, trusty, Roneo 750. My first issue, a modest 4pp, duly appeared via this route, printed on bog-standard white duper paper and sporting a simple, letter-guide header. In it, I wrote: "The Branch has a new typewriter, on which the whole of this month's MILD & BITTER has been produced. The machine, an Adler 21 electric, is slightly middle-aged but seems to have few vices – which is more than can be said for some of us." Duper, stencils, electric typer, inappropriate humour... sounds like a fanzine.

Straight after this I had the job of producing the daily version of M&B for the Derby Beer Festival, at that time in its fifth year. If the beer festival is real ale fandom's equivalent of a convention, it's no surprise that they should both have a daily newsheet. Fortunately I had the help of Rob Gilvary, the Branch's resident artist and man of mystery, who did headers and cartoons for my three two-page issues. Not many faneds are ever lucky enough to have a tame artist. He, too, would have made a great fanartist and writer.

The festival editions of M&B had always been lightweight and frivolous, but I wanted to introduce a lighter tone to the monthly newsletter as well; in the past it had been worthy but often somewhat staid. As a group, we real ale fans might be frequently rat-arsed, but why be pofaced as well? Certain features had to be included every month, such as the minutes of the previous month's branch meeting, and contact details for the branch committee and other officers. Beyond that, I thought there was considerable scope for other kinds of material which would be too in-groupish for DERBY DRINKER, but of potential interest to branch members. After all, I reasoned, sf fans like reading about themselves in con reports, so why should real ale fans be immune to egoboo?

I didn't go as far as to change its title to GNAT'S PEE & NECTAR; that would have been too much for the traditionalists. The changes I made were smaller in scale. I immediately introduced a column to cover editorial miscellanea under the title At The Hop; the item sub-heads were usually musically-inspired in the style, all too well-known to many of you, which Greg Pickersgill once described as "relentless punning". "Another Newt-Case In Another Hall" headed an item on CAMRA's national beer festival, then in Leeds, and "Not-So-Magic Bus" announced the cancellation of a coach trip to it due to lack of support. Fortunately there were enough Branch members with a sense of humour, who supported me and even offered material, such as a series of spoof National Good Beer Guide symbols: one showing a pie with a line through it was captioned "The pork pies in

this pub are used as carbon-dating standards by the local archaeological society", and another, depicting a bird, bore the legend "Abusive Parrot". These members included Ivor Clissold, a published writer, and Colston Crawford, who in his spare time was a journalist for the local papers, as well as the aforementioned Tim and Nick.

Pseudonymous bylines, mostly me, included Lunch-time O'Brews, Ale Seizer, Phil McCarrykeg, Watt Shaws and Desmond Linemup, the latter reserved for sports news – usually nothing more strenuous than an inter-branch quiz, though sometimes a cricket match. I also used some stylistic tricks borrowed from my faned days, such as the strikethrough, that humorous effect which was so easy to achieve with a typewriter, near-impossible with today's word-processors. I also used interlineations, inspired by HY-PHEN, of which my favourite was:

"Do your kidneys a favour and drink Pils – it's 75% of the way there already."

To keep the traditionalists happy, with issue 83 I went back to coloured paper, and restored Rob Gilvary's original masthead depicting the title over a pair of handpumps couchant. The paper was still good old 80gsm duper paper, though. Later, I was asked to bring back Rob's border as well, admittedly a nice design showing malt and hops, but the only practical way to achieve this was to switch to litho-printed blanks, one design for the cover and another for the continuation pages, onto which I then printed the text by duplication as before. This worked reasonably well, though the offset was worse on the less absorbent litho paper.

In issue 86 I had to announce the shock mid-term resignation of Rog Robinson, who had continued as Branch chairman after giving up the M&B editorship. Gafia had struck, and for much the same reasons as it does in sf fandom. Rog had been a "branch stalwart" for years, had taken on too much, had become vaguely resentful without really understanding why. All that was needed was the tiny little thing that would make him snap. In Rog's case it was one unruly Branch meeting too many. I took over from him on a temporary basis, and was re-elected the following year. As time went on, Pat and I demonstrated that we had learned nothing from (recent) history, as we variously took on the roles of Membership Secretary, Social Secretary, Branch Secretary and various Beer Festival-related tasks (chairman, treasurer, beer order) before we too imitated the action of the weasel and went "Pop!"

In issue 88, Tim Williams reported that the number of M&B subscribers had declined to around 90. Was it something I wrote? Maybe, but Branch membership and meeting attendance were also heading south, so I don't think so. CAMRA was successful, and complacency had set in. 90 was a good enough circulation for a fanzine, anyway.



Chairman Mike through the eyes of Rob Gilvary

But it wasn't all beer and skittles. The arts got a look in too. Under the title "Alehouse Rock" I noted that "a Branch member ... has mentioned to me a couple of times the idea of Derby CAMRA forming its own musical ensemble (or "group" as we headbangers call it). Recalling his own modest prowess on the guitar – he bought Bert Weedon's "Play In A Day" book, only to discover that the day in question was July 23rd 1959 – your editor's response was guarded, to say the least." How times haven't changed, eh?

The aforementioned 100th issue was professionally printed and had a specially-drawn cover from the ever-more-elusive Mr Gilvary, featuring caricatures of dozens of "branch stalwarts" – all very fannish, really - and contributions within from no less than ten of them.

The Branch's social trips by minibus usually went well, but one, jointly with Nottingham Branch to Warwick, was a cock-up of catastrophic proportions: not only did the bus not turn up, neither did Nottingham Branch. The assembled toppers made the best of a bad job with a pub-crawl in not-very-faroff Derby, which I wrote up (under yet another pseudonym) as though we had actually been to Warwick, using anagrams of Derby pub names with suitably spurious descriptions: the White Horse became Short Hewie, named after "a 14th-century dwarf whose noxious habit of vomiting on the heads of passers-by from the battlements of the castle would hardly have made him welcome at Tuesday Socials". As one of the participants didn't say: "It was so good that I can't even remember getting on the coach."

Unbidden, various Branch members began offering write-ups of their own personal real ale adventures up and down the land, and even beyond. This was a time, remember, when the widespread availability of real ale was still new and wonderful. I started an irregular column called Travellers' (T)ales to accommodate them. I'm sure some of these people had never in their lives before written anything for publication, but the standard was really pretty good, and most of what I got just needed a little editorial tweaking.

There were also minicons to be reported: CRASH (the Committee Real Ale Summer Holiday) and its baby brother CRAPU (the Committee Real Ale Piss-Up). This was also the day of the Overniter, where a dozen of us would go somewhere in a minibus, get pissed in pubs, stay overnight, and do it all again the day after. A bit like a con, then.

By 1985 I had managed to persuade the Branch to buy me, I mean itself, a computer. That was the good news. The bad news was that it was an Amstrad PPC512 – the luggable one with the built-in, flipup screen. With word-processing (Tasword, I think) and with my newly-acquired (though very secondhand) Roneo 370 electronic stencil-cutter, which I had coveted since my faned days, this motley bunch of kit dragged M&B into a whole new arena of potential disasters. All this I reported to the stunned masses in issue 122 under the title "The Half-Cutting Edge of Technology". By issue 154, we even had charts, of various stats from the recent beer festival!

In issue 125 I had the wonderful (at the time) idea of

subheading every item with the title of a well-known (to me, at least) science fiction book. Thus Pat's report on the previous year's social activities became "The 1,000-Year Plan" and the agenda for the next Branch meeting "All Judgement Fled". After almost four years in the job, perhaps I was losing it. Perhaps? Definitely.

Although my last issue as editor was six months away, I'd announced my decision to stand down as early as issue 155. A bit of simple arithmetic had revealed that if I went on as far as number 161, I would have done more issues than all the previous six editors put together, and that was a pleasing thought (the issues, not the editors). I was still involved with the Branch, in charge of pub information and co-editor of DERBY DRINKER, but perhaps gafia was starting to nibble my toes. However, a successor was not immediately forthcoming, and in issue 159 I had to issue a stern warning that I Really Did Mean It.

Eventually a sucker, sorry, volunteer was found, and having negotiated a suitably modest price with the Branch I duly handed everything – stencils, ink, paper, yes, even the duper and stencil-cutter - over to one Richard Green. Known to the Branch as "Dipstick", he appeared to be, and indeed was, utterly bemused and baffled by all the technology, old and new, and didn't last long in the job. Neither did that particular batch of technology.

In issue 161 I thanked almost 40 people who'd written for me over the years, and confidently asserted that my record of 81 issues would never be broken. I was wrong.

Richard's successor Gareth Stead surpassed me easily, and will have produced over 250 issues by now if he's still in the job. He wasn't a patch on me as a writer or editor, but I have to admit he did have stamina. A few years back, M&B started to go electronic to save time and money – another parallel with sf fandom – and about a year ago I stopped being a CAMRA member altogether, having long ago retreated to the back benches, so how the old rag fares today I sadly have no idea.

Naturally I kept all my back numbers – no-one else's, though – and in looking through them again for the purpose of writing this, I came to a completely different conclusion from Tim, who did a similar thing for the 100th issue. He said: "When I re-read my much-hoarded issue 1 of MILD & BITTER, I really was expecting to find some hidden gems, well worth quoting ... but no." I, by contrast, found treasure: fan-art of a kind, more beer-related puns than a compassionate man such as myself could burden you with, scurrilous gossip and near-slandorous accusations that I'm amazed I got away with, and a lot of bloody good humorous writing from numerous pens, all sauced with a generous helping of sheer lunatic nonsense.

Time flies like an arrow, but history trudges round in circles, which is partly why I'm back here pubbing my ish once again. I remember the M&B editorship with affection – but perhaps only because I no longer have it.





Edited by *Christina*

Hello and welcome to the letter column, the part of the fanzine where we discover if anyone can remember the last issue. Luckily Doug's article on gaming seemed to make a bit of an impression, so where better to begin a discussion on the geography of virtual space than over on the far side of the world (or the near side if you happen to be reading this in the antipodes)?

Tim Jones, 87 Ellice St., Mount Victoria, Wellington, New Zealand

I enjoyed all the articles in this issue, including the timebinding TAFF report, but the article that really got me thinking was Doug's piece on Space/Non-space. My gaming knowledge is much more spotty than Doug's, but on winter evenings this year, I've enjoyed escaping into the sunlit worlds of Jak and Daxter (yes, the original - the one with grass and plants, not urban squalor) and DragonQuest 8. It's the ability to explore new territories, even if they are virtual territories, that I enjoy in these games, and it mirrors my behaviour in real life. Whenever I go for a walk, I like to include at least a small section of new territory, so I can feel like an explorer in real life. I apply the same approach to virtual spaces.

Although I prefer walking in the woods that begin about fifty metres from our house, built spaces — Ballard's hospitals, hotels, motorways and airports — aren't excluded from my exploratory urges. Runways and six-lane highways are not prudent places to explore, but on the fringes of every airport, beneath the concrete and steel of every overpass, there are always forlorn but enticing spaces where life struggles to reassert itself: and, as we have seen when partially abandoned cities such as Detroit fold back on themselves, it doesn't take long for the most imposing of human structures to succumb to a Ballardian mix of entropy and chlorophyll.

You mention that Marc Augé theorises that place held more meaning for humans before the modern era and the wide availability of long-distance travel. You then

go on to say that this detachment from place has accelerated with the expansion of information on place accessible through the Internet.

I agree with the first part of that proposition, but I'm not so sure about the second part. Pre-Internet, one could find out about a place in a guidebook; now, one can read its history, look at images, watch it on video, and possibly traverse it in a virtual flyover. I live a long way from the rest of the world, and have neither the budget nor the inclination for a lot of long-distance travel. I find Greenland fascinating, but it's most unlikely I will ever visit Greenland. Despite that, I can get to know (about) places in Greenland to a level of detail that would have been impossible even five years ago.

I would never pretend that this "remote access" to a place in any way matches visiting the place itself; but then, visiting somewhere for a few days is a poor substitute to living there for a long time and getting to know it throughout the cycles of the seasons and the years. Nevertheless, I think the Internet can allow an increased engagement with place; and, given present economic conditions and the likely constraints on the growth of international aviation, that sort of remote engagement may come to be an increasingly common substitute for visiting in person.

A bit like attending a virtual Corflu, perhaps, which Doug and I did this February? It was certainly a weird experience, but fun in its own way, and much less heavy on the carbon footprint, bank balance and sleep deprivation than the real thing.

Jerry Kaufman (JAKaufman@aol.com)

Doug, your article on "Space/Non-space" goes all over into interesting territories. But tangentially it reminded me of Third Place. There's a book about this concept, that people have two main places in their lives: home and work. (Broad generalization, yes - I have this all at third hand.) They also have, or need, a third place, where community happens. The town square, the church or other place of worship, the favorite diner. There's a fellow here, an owner and



developer of small shopping malls, who's adopted that concept and tried to create, with some success, environments that will be this third place. His first effort was called Crossroads Commons - he took a mall and added a stage, an open area for seating and a lot of small over-the-counter restaurants. There's a large used bookstore there, too. (The restaurants are almost all ethnic and either unique or part of small, local chains.)

His second and third attempts he called Third Place Books - one is pretty near to us and has similar elements to Crossroads, but only five food places. The third one has only one sitdown restaurant in the back and is primarily a bookstore, But there's a pub downstairs and we've been holding Fans with Beers there for several years now. If you're ever back in town...

Some day soon, Jerry, I hope! If the world economic system survives long enough!

Jim Mowatt 273The Rowans, Milton, Cambridge CB24 6ZA

There was something odd happening to me as I read Doug Bell's 'Travels Into Several Remote Nations Of The World.' Various words and phrases started jumping out at me as being incredibly significant, or remarkable, or unusual in some way. It was like a steady babble of conversation interspersed with the random chiming of a bell. OK, thinks I. This feels a bit strange. I shall attempt to tame it with a diagram showing its impact factor upon me. Then I realise how upsetting to academics the words impact factor may be so I decide upon impact peaks instead. So here goes:

Thanks, Jim. It's good to have the stats to prove that Doug was more impressed by elk sausage than by any of the fans he met!

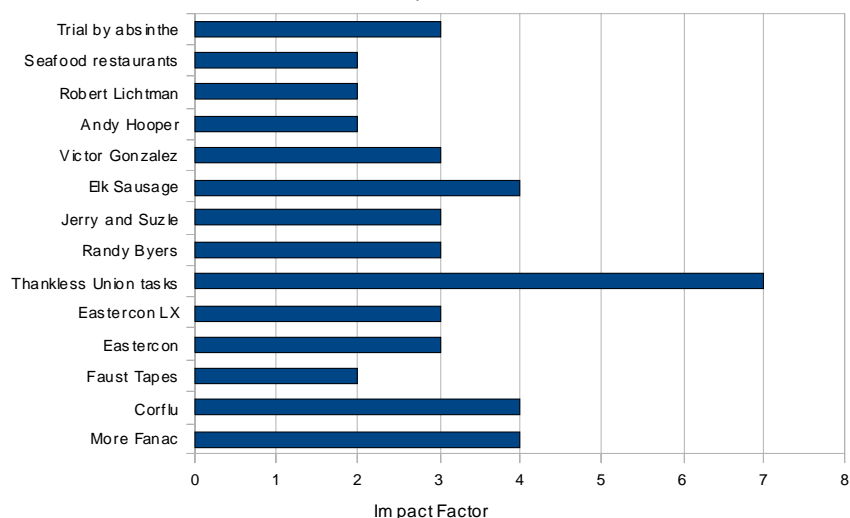
Brad Foster PO Box 165246, Irving, TX USA 75016

Doug's article on fascination with gaming also made me think about my own almost total lack of interest in games. Or rather, maybe more a recognition that I might too easily be sucked into spending too much time with them, so I go out of my way to avoid the temptations. And when I do get plucked down in front of a screen and some sort of control stuck in my hands by someone shouting "Seriously man, you have GOT to try this one!", I always try to approach it a bit "differently". Examples: once bet a friend I could get a perfect 100% accuracy for my shots in the old Galaxian (spelled right?) game. He said no way anyone could do that. Started up the game, I took one careful, dead on target shot, then released the controls and let myself get killed the required number of times to end the game. Every OTHER score on the screen was pitiful, but I had a 100% firing score.

Thanks for everyone in the locs column who commented on the cover I did for #9. Nice to get such positive feedback, especially for stuff that, let's face it, I'm mainly doing to amuse myself here. (Did I mention I've no video games? So, what else am I supposed to do with my time?) And to respond specifically to two comments: To Mike Meara, thanks for comparing to the cover I did recently for BEAM. Playing off the zine title is always fun, gives a "hook" to get creative around. And for Jerry Kaufman, attached is a photo of the head as assembled, opened to show the interior and the brain pyramid— and inside that are all the other little bits. If

Doug's Remote Travels

Jim's Impact Peaks



I ever tried this again, I think I'd blow the pattern up about double size on a copy machine first!



Finally, totally agree with the comments about the D. West covers on INCA#5. I think that, like Atom, he is more known for the huge amount of smaller and simpler filler pieces he creates, and many people just aren't aware of his real artistic talent and range. I was blown away when I first saw those pieces, just wonderful!

Murray Moore (murraymoore@gmail.com)

A typical inventive Brad Foster cover. And Brad is prolific: he's everywhere, on the covers and on the inside pages of fanzines. The only way Brad can improve his reputation is to be less omnipresent: perhaps we take him for granted. Steve Stiles and Dan Steffan are the rest of my active fan artist trinity. And there's Steve, on page 21, with a typical Stileish look at the future of funny.

Here's my vote for finishing your TAFF report, Christina. I attended two Worldcons in the previous century (Torcon 2 in 1973 and Chicon 2000) and Nolacon is one of the notorious Worldcons.

I do still have some notes on Nolacon that I haven't written up, but being a naive young thing back then, I was probably oblivious to most of what made that convention notorious.

Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, Tottenham London N15 4JU josephn@globalnet.co.uk

"Lilian and I are part of fan history," says Christina in the introduction to the chapter from her 1988 TAFF report on San Francisco in Head 10. "But at the same time, we've carried on moving forward through time, making other trips, meeting different fans, kicking over the traces of our 1988 selves." Otherwise known as "getting older".

But in returning to those memories of 1988, Christina has doubtless discovered one aspect of what getting old means: that although it may be "over two decades since...[we] went off on what to me seemed a fabulous adventure" the memories are just as fresh as though they were formed yesterday. This came home to me last summer, when I was reviewing our CD collection to determine whether there was anything we could rip to computer hard drive before donating to Oxfam (to relieve pressure on the shelves) and discovered that I could not only remember Britpop, all the way from 1995, but also the bands/the concerts/the songs/the press coverage/the television programmes....and also that it seemed, to my memory, as though it had all happened yesterday, or perhaps the day before, not fifteen years ago. (What? Had it really been fifteen years? Surely I must have played the otherwise forgotten Menswear at least once since then?). Ditto with other memories. I can remember (without having to look at the photographs) my first trip to Australia, for GUFF in 1981, where I met Judith. I can remember meeting Christina at a Surrey Limpwrist in 1984. I can remember the Novacons in Birmingham's Royal Angus Hotel, in the late 1970s. I can remember our boat-trip on the Mississippi in 1990, when we visited New Orleans. I can remember the worry and sleepless nights I had in the months before the purchase of our house in 1993. I can remember going round the Maritime Museum in Antwerp with Judith in 1983. I can remember the night of Labour's electoral landslide in 1997. And on, and on.

It occurred to me at the time, as it occurs to me now, that this might be one reason why older people seem to talk more of the past than the present: not because (obviously!) they have less of a future ahead of them, but because past time has telescoped — all the memories are there, in the right order, but the gaps between the present and the events being remembered have been erased. What the reason for this might be is open to question — have the dull stretches between these memories been edited out? Is it that the past, when one was more active, is more mentally attractive than the present, when one might feel wearier or more sluggish? Could it even be that one starts to review one's memories because the knowledge that life is finite, and that at any moment one might be taking one's leave of the world, thrusts its way ineluctably to the fore?

Joseph, you have a far better memory than me. Reconstructing my TAFF trip took a lot of research and imaginative interpretation of my notes. Sometimes I'm not sure if any of these things actually happened to me at all.



By the way, I was tickled by the photograph of 1988 vintage Lilian and Christina on page 11. Lilian's hair and glasses are *so* 1980s! (Although Christina's hair seems more 1970s pre-punk prog rock hippy-like.) Ah, the joys of youth!

Obviously, I can't comment on TWP — although Judith was once a member, and a semi-regular contributor until work pressures abolished the time and leisure to write anything substantive. I recall that at one point — and if I recall correctly, Joy Hibbert was the person most associated with this — there was some worry in its pages that the male partners of its female contributors would be able to read it, which it was suggested could impose unspoken inhibitions on their contributions (and also that men shouldn't read it anyway, because it wasn't intended for them). I myself didn't pay much attention to the detailed points made in this debate, because I didn't have the time to do more than note the existence of each new issue of the apa, but I think it was ultimately acknowledged that (Hibbert's demands notwithstanding) it was impossible to prevent men from reading it if they wished. I do recall, though, that Hibbert went completely up the wall at the sight of one issue — when the apa was being edited by Hazel Ashworth — which had a cover by D West, spoofing women's magazines with a "Free Inside: Bedsocks Knitting Pattern" tag; Hibbert's argument was that men shouldn't be contributing to TWP at all, even cover art (and also that the bedsocks knitting pattern was a typical patriarchal assumption about women's place in the social order, at least according to her — Hibbert was notably humourless, about almost everything).

But I will respond to Christina's comment about TWP that "some of the best British writers of the 1990s are no longer so active", where she names Yvonne Rowse, Alison Freebairn, Lilian Edwards, Alison Scott and Debbi Kerr as examples — and then only a few sentences later points out that "mailing lists like InTheBar have been actively pulling older fans out of gafiation". Are these two observations perhaps not related, and the factor once again is age? After all, the writers who are no longer so active are now ten to twenty years older, and whose time is likely to be dominated by such "mundane" concerns as work, family, children's schooling (where they have children), house DIY, gardening and the like — while those who have degafiated are also (largely) those who have retired from full-time work, and who therefore have more time available for fanac. (It should also be pointed out that many of those who are no longer so active in fanzines also have an on-line presence: for example, Lilian and both Alisons have Livejournal and Facebook accounts, and thus perhaps feel less inclined to write for paper-based media.) There is also the possibility (I draw from my own experience here) that some people are no longer so active because, having already produced a body of

work exploring the issues of interest to them, they do not think they have much more to say. (I produced what I consider to be some of my best writing during the years 1988 to 1995, but felt towards the end of this period that I was beginning to repeat myself and should take a break. Of course, I had no idea that the break would last this long....)

Come back Joseph, you must have something new to say by now!

And, talking of InTheBar...

Mike Meara, Spondon, Derby

So here I am, glass of wine at my elbow (careful, now!), beginning my loc to HEAD! 10 at our place in Parthenay, France, just as I did for my loc on HEAD! 9. I get a lot of fanac done in France. I think it's being away from InTheBar that does it. No internet access here, you see. The difference this time is that I now have a proper office to work in, as what used to be the bathroom has been ably converted by our DIY-mad co-owners. I'm still using the same old crappy laptop, though — an AJP with a thermostatic fan that keeps cutting in and out and makes a hell of a racket. Drives me mad. And the wine isn't even French, though that's a good thing, after a while. And we do still have a bathroom — in fact, we have two.

Another amazing cover by the Hugo award winning Brad Foster. Oh, you already said that. Hey, are you writing the locs now, too? I hope you've left me something to say.

But it is a good cover, though I'm a bit surprised that what seems like such an obvious idea hasn't been done before. And only one brain location for bheer doesn't seem anything like enough. Maybe the others have been destroyed by alcohol, and the empty, synapse-infested lots left behind have been redeveloped, though I can't see Blog or LiveJournal or e-apa in there anywhere.

But who is this Rostler? Is he/she any relation to the Rotsler who used to do the odd fillo, back in the day? Certainly the style is familiar.

I blame the proof-readers. You really can't be too careful who you employ.

I was especially interested in Gary Wilkinson's piece, since Nottingham is only twenty minutes' drive (plus half-an-hour's parking) from Spondon, our other home, and yet I hadn't picked up on the exhibition he describes. It sounds great, and I was intrigued

by his throwaway comment about "a new ending to the film *Solaris*" since the original Russian version is one of my favourite sf films. Can Gary (or anyone) tell me more about this? I like very much his final paragraphs, and especially his final (I suspect, ironic) sentence: what *are* the dreams of Capitalism, achieved or otherwise? And why are they interesting?

Liked Steve Green's header for Doug's piece on the geography of video games. I too did all that stuff with ludicrously overpriced proto-computers and unreliable tape-based software, the difference being that I was in my wage-earning thirties while Doug were just a wee lad, and so I had an Atari 400 with memory expanded to a whopping 32K. It still had a bloody membrane keyboard, though, as I balked at paying what they were asking for the 800. I too used to type in magazine listings, though only the short ones, and try to modify them. In the Atari 400 manual was a short program designed to show off the machine's sound and graphics capabilities; running it gave a flapping seagull, together with its plaintive calls and the sound of surf on a beach. I tried to modify this too, for what purpose I now forget, but my understanding of the code was clearly imperfect, since all I achieved was to detach one wing from the seagull; the two parts of the poor bird then flapped off in different directions. All very surreal, and much funnier than the original. In general I preferred abstract games, and I still admit to a fondness for Breakout, though I can't find a free online version like the Atari original. My limited experience with today's computer games makes me think they're either too complicated for me to understand, or too simple to hold my interest for more than an hour or two. I once had an ambition to write a Microsoft Excel version of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS using macros, but never got very far with it.

I very much enjoyed Christina's piece on APAs, yet I find it very difficult to empathise with her enthusiasm for the women-only approach, even if I can now perhaps understand it a bit better. I went to an all-boys school, yet I would have never had the slightest interest in joining an all-male APA, or indeed an all-male anything that I can think of. That said, I would have loved to have joined TWP in its heyday, but only if I could have got away with pretending to be an obscure, reclusive, never-seen-for-obvious-reasons female fan. That would have been quite a challenge, but I suspect the fart jokes would have given me away sooner or later. This is hard for me to say, but if TWP was still hot, potential members would be knocking on your door. What actually happened at the TWP party you organised and had to miss? Any new members? Any rejoiners, even? And I wish you'd told us more about e-apa: how does it differ from an e-list,

and why is it better, or if not better, an interesting alternative?

The difference between e-apa and an e-list, is that e-apa is only published once a month, so there's no instant response, but at least it doesn't take over your life. If you want to find out more, look up e-apa on efanazines, as there is always one open issue a year free to download.

And finally a belated loc on Head! 8

James Bacon, 54 Bridge Road, Uxbridge, UB8 2QP

What a bloody brilliant fanzine. Thanks! Sorry I never got to "swop" as mentioned, at Lx Doug – but was busy – all in a good way of course. Hope you enjoyed it. I look forward a report in a year's time. Not sure what take you have planned but keep up the good sense of the strange! You have very interesting music tastes. Me not so much. I like a lot of things but am no expert, and XFM never fails to provide new Indie & Rock that appeals to my ears, although I had an "experience" one morning at 3 Amish listening to MARS VOLTA, on BBC1. Mark then sent me the CD. How mad is that. (He saw my comment on I.j.)

Teledu. You know Chris – as you saw new people doing new things I saw older people capturing the "spontaneity" essence of the two INCONs I attended some fifteen years ago. In fairness I was at TELEDU for 2 hours & returned to the "NEW THING" for me that weekend which was a Harry Potter con. It shows your perspective. Anyhow – really ace zine guys. I must be honest if I was told of a zine about year old cons I might pass – yet Head – its awesome cover + great content was ace. I read it on way to and during non driving times at work. Very enjoyable – so there must be a message there somewhere.

WAHF: **Leigh Edmonds**: "No specific comments but, by Roscoe, it is just so nice to get something that looks, reads and feels like a fanzine. Keep up the good work."

Sue Thomason: "Very tempted to immediately spend several hours colouring in the front cover..." Which evidently she did as we received a copy later!

Lloyd & Yvonne Penney: "Brad, if you can create stuff like that cover while only fully caffeinated, then you are truly, truly talented". **Eric Lindsay**, a man of different talents, boasts of driving from Bristol to Lands End and back in day, while **Gary Wilkinson**, in another vote for virtual space, comments: "I remember when I was playing GTA Miami to the end of the campaign suddenly realising that I probably knew that place better than my own town." And a postcard from **James Bacon** thanking us for Head! 10.

