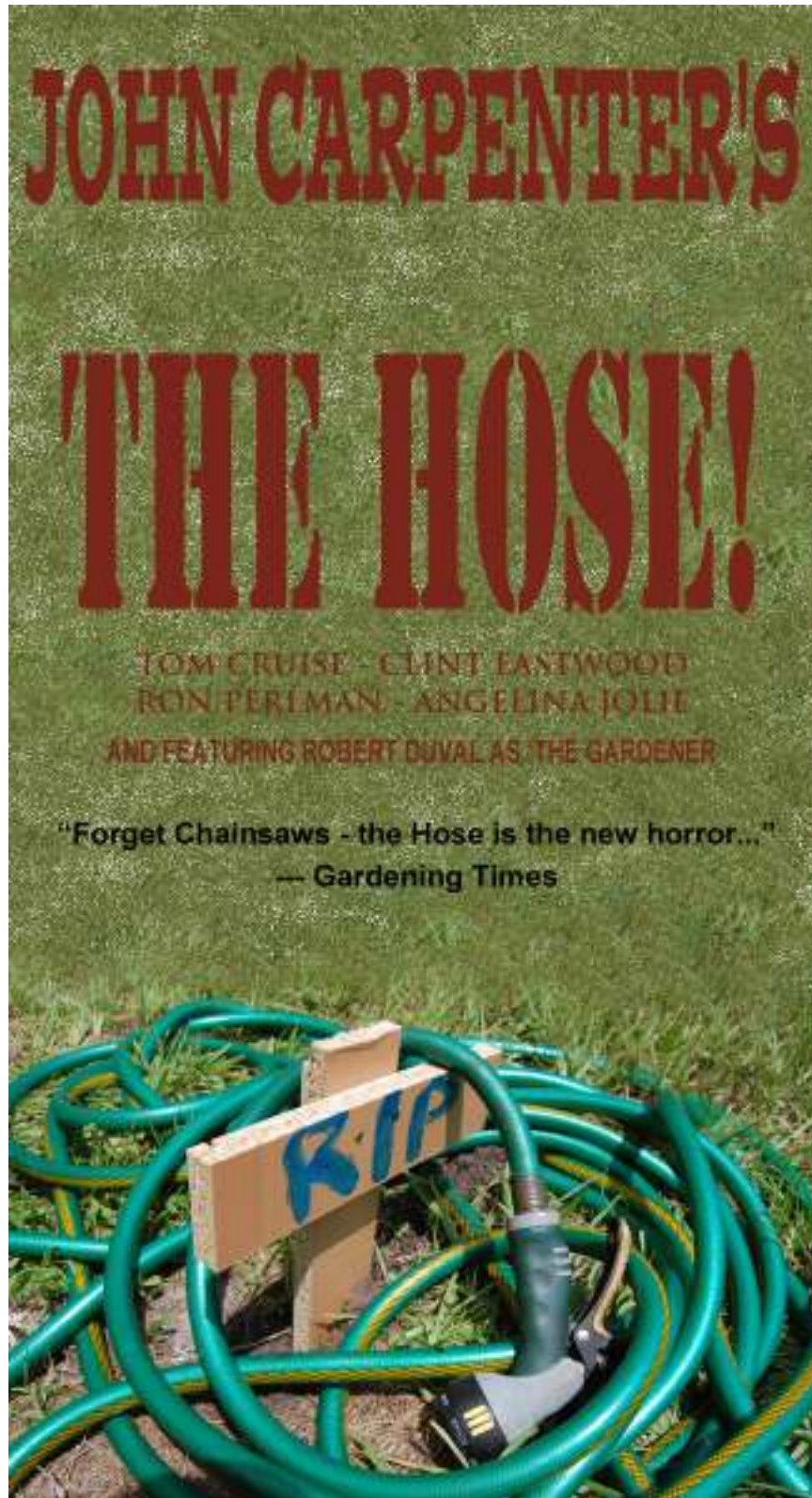




September 2015



Hello peeps. This is your friendly psychotic fanzine editor addressing you from the pulpit of time with yet another sermon on the conventions of conventions. Well, several sermons, actually, by several different hands.

Here you will find discussions of the Renton Prolog(ue) and the Peterborough Barcon 3. These are the only conventions that matter. To hell with Sasquan. This issue also has two reports on Barcon 3. Barcon is a subscription only convention. We are not exclusive, it's just like we don't encourage the common rabble to join us, a bit like the Yahoo group InTheBar which is it's basis. First we have a sane and sober report by Pat Charnock, and then Claire Brialey provides the jokes and funnies.

Health notes: a little while ago I sat on my foot. No, I'm not sure how it happened either. I suddenly became aware of an intense pain shooting through my foot. Looking down I saw the chair leg had someone found itself way on top of my foot, or else my foot had found its way under the chair leg. The improbability of it all led to a delay in my working out how to extricate it. The end result was a badly bruised toe. When the initial pain subsided a second more disturbing source of discomfort became apparent. I had apparently aggravated my pre-existing peripheral neuropathy and a stabbing periodically regular pain started stabbing upward from my toe like an electric shock every minutes or so. This lasted for several days, gradually easing both in painfulness and frequency, but while it lasted it was troublesome and disturbed my sleep.

Oh, well. Life is often a constant recurring pain of one kind or another, isn't it? A bit like Vibrator. Once a month at the end of every month it delivers either an unexpected shock or at the very least a nagging underlying itch which simply won't be scratched. But keep trying, fellow scratchers. You'll find me as always at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk, sitting here with my sores exposed, awaiting your healing balm.

For the next issue Steven Stiles has done me a spiffing Halloween cover, so I may have to concentrate on making it something of a supernatural issue. Have any of you had any weird supernatural experiences you'd like to recount? This is your chance

PROLOG(ue) AFTERTHO(ugh)TS



TAFF DUFF Panel – L-R Suzle, Jerry Kaufman, Ulrike O'Brien, John D. Berry, Nina Horvath, Dan Steffan (Photo by Lynn Steffan)

Rich Coad: Ulrika O'Brien, and other Seattle area fans. put on a small relaxacon in Renton, not the most prosperous appearing of Seattle suburbs, although it does have a WalMart. I flew up on Friday afternoon, leaving a Santa Rosa where the sun was shining

and the temperature was in the mid 80s Fahrenheit. No sooner had we boarded the Bombardier Q400 than we were told to go back to the terminal and wait an hour since Seattle was backed up due to inclement weather. Naturally I had no jacket nor an umbrella. I feared I might have to buy a *shudder* Seahawks hoodie to keep dry. Fortunately, Sub Pop records has a store in the Sea Tac terminal, so I now have a nice black nylon Sub Pop jacket.

Friday evening at the con was simply a party in the Hospitality Suite. I found Murray and Mary Ellen Moore there and we three adjourned to the Yankee Bar and Grill (attached to the hotel) for some dinner. Here I found out that if Murray ever claims to have "made cookies" take it with a grain of salt, for Mary Ellen almost certainly mixed the dough and Murray merely "bakes the cookies". I can't countenance this cookie credit theft that has been going on, especially since neither Murray nor Mary Ellen had any cookies with them.

Up in the Hospitality Suite, however, there were plenty of Jane Hawkins' home made cookies. Nina Horvath, TAFF winner, mentioned in a Facebook post that she had awoken at 3:00 a.m. to find Jane busily baking in the kitchen. This is true dedication to hospitality and Jane's cookies were delicious. The party Guest of Honor was, of course, Nina herself, who seemed to be about half the age of just about everybody else in the room, with that of I'm-not-sure-what-I've-gotten-myself-into look that seems common in first time convention goers. She seems nice enough but from an entirely different corner of fandom than ours. Andy Hooper grilled her in detail so may have more insight. I hope she enjoys the Worldcon and the rest of her TAFF trip.

Victor and Tamara Gonzalez appeared; Victor seems well recovered from the infected abscesses that landed him in the ER and ICU for several days. He now looks forward to having his remaining teeth pulled once he is able to convince the relevant agency to cover the cost.

The bathtub full of beer, mostly Washington State microbrews which I had never seen before, helped to lubricate the convivial gathering where little of Earth-shattering consequence at all occurred but nevertheless an enjoyable time appeared to be had by everyone.

Saturday dawned without a hangover which is better than arriving with a pounding head and roiling stomach that makes you bury yourself beneath the covers and go back to sleep until mid-afternoon. Instead, I awoke, had breakfast, and missed much of the first program item: My Favorite Worldcon. I could have missed more. Anecdotes that work well at a dinner table, or with a few friends, just don't seem to scale up that well.

That they inevitably seem to be about either Harlan Ellison or Jerry Pournelle just adds to the feeling of *deja vu* these types of panels conjure up.

The panel was followed by a long break spent in the Hospitality Suite, listening to Charlie Stross declaim about every subject under the sun, authoritatively and conclusively. I should have been in the parking lot at the Polynesian Festival where I might have heard some Hawaiian reggae, seen a hula or a haka, and had some spam sushi. Foolishly, I did not, but waited it out until it was time for the Pub Quiz, which our team won, or lost, or came in with a tie. This was actually a dry run for a quiz to be done at Sasquan; we were able to find a few bugs that, with any luck, will get corrected.

I'll skip the Charlie Stross reading because I did and leap forward in time to a very pleasant dinner with Mark and Claire at the Lemongrass Vietnamese restaurant. This was probably one of the better nearby restaurants and Vietnamese food is still quite exotic for fans from the UK. Claire got a remarkably complex dish of rice paper wraps, dipping water, and a plate of mixed meat and greens, for the Vietnamese equivalent of *mu-shu* pork; Mark went for meat, the way a guy should; I settled for spicy pho which I dripped on my shirt.

One of the unexpected delights of the con was the arrival of Dan and Lynn Steffan. Lynn had bought train tickets and booked a room as a birthday present for Dan. Back in the con suite I was having a pleasant natter about nothing in particular with Dan when we were joined by a fellow from San Jose whom I had never met. He quickly managed to get the topic over to water witchery and dowsing and proceeded to lecture about lizard brains and western science conspiracies and Aristotle and on and on and on. The bastard Steffan managed to slip away before I could.

Sunday arrived again with no hangover. At the restaurant I ran into Mark and Claire who told me about the breakfast voucher I had overlooked before. So after a free breakfast buffet, another chapter of James Morrow's *GALAPAGOS REGAINED*, and a chat with Jerry Kaufman, I toddled off for the one program item I really did want to see: "Through Time and Space with Widner and Shiffman: An Appreciation". Andy Hooper deserves a lot of kudos for this well selected portions of Stu and Art's fanwriting that brought back plenty of memories while providing plenty of laughs, too.

John D. Berry arrived in the con suite about half an hour before I was to leave. Typecon, where he had been, apparently has a reputation for making unreadable name badges, possibly using fancy typography. By contrast, the Prolog(ue) name badges were plain and legible. After an uneventful plane ride back through smoky California, I got home, thinking I'd had a good weekend in good company with good beer. What's not to like? – **Rich Coad**



Aloha Day in Renton (Photo by Lynn Steffan)

Dan Steffan: Great little conrep, Rich.

As Rich already mentioned, Mz Lynn and I also went to Prolog(ue) this weekend, though I didn't know we were going until the last minute. It was my surprise birthday present, actually, and how it came about was pure serendipity.

On Thursday evening I had a phone conversation with Andy Hooper about the copies of *The MOTA Reader* I had shipped up to Seattle for the worldcon and during our discussion he mentioned in passing that their little relaxacon, Prolog(ue), was going to be quite small -- probably less than 50 people. Afterwards, I repeated that factoid to my wife and went back to picking lint out of my navel, never suspecting that 36 hours later I would be sitting in a seat on the Cascade Express bound for Renton, WA. *Happy birthday to me!*

Apparently, after telling her about my chat with Mr. Hooper, the dear gurl had gone online and gotten some train tickets for the next day and booked a room at the con hotel, The Red Lion-Renton, without my even suspecting that a plot was afoot. Friday evening she told me about our plans and I couldn't have been more surprised. The following morning, at the civilized hour of 11:00 a.m., we were in a cab to the train station and on our way. The fact that we didn't have to actually go all the way up to Seattle made everything easier. Instead, we got off one stop outside of the city's urban sprawl at the Tukwila train station, a mere 2 miles from the hotel. Another quick cab ride later we were checking in. It was probably the easiest, least frantic, and most fun I've ever had traveling to a con.

Lynn had apparently been quite lucky to score us a room at the hotel because there was a big wedding going on when we arrived, though its festivities paled in comparison to what was going on out in the parking lot and in the other function rooms, where "Aloha Saturday In Renton" was in full swing. As our cab pulled into the hotel's driveway

we literally had to weave our way through a sea of big brown islanders -- a couple of hundred of them, at least -- who were either dancing to the throbbing with hip-hop music or wandering among the booths that had been set up to sell food and trinkets.

I later found out that the hotel was in fact sold out for Saturday night, but somehow Lynn had still managed to get us a room (perhaps the last one). It was a pretty good room, quite large, with a huge bed that was as wide as an old Cadillac was long. Yet, despite presence of the giant bed, the room still seemed weirdly empty. It had a kitchenette, and (as it turned out) a really good shower, but the room had no chairs, except for the small wooden one by the tiny desk. Fortunately, we didn't have to play host to anyone, so there was no need for any chairs, though I'm quite sure we could have easily found a seat for at least half the con on the bed alone.

We wandered down to the registration table, ably manned by long-time Seattle fan Denys Howard, who is always entertaining to conversate with -- which we did, trading gossip about what was going on at the con. The table was right outside the function room and when we stuck our heads inside, Charlie Stross was in the middle of an enthusiastic reading of one of his stories. Lynn slipped up behind Andy Hooper, who was sitting near the back of the room with his eyes closed. He was, I am assured, listening intently to Stoss' oration and definitely *not* snoozing. She ran her green fingernails across his shoulder and his eyes popped open. "What are you doing here?" he asked, a bit startled to see us. "Happy birthday to me," I answered.

Afterwards it was up to the con suite where we surprised a few more people and I handed out copies of the *Mota* anthology to the Corflu 31 members in attendance like Murray and Mary Ellen, Claire and Mark, and a few others. I hadn't expected Rich Coad to be there and explained to him that I had just mailed his copy the afternoon before and promised that it would be on his doorstep soon, maybe even before he got home. Aileen Forman was also there and I wanted to give her a copy because she and Ken had separated and I didn't know where to mail it to her. I had a couple extras with me and told her in the con suite that I had a copy for her but, unfortunately, I only saw her briefly after that and I missed my opportunity to put it in her hands. Oh well, I hear she's moving back to Vegas, so I guess I'll just send it to her there.

One of the folks I did get to chat with for a while was one of my fave fanartists, Craig Smith, who has been through hell the last few years, with ill-timed unemployment and an unfortunate accident on an icy sidewalk that had broken his leg in multiple places. It was good to see him again. Though using a cane and walking with some difficulty, he was, nevertheless, in an upbeat mood and it was nice to see him socializing, particularly since he had just gotten a job offer from his old employer, who wanted to rehire him. Yay, for

Craig Smith! Good on him. Maybe now he'll be able to get back to drawing those delightful cartoons of his.

We had a relatively early dinner at a Vietnamese restaurant that was just across the access road next to the Red Lion. It was called Lemongrass -- as many Vietnamese restaurants seem to be -- and it was outstanding. Accompanied by Andy Hooper and Carrie Root (Andy's birthday was the day before mine) we went to celebrate our powerful and often annoying Leo-ness and discovered that many of the tables in the restaurant were already filled with fans, and those that weren't, were filled with Vietnamese folks, which is always a good sign with an ethnic restaurant. The menu was huge and the food was great. We all agreed that along with way too much other yummy grub, the fried tofu was the best any of us had ever eaten. Afterwards, during our stroll back to the hotel, Andy and Lynn and I stopped to sit on a nearby concrete retaining wall to have an after dinner smoke. *Ahhh*.

The rest of the evening is a happy blur. At one point I found myself having a conversation with Rich Coad. We were sitting in the con suite near a table full of snacks and breadstuff -- there always seemed to be at least four or five bagels on prominent display in the middle of the table and it seemed like every time I went in the room they were there, though they were not necessarily the *same* four or five each time -- and we were making pleasant chatter, as you do, when we were interrupted by a guy who was a total stranger to either of us. Our strange encounter started when he inexplicably moved from where he had been sitting on the far side of the table into an empty chair between us, where he waited patiently for a break in our conversation.

Finally, it happened. One of us paused to take a breath between phrases and our new friend saw his opportunity to jump in. Before we could resume our discourse, though it was only the matter of a few seconds, he launched into a loud sermon (it struck me as being a very well rehearsed rant) about -- *of all things* -- dousing and the history of its use through history as a reliable way to locate underground waterways. Wild eyed, he told us about his experiences of it and condemned those who would dare deny its truth.

He told us about the science of dousing and how the Native Americans had used it for centuries and how it was possible to drill a dry well and then, with the proper dousing techniques, move the drilling rig less than 10 feet and easily hit water. He told us about how Aristotle believed in the power of dousing and ... well, you get the idea. Rich captured it well, though he forgot to mention the man's earnestness or his breakneck delivery. It was obvious that he didn't want to give us a chance to interrupt him.

He vomited forth a huge amount of information and opinion at Rich and I and we just sat there in a kind of shock. Rich looked over at me, his eyes were big like Ralph

Kramden's used to get when he was caught in a bad situation. I shrugged at him and smiled a smile of trapped panic. This went on for more than five minutes (Or was it an hour?) with Rich and I caught at the bread table, making bizarre faces at each other because we were too polite to storm off. It must have been obvious from our expressions that neither of us wanted to be there and if somebody had been filming us, I have no doubt that it would have been pretty hilarious to watch us squirming in our seats.

Though we really didn't want to encourage him, I couldn't resist asking him a few questions about the veracity of the science of dousing and he swore emphatically that it was real and that he had done it himself and had seen it done many times by others. His enthusiasm for his subject seemed endless. As we watched, he pounded on the table and made wild hand gestures that suggested to me that he probably might have seen a few too many Bob Fosse movies when he wasn't out in the fields looking for water. He was pedantic as all hell, but at least he was entertaining to look at, kind of like modern dance performed while sitting down.

At some point Lynn, thankfully, called me away from the table. As I got up to see what she wanted, I saw Rich's face get tight; a frown formed on his lips and furrows rose on his considerable brow. "You're not going to leave me here with this guy, are you?" he asked me telepathically. Sadly, I was. Lynn led me off somewhere and I did not return. When I did see Rich again about a half an hour later he sidled up to me and mock-whispered something like, "You bastard, you left me with that guy and didn't come back." I laughed, even though I knew I should have taken him with me when Lynn led me off. I guess I must be out of practice with my con etiquette.

The reason Lynn had flagged me down was because Victor Gonzalez had just shown up, having returned to the con just to see us. We were glad to see him still looking very Victorish after his near-death dental experiences. He was more than willing to describe it all to me in great detail, though I tried not to look into his ravaged maw too much, for my own well being. (I have dental issues of my own, you see.) We spoke of many things besides his hospitalization. We talked about his boyhood friend Tom Weber (they've known each other since they were 12), a fanboy in the '70s, who had a massive stroke some years ago that left him disabled. Victor and Tamara have recently moved into a house together with Tom, where they've decided to help take care of him after the unexpected death last year of his wife (one-time TAFF winner Valma Bowen).

Fortunately, all wasn't gloom and medical bills, we also talked about positive things like Victor's 1981 ambulance. He bought it off Craig's List a couple years ago -- before the above events -- and is slowly converting it into the world's most medically sophisticated camper van. He showed me a few pix on his phone to convince me that he wasn't pulling

my leg. As always, talking with Victor was fascinating, informative and rapid-fire. It was enjoyable to see him again and see that while he still has stuff to overcome, his Victoriness remains unchanged.

We were back in our room by 1:30 a.m., exhausted but happy. Lynn and I sprawled ourselves across the giant bed and watched some TV before passing out for the night -- the MTV show "Ridiculousness," which features nothing but videos of idiots riding on skateboards, bikes, and things like shopping carts and wheelchairs, which usually end up crashing into walls, falling off ramps, and generally breaking their bones and other assorted body parts for our entertainment. It lived up to its name.

We were up at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday morning and, after checking out, went to the memorial panel for Art Widner and Stu Shiffman that Andy had organized. He had pulled together a clever mixture of quotations from both men's fanwriting, structured it in such a way that it was almost conversational, and then had them read aloud by a table of their friends. It was very effective and did a service to both men. I thought Stu's material was particularly livened by being read aloud. I often found his stuff to be a bit too precious and clever-by-half when reading it in fanzines, but in spoken form the humor and the tone came through clearly and enjoyably. It was a good one.

After that it was back across the parking lot to Lemongrass for lunch with Andy, Spike and Tom Becker. The restaurant was so good that we didn't mind going back and their menu was large enough that there was no need for duplication -- though we did order another helping of the fried tofu. Yummy, once again.

After that we waddled back to the previous evening's retaining wall for a post-luncheon chat with Ted before returning to the function room where I had been added to a panel about TAFF and DUFF. The panel was peopled with a bunch of middle-aged Americans like Jerry Kaufman and Suzle and Ulrika and John D Berry (who had returned from Denver to find us in Renton) and myself, plus the bright and shiny new TAFF fraulein, Nina Horvath. Unlike the rest of us, she was young and fresh and full of energy. She was like a teutonic china doll, pale skin with a perfect Sally Bowles haircut, and little, tiny fingers that looked amazingly life-like. She was very earnest and took most of the things we discussed quite seriously, although that just could have been the language barrier. Her English was quite good but her accent was pure *Hogan's Heroes* hilarious and I had an awful time keeping a straight face while sitting next to her. I worked very hard not to laugh at her because, after all, she wasn't doing anything wrong. It wasn't her fault that she spoke like a high-pitched Sergeant Schultz.

I tried to behave myself and was almost completely successful except for one little slip that escaped my mouth before I had a chance to edit myself. You see, while I was busy

concentrating on not saying anything too stupid, I was also scanning the audience, looking for help. I noticed Andy raise his hand with a question. I knew he had a question because he had thrust his right arm straight up in the air. He had raised it a couple of times, repeating his gesture until I finally called on him. I was relieved that I didn't have to think (operative word here) of what to say next.

Acknowledging his outstretched arm I said, "*Sieg Heil*, Andy. Do you have a question?"

Lynn says that I literally flinched when I realized what I'd said. Considering the politically correct climate in the sf world these days, I thought for sure that I had just created an international incident to rival the rabid puppies that had been hogging the pages of *File 770* of late. Fortunately for me, nobody laughed and Nina seemed to have missed my idiotic -- but still terribly funny to *me* -- comment. I decided right then and there that this was definitely my last time on a panel without taking a Xanax. Or maybe better, just my last time. My mouth has a mind of its own.

Fortunately, before I could get myself into any more trouble, it was time for Lynn and me to head back to the train station. There was a quick round of goodbyes and then we slipped out of the hotel to grab our taxi. When we left the con suite JDB was off tasting strange yeasty ales, while Jane Hawkins was trying to get people to finish up the last of the 300 chocolate chip cookies she'd baked for the con.

The train ride home was pleasant and scenic, especially with the sun setting to our right. The train itself was pretty much full and I saw quite a variety of folks on board. I saw a father and son pair who were returning from a sporting event in Seattle and were wearing identical outfits and face paint. Across from us there was a woman in her 20s who spent most of the trip coloring in a coloring book that looked like someone had found a speed freak's telephone doodles and printed them up in book form. Odd. The woman behind her had a full figure of Wonder Woman tattooed on her thigh, which stuck out unobstructed from her little booty shorts. And the young man in the seat behind me, it turned out, had just moved West from Washington, D.C., where he had grown up about ten blocks from where we had once lived.

We were back in Portland's lovely old Union Station by 9:30 that night and we caught another cab home to Steffanland. (I'll spare you the irritating cabby story about the process of procuring that cab.) Soon we were unpacked and in our comfy chairs, watching John Oliver and "Ray Donovan." It had been a whirlwind weekend without a single bad note. Beautiful scenery, Samoans, fried tofu, and good friends. Now that's what I call a successful weekend getaway. -- **Dan Steffan**

Murray Moore: I was telling Mark Plummer that he would not be meeting Dale Speirs during Sasquan, although Dale lives a day's drive from Spokane, in Calgary. I had inquired of Dale, might I see him in Spokane?: no, he answered, he doesn't own a passport. I have met Dale twice, both times in Calgary.



Shiffman/Widner panel (Photo by Lynn Steffan)

During Prolog(ue) I met Carl Juarez. Mostly Carl and I were in the same room, the con suite, Carl in a chair at a table or Carl in a chair out-of-the-way, in, I could not tell, one-way or two-way mind meld with his laptop.

But I am talking to Victor Gonzalez and the subject turns to Boeing and the third side of the triangle of myself and Victor is empty and *blink* Carl has occupied that empty side of the conversational triangle. He contributes a fact about Boeing and *blink* that space again is empty.

Mary Ellen and I introduced ourselves Friday evening to TAFF delegate, Austria's own Nina Horvath. Saturday morning we three were together in line for breakfast so we ate together. And midday we three and Tom Becker and Jack Bell and Andy Hooper walked a mile to a Mexican restaurant. The soup was very good and ridiculously generous. At home for me that quantity would have been three meals.

Jack knew the neighbourhood from his youth because his grandfather managed a restaurant for its owner and also was the chef. Jack learned from his grandfather to cook. We walked over the spot in a quiet road at which Jack had his first car collision, not his fault. Jack pointed out businesses where he had worked. The local movie theatre of his youth still stood, near the con hotel, but closed. The posters in the exterior display cases were for Bollywood movies.

Laurraine Tutihasi however I saw only once, in the front row of the first program(me) item, operating a camera recording the speakers.

I told Charlie Stross that I had read his short story "Bit Rot" on our flight to Seattle, in the Johnathan Strahan-edited original anthology */Engineering Infinity/*, and, further, my opinion that Strahan is the Terry Carr of this century, an opinion which I meant as praise.

But, I added, Strahan, unlike Terry 'Ace Science Fiction Specials' Carr, has not edited novels. And Stross told me that he understands Strahan is not interested in editing novels, and, further, Strahan living in Perth would be his disadvantage.

Perhaps the Internet has not reached west Australia?

I greeted Aileen Forman with "Aileen! Last year I saw you on the east coast during the Richmond Corflu. Now I see you on the west coast. You're doing something with horses?"

Aileen has been living with a friend in the Northwest and teaching young girls to ride. Aileen learned to ride at a young age. Her jumper (a kind of horse, not an item of female clothing) was surprised and bolted. Young Aileen fell from the saddle and hit her head while one of her feet stayed, twisted, in a stirrup.

When she regained consciousness her helmet was split, she was 100 feet distant from the place at which she fell, and her foot still was in its stirrup.

She enlisted her brother to remove the gravel embedded in her back. She ensured his silence from their parents about her misadventure in exchange for her keeping silent about the location of her brother's collection of porn magazines.

Aileen is attending Sasquan thanks to a friend. Immediately following Worldcon she drives to Las Vegas to stay with another friend.

Her immediate goal is to return to the work in life she enjoyed most: casino gambling dealer. Aileen prefers to deal blackjack but she has to be able to run a roulette wheel, a skill which she hasn't flexed for so long that she must retrain. In the meantime she can work at a casino other than at roulette.

Long term, Aileen wants to work on cruise ships. Seven months per contract with two months between contracts. Shipboard casinos operate only in international water. In port she has no duties: she can sleep, go ashore, read, as she pleases.

Jerry Kaufman accepted my suggestion that a couple of hundred copies was the print run for his 1980s' twiltone paper fanzine anthology, *The Best of Susan Wood*. My first sighting of Jerry, he was pushing a hotel luggage cart with a small box on it. I asked Jerry 'What is in the box to make it so heavy that you need a cart?'

I missed my opportunity to complain to chair Ulrika O'Brien about the lack of wrestling. Corflu Zed had wrestling, Jerry and Andy Hooper, one fall takes all. Jerry and Andy wrestling: not a sight that a sensitive person forgets.

Sunday, Mary Ellen and I left Renton in our rental Mazda 3 after breakfast, driving east the width of Washington, through Idaho, into Montana and a different time zone. While John D. Berry still had not appeared at Prolog(ue), Mary Ellen and I were trudging in the heat and forest-fire haze on the west bank of the Columbia River, on a trail in the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park.

Tuesday morning we drove north from Missoula, Montana, to the west entrance of Glacier National Park. In the park we saw mountain goats, the first an adult male, eight stopped cars ahead of our stopped car, and, later, at a higher altitude, a female and a young goat, themselves a couple of hundred feet higher than ourselves on the narrow road.

Mary Ellen was not injured during the drive up and then down on the just-wide-enough roadway. I was on the inside both ways, she closer to the edge. Mary Ellen, especially as we ascended, leaned sharply toward me, clutching the centre console, lest gravity suck her out the closed car door and over the edge of the precipice.

Before leaving the park we walked on the Trail of the Cedars, old cedars and Western Hemlock and Rocky Mountain Maple and more fine trees. Which reminds me, midday in Kalispell, in the Bojangles Cafe, Mary Ellen had a fine piece of cherry pie. Cherry trees in northern Montana: who knew? And then she had, even better, a fine piece of huckleberry pie.

But back to our walk in the Park. A group of five, four youngsters in the eight- to 14-years-of-age range and an adult, my age or older. The adult was wearing a cowboy hat. Also a gun belt around his waist, bullets in their individual holders, and, in the holster, an old-fashioned revolver. Cowboy cosplay? Not likely. Montana is a state in which an adult can be openly armed. And bears lurk in those woods. Be prepared.

The other unexpected sight that day, at the high point of the Going to the Sun highway, Logan's Peak, as we vainly cruised the parking lot seeking a parking slot, was your friend and mine, editor of Niekas, on foot with his wife, Ed Meskys. We waved violently and smiled broadly as we passed them. I hope to learn during Sasquan what Ed's wife told Ed.

-- Murray Moore

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL DENIES HE IS A PERVERT, AND INVITES ME TO PULL THE OTHER

ONE

Sweetheart, I dunno what happened but my copy, if no one else's, was all over the place. I only got a line of Greg Benford's letter, and then a reprint of most of Joe Nicholas extremely detailed comments(which I had to keep my eyelids open to read the first time) followed by unheralded abuse from Skel. And then I think you weren't going to print those fannish exploits with the sex trade, yet at one point you appear to be saying you had already printed them. I think you must be editing two issues at a time and getting them mixed.

In these latter comments, you call me and Chuck Connor, "libidinous". Its a word I quite like, but it seems pejorative in the way you have used it. I may be paranoid, and I cannot speak for Chuck, but as far as I know all I am guilty of is liking sex a lot. I dont think this makes me a pervert (though I am, probably) or a monster. There is actually nothing wrong with being libidinous, and I think you should make that clear. Or perhaps you are afraid of upsetting Farah Mendelssohn and her compatriots. But I didn't realise they were on your mailing list.

I don't think Fred Smith and I are ever going align our views much. He asks, rhetorically, who is going to make music if not the musicians. The answer is, composers and writers and , to a lesser but still important extent, record producers. A lot of these people were musicians before they were anything else, of course, but musicianship, while important, is not the entirety of what music is all about. It is only a component part. When it is elevated beyond a certain point, it winds up detracting from the whole. If jazz is about musicianship more than it is about music itself, as I believe, then it always did contain the seeds of its own demise. Fred obviously doesn't agree, but doesn't seem willing to define what he thinks jazz is about, if it is something more than the actual playing of it.

As for your typically fierce response to my remarks about your adopted literary taste, the very fact that I am responding to your fanzine right now makes you a fan, and you cannot possibly deny that to be the case. The position you want to support, that a fan only reads crap, is just pseudo intellectualism. Even Chris Priest, for heavens sake, whose blog I have read only recently, does not support such an obviously foolish point of view and indeed postulates that genre fiction will remain widely read and popularly regarded long into the future. As I said, Graham Greene wont last, nor any of the currently living mainstream novelists (Ian McEwan et al) so regularly puffed in the lit pages of The Guardian. And anyway, I dont really believe that this whole argument really proceeds from a genuine belief of your own- you only started it to get folk writing. And you have succeeded.

Your own and Linda Moorcock's remembrance of Graham Hall was quite moving. We are all liable to be self-destructive at different times in our lives. Fortunately, only a few of us are so determined, or stubborn, that we do actually kill ourselves with our excess. Usually, somebody or something comes along to give us a reason to change course. Sadly, it didn't for Graham.

Can I have a proper copy of the next ish? Thank you so much.

(*EDITOR*: I think my position is not that a fan only reads crap, but **only** a fan reads crap. That's not specific to sf; a fan of any genre fiction will undoubtedly read examples of crap within the genre, because what appeals to him is not the literary values inherent in any genre, but other elements, mystery in the case of crime fiction, romance in the case of romantic fiction, etc. A general reader who is not genre-specific will tend I think to have an interest in reading more elevated forms of fiction than crap.)

John Nielsen-Hall can be found at johnsila32@gmail.com

PAUL SKELTON

The latest *Vibrator* arrived this morning. Haven't read it yet, but the back page caught my eye.

I think you will find that Paul Skelton will be far too confused to provide a Barcon3 report. I mean, given how easily he is confused sitting relaxed at home, reading *Vibrator*, and only generally drinking two days each week (I have to say "generally" as Bank Holidays sort of don't count). Just think how confused he's going to be drinking practically all the time amid a frenzied hotbed of fannish interaction. I mean just describing Barcon as "a frenzied hotbed of fannish interaction" should give you a clue as to how confused he's going to be. I suspect the entirety of his convention notes will be a post-it note to himself stuck on the bathroom mirror saying "You had a great time. Do it again next year." Sadly he is unlikely ever to see this note as, being too drunk to find the bathroom; he will probably piss in the wardrobe instead.

So Graham, as regards a Barcon3 report, I think you can take this as "A big 10-4 on the 'FUCK OFF' front".

I do though remain yr hmb1 & obdnt srvnt.

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

STEVE JEFFERY

I'm not sure if I should thank you for send me on a Google hunt to see if I could find any more details about Harry Adam Knight's *Crickets!* which is either very rare indeed (in that neither Wiki nor Amazon have heard of it) or you have completely made up. I suspect the latter.

I did discover that Cold Tonnage is asking fifteen quid for 1st edition copies of both *Slimmer* and *Bedlam*. And then I somehow landed in the website for Newman and Gaiman's *Ghastly Beyond Belief* (<http://www.kelper.co.uk/litcrit/ghastly.html>) which wasted most of lunch-time.

I don't think I've ever been solicited, by a Lady of the Night ("Ah, vat sveet music they make.") or anyone else for that matter. I've only talked to a solicitor twice to my knowledge, once when we bought the house and then to make a will. Neither tried to proposition me.

I did enjoy other people's tales of such encounters though - particularly Chuck's. I didn't know that about Ian Bambro. I suspect all that was behind him when I knew him when I worked in Howdon in the late 90s. I'm not even sure he had a car then.

I share a lot of your tastes for jazz as evidenced in your long reply to Fred Smith - McLaughlin, Etheridge, Abercrombie, fusion bands such as Isotope, Weather Report, Brand X (a Phil Collins side project), Barbara Thompson's *Paraphernalia*, etc. There seemed to be a lot of crossover around the 70's, with several UK jazz musicians turning up on odd projects, like a brace of albums by composer Neil Ardley (*Kaleidoscope of Rainbows* and *Harmony of the Spheres*) which also featured some splendid sideways guitar soloing by John Martyn.

So I sort of discovered jazz through rock (and also folk - Pentangle were pretty jazzy at times), then found my way back to the original stuff like Coltrane, Parker, Miles, Mulligan and Monk. The first proper bebop I heard was probably Dizzy Gillespie on 'A Night in Tunisia'.

Yeah, and I have that bad habit of playing where my fingers want to go rather than what's in my head. Must break out of that, since I end up noodling around in the same set patterns. Not that anyone else but me is listening to it, but it would be nice to actually surprise myself once in while.

That particular sound in Nic Farey's head is also in mine quite a lot, and often under my breath - usually after SAS or SQL Server has done something particularly stupid (i.e. exactly what I just told it to do) and locked my PC completely until I reboot it, thus losing

everything I've done for the last two hours because I didn't save it.(Backups are for wimps). Altogether now. "cu**cu**cu**....."

(EDITOR: Sorry to have sent you on a wild goose chase in search of Harry Adam Knight's "Crickets", Steve. Unfortunately I have yet to persuade him to write it.)

Steve Jeffery can be found at srjeffery@aol.com

JOSEPH NICHOLAS HATES KNEE-JERKS, LIKE ME.

Thank you for *Vibrator* 19. Unfortunately, its distribution coincides with preparations for another visit to Australia -- for, among other things, a trip up the west coast to see the West Australian spring wildflower displays: reportedly very colourful and spectacular -- which means that, among the various tasks which need to be completed before our departure, I haven't had time to do more than skim it. I did notice Philip Turner's usual knee-jerkery about global warming -- invective unsupported by any trace of evidence or structured argument -- and your own rather splenetic response to my latest. "'Once the capital costs have been met.' When will that be, Joseph?" Why, Graham, that will be when the returns (monies from the Feed-in Tariff, savings on electricity bills, whatever) from a householder's investment in solar power or wind energy have repaid their capital investment and the householder in consequence moves into profit. I would have thought this would have been so obvious from the context of the original remark you quote that it would not have needed to be spelled out in such plonkingly literal detail.

I have no idea what you mean by "modern advances in carbon limitation" (carbon sequestration and storage? carbon reduction programmes?) but would assume that your reference to the "volumetric input from volcanoes" is a reference to the claim that volcanoes are a contributor to global warming. I didn't mention this -- the IPCC doesn't bother with it, no reputable climate scientist bothers with it -- because it is scientific nonsense, one of many zombie arguments (you can look them up online) which bedevil the climate argument and which despite being refuted again and again are continually resurrected by the denialist lobby. (Please do not try to claim that if these arguments keep being resurrected there must be something to them. There is not.) A moment's thought would suggest that if volcanoes contribute anything to climate change then it is global *cooling*, through the aerosols of gas and dust that they inject into the atmosphere.

I reject your assertion that I "haven't the will to research any topic which might really bother [me]" -- my concerns about anthropogenic global warming and the UK's coming energy generation gap ought to demonstrate as much. But I certainly do not waste time

and energy on researching topics which are unsupported by scientific evidence, and so far you have yet to provide any which would convince me that human activity is not the sole cause of present climate change.

I also noted Dave Cockfield's statement that "the whole world is undergoing social, religious, political, economic, geographical upheaval and I have no faith that mankind has any hope of preventing a new Dark Age", from which there is much to unpack....but time is against me, so I'll have to content myself with sketching the following three responses. Firstly, from a historian's point of view we may merely be in another interregnum between periods of stability -- the Napoleonic Wars were followed by a long nineteenth century which was relatively peaceful for Europe and Europeans until the global imperial system could no longer cope with the strains which resulted in the First World War; the European Civil Wars (as the late Eric Hobsbawm named them) were then followed by the stability of the superpowers' Cold War until that broke down with the end of the Soviet Union as a functioning polity; within the next decade or so of this century, a new international system may be constructed which will restore the *status quo ante*. But, secondly, this suggestion of global stability really only applies to the developed north: the lived experience of the rest of the world, since the point of European take-off around 1500 CE and its past half-millennium of confrontation with the rest of the world, has been instability and disruption, and the reconfiguration by the European imperial powers, for European ends, of those other polities and cultures; the present instability in the Middle East may be just another instance of that. (Indeed, those specific conflicts are the direct result of European meddling in the Middle East, from the end of the Ottoman Empire onwards.) Thirdly, we may be seeing the end of the past half-millennium of European hegemony and the return to global prominence of the polities and cultures that it had displaced and eclipsed; China and India are the obvious examples, but far from automatically implying a New Dark Age for everyone else it simply means that Europe will be once again as marginal and unimportant as it was a half-millennium ago. (Russia and Brazil have usually been linked with China and India -- as the BRIC bloc -- as the likely dominant powers of this century, but it seems to me that Russia's endemic political corruption has destroyed its attraction for inward foreign investment, without which it cannot realise the potential of its resource hinterland, while Brazil now seems to be experiencing resource-linked political corruption of its own which will have similar knock-on effects.) I recommend John Darwin's *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* as an excellent overview of the first two points.

But that will have to be it. I'm taking electronic devices with me on the Australian trip, so will have time to read *Vibrator* 19 properly when down in Albany at the end of the month, but whether I'll have time to fit writing anything more into the vitally important

business of reclining on the lawn in the sunshine or whether we'll even have intermittent internet access is another matter entirely. Toodle-pip!

(EDITOR:I don't know what planet you are living on, Joseph, but a quick Google will reveal umpteen scholarly papers on carbon dioxide emissions from volcanoes (none of them particularly slanted either for or against the global warming issue). But never mind, the meteorite which is about to strike the Earth will soon make all this discussion of global warming quite academic, as will the imminent eruption of the Yellowstone Supervolcano. Have a safe journey to the antipodes)

Meanwhile, there is this:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexepstein/2015/01/06/97-of-climate-scientists-agree-is-100-wrong/2/>

Joseph Nicholas can be found at excellenceingardening@gmail.com

PHILIP TURNER DON'T CARE HOW KORIZO IS PRONOUNCED, OR SPELLED.

Thanks for your latest Vibrations. Time to turn on, tune in, cop out and LoC. I was intrigued to receive an envelope with 10½ in the address. After wondering briefly what the postman made of the fractional address, I launched a search for the extra half-a-house, which you so graciously and so arbitrarily awarded to me. Alas, at the time of writing, I have been unable to find it. I am now thinking that you sent it via *Parcel Farce* and they lost it.

How nice that Vib now has page numbers -- even on the front cover with its shock-horror volume by Hairy Adam Blight. Very useful for making sure I haven't turned over 2 pages at once. The Hookerama qualifies for the same description as the Earth gets in the HHGTTG: Mostly Harmless. A descriptionn which does not fit the crooks and swindlers who go round pretending that they can change the Earth's climate (I don't recall ever being asked if I want it changed) provided they are given enough zillions of hard currency.

Do care how korizo is pronounced? Actually, no. The stuff in my Sainsbury Local looks fairly disgusting and I've never been tempted by it. I'd much rather have Aldi's peppered German salami on my chiabata mini-pizzas.

"Renewable" energy? That's one for the Fraud Squad. What it actually is, is "temporarily available" energy, which is there when the wind blows and the Sun shines, and not available when they don't. As for this story that the cost of windmill electricity is falling -- what it's not falling anywhere near is the value-for-money obtained from always-on gas and advance coal-fuelled power stations. I'll stick with "expensive swindle" where the alleged planet-savers are concerned and feel fully justified in doing so. And as for

"spend a pound to save a penny at some unspecified point in the future" -- that's just Gordon Broon economix.

What Nic the Taxi needs is a recording to play to punters who try to keep their destination a secret. Something along the lines of: "Attention, your ejector seat will fire in ten seconds if you do not provide a clear destination. The company takes no responsibility for any injuries you may receive. Ten, nine, eight . . ."

Philip Turner can be found at farrago2@lineone.net

JIM LINWOOD JOINS THE MASS DEBATE ABOUT PROSTITUTION

Many thanks for Vibrator 19 and my apologies for not sending you stories of my (non-participant) encounters with the oldest profession.

In Nottingham, where I grew up, I knew nothing of the ladies of the night until I read Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. He identified the Council House and Market Square as their centres of activity and a work mate told me that "them local brasses are crude and common – not like the ones in London." When we were married we moved into digs in Mapperley, just north of Nottingham. Nobody told us that the roundabout at the top of the road was the local pick-up point and Marion kept wondering why cars pulled up beside her as she returned from work.

When I spent my first single holiday in London as a teenager I stayed at a hotel in Bayswater. When I returned to the hotel at night I saw that the whole of the north side of Bayswater Road was lined with well-dressed manikin prossies ten paces apart. They didn't give any come-ons because in the late-50's they could be arrested for talking to potential customers or even giving them the glad-eye. I assume they took their customers over the road to a secret entrance into Hyde Park.

My next encounter was like Ian and Mike's. I was on my way to *Dark They Were And Golden Eyed* down an Soho alley off Tottenham Court Road when an attractive young lady came up to me, nodded at the block of flats behind her saying "Want to come up stairs?" I felt a bit like Frank Spencer and mumbled something about not having enough time; after all. it was my lunch break.

When I entered fandom there seemed to be a story floating around that a S-F reader and lady of the night regularly plied her trade at the Kettering conventions in the 50's – I'm sure that's a total myth.

Jim Linwood can be found at jlinwood@aol.com

MILT STEVENS

After reading Vibrator #19, it occurred to me that I had a few stories about prostitution and SF conventions. Telling those stories would be more entertaining than telling you about cases where whores were not only killed but also dismembered.

One Westercon was held in a hotel on Union Square in San Francisco. As it happened, the best place to eat was a coffee shop which was diagonally across the square. This doesn't sound like a difficult situation.

It was 9 am on a Saturday morning. I had awoken from the sleep of the somewhat worse for wear and gone in search of food. As I emerged from the hotel, I was brought to a complete stop. The square wasn't exactly crawling with whores. However, there were a whole lot of whores milling about. This was bad. Even in my younger days, my libido never made it up before noon. If my libido had been awake at the time, it would have wanted food as badly as I did.

Male fans were bunching up in front of the hotel entrance. For those of you familiar with American football, I could say that it looked like the whores were lining up in the nickel defense. There was only one thing to do. As if at a signal, we all headed off in various directions at as much speed as we could manage. I headed around left end. Going, going, going, going. I was almost at the coffee shop door when a dark figure appeared before me.

“Hi white boy, you want to have some fun?”

My gift for repartee sprang into action.

“I dunno, do you give a police discount?”

A puff of smoke couldn't have removed her any faster. With a sigh of relief, I proceeded to breakfast.

Milt Stevens can be found at miltstevens@earthlink.net

MARION LINWOOD SHARES THIS REMEDY FOR DEHYDRATION

Best wishes to Pat for a full recovery. Dehydration seems to make many illnesses worse, especially if one lives alone. If it happens again perhaps Pat could drink an adult version of Dr Spock's dehydration fluid:

1 litre boiled water.

8 teaspoons sugar

1 level teaspoon salt.

Stir together and keep in the fridge.

Your sign off “This is the End, my Beautiful Friend” - I can hear the intro but I've forgotten the words to the rest of the song – irritating.

Marion Linwood can be found at jlinwood@aol.com

DAVE COCKFIELD SENT ME A FIVE POUND NOTE, BUT I AM STILL PRINTING HIS LOC

Vibrator 2.0.19 hit the usual pleasure receptors but a fluctuation in voltage gave me a bit of a shock.

I can confirm that I spoke to Ian Williams as he said in his Loc but my so called apology wasn't really what I would call effusive. He has probably already forgotten the conversation as he has details of our holiday together. Equally my trip to Bob and Sadie's with two friends did not involve any Gannets.

Reading the preamble to my "Ladies of the Night" tales I found that I had no memory of having been solicited at Eastercon 77 in Coventry. Did I really send you this snippet of a tale? If so I'd better give the men in white coats a call.

I do however have a non-fannish tale of another solicitation event. When I first came to London in 1978 I lived in a housing association flat and became good friends with a small, well dressed, fellow called Dick who just happened to be a Gay bank Manager.

One afternoon we went to The Ship pub in Rotherhithe for a local Real Ale and Morris dancing festival, as one does. Dick was not overtly Gay in his manner or appearance but some of his friends were.

While relieving myself of a great quantity of ale in the pub loo one of them suddenly appeared at my side. He was tall, slim, dressed in a blue ballgown and sported a long curly blond wig. Suddenly he leaned in front of me in a downward direction and exclaimed, "Oh you poor boy, it's miniscule. Whatever does Dickie Boy see in you. You have certainly dampened my interest". The latter may be because I had turned and peed on his shoes.

I experienced a mixture of shock and anger. Shock because he could not have made such a judgment as my forefinger was blocking his view. Anger because he fancied me. At the time I was 27, overweight, had at least two clean shaven chins, and a moon face with an inane childish grin.

Maybe looking back I should have been grateful for the attention.

I've just remembered a tale from my childhood. My Uncle Alfie was a seaman all his life (1st engineer) who eventually had to retire in his 50's when he lost the four fingers on his left hand.

I was about 12, so this would have been in the 60's, when one day we were going through a box of his old gear. In there was a tin box that had him laughing aloud. It was his official war issue condom. The tin contained a leather condom and two tubes of

cream, an ointment to be applied to the trolley to help prevent infection and the other a lubricant to keep the leather supple.

I remember that it looked well used.

Milt Stevens' dilemma about the legal nature of whores peeing in a bucket reminded me of a similar dilemma I used to have in my job. Most forms of pornography on film are legal these days in the UK. However, going back 10 years I and my fellow Officers were each seizing hundreds of videos and DVDs that were arriving daily by mail from the USA. Gradually the laws started to relax. As far as peeing in a bucket was concerned, this was originally illegal but it was later decided that in order to be illegal someone would have to be peed upon to consider it a sexual act.

I don't know what the current position is but my dodgy prostate allows me to piss on myself regularly.

I'm amazed how you manage to deliver your Vibrator every month. Thank goodness your name is Charnock and not Chilcot.

Dave Cockfield can be found at daverabban@gmail.com

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL HERE HAS A SECOND BITE OF THE CHERRY

Are you doing this to me on purpose? After all, no one else mentions it in the LoCs you have printed. It was bad enough last time, when I got an excess of Joseph Nicholas. There's only one thing worse than that, and it's to be deprived of most of Nic Farey. In short, I don't have Page 33! Instead I have two of Page 13. Since Nic's column is probably the best thing you print each issue, I feel very hard done by. I suppose I could go on eFanzines and read the missing bit. But it's an imposition.

The Ladies of The Night feature backed up your observation (in #18, confusingly enough) that most fans have lived a very sheltered existence. Dave Cockfield mentions that he may have been tempted but one of the things he was afraid of was disease. Dave, I can only tell you that I have never picked up an STD off of anyone who wasn't a fan, or, if they weren't a fan by any normal definition, they were at least married to a Science Fiction writer. (Perhaps that could be a feature you could run next ish: STD clinics as experienced by fans). Working Girls are more than safe by comparison. Of course, one or two of your correspondents relate putative non-hetero experiences, about which I am pretty ignorant, except in the case of the Leicester Square gents of years ago, where you needed a pretty big stick after about 10 at night- come to think of it, there were some pretty big sticks on offer. Chuck Connor's reminiscences were very entertaining, though I got a bit bogged down with military acronyms.

Curt Phillips is dead right about the dreaded Sonovox and all its progeny (from "Water Guitar" right down to the digital Vocorder, last most notably heard on Cher's last big hit). Not only Peter Frampton used it back in the day, but many otherwise sensible people experimented with it, never to much really creative purpose. Basically, all the possibilities of the thing have been evident ever since Sparky's Magic Piano. Right, there you go, that's what it does. Next? But I have to differ with Curt about what he describes as "imprinting" in relation to the music one hears in ones early teens or whatever. As I think he acknowledges, it is perfectly possible to develop other obsessions in music beyond all those 45's you once bought (78's in Fred Smith's case). In my own case, my earliest musical exposure was to 1940's and 50's big bands via my father, and though he had some records I liked, there were a lot more that I could not abide. I was keener on the late 19th and early 20th century classical music he had, much of which I still play often and "enjoy" seems a very inadequate word to describe their importance to me. But at the same time, when I first heard Buddy Holly or the Beach Boys, those were experiences that remain with me in a completely different way. Its not that they are imprinted, if you use that word in the same way as you might describe the behaviour of a bird straight out of the egg, its that they carry with them the emotions they invoked when I first heard them, and very little compares to them right down to the present day. Its not that I cannot experience similar reactions to newer music (Particularly orchestral minimalism or Trance Techno and other electronica in the recent past.) but that too comes with its own emotional referent compared to which very little sounds as good. Certainly, as Curt observes, hearing the same old stuff repeated and re-iterated does nothing, apart from elicit a realisation of how bored one is with it.

Oh dear, how I wish you had not brought up Jeremy Corbyn. But since you have, please could you explain how you think having someone lead a major political party who, by your own admission, cannot win an election does anything for the " issues" about which, I assume, you care. There is no point to politics that cannot aspire to power, is there? And if you oppose the views of those who are currently in power, how do you propose to effect change without an electable alternative? I just don't get it.

John Nielsen-Hall can be found at johnsila32@gmail.com

PAUL SKELTON IS STILL CONFUSED

You showed an amazing degree of prescience by deciding to add page numbers with this issue of your esteemed organ as otherwise, given how easily I seem to become confused, I might never have spotted that I had two page 13s and no page 33. Given my poor memory I'd already have forgotten your earlier piece and assumed that the

reference to 'Liffs' at the bottom to be Nic's misspelling of 'Lifts' and that his taxi trials had finally caused him (or me – I'm an 'equal opportunity' reader) to suffer a complete mental breakdown). Anyway, thanks for giving me this replacement copy at Barcon. However, I am not returning the original, given that you claimed my copy to be the only one with the pages misprinted in this way I reckon that it must soon be worth a fortune. I shall file it with my copy of *aMfO 18* (the version with the Barcon report, that was completed in June 2014, one copy printed and brought here by the Mearae that month, and not the version that was mostly rewritten, completed in November 2014, and subsequently issued to the World).

Regarding the *Ladies of the Night* symposium, I am unsure which is worse; whether to be considered so ugly, dirty, smelly and generally *YEUCH* as to never be approached by any such ladies, or instead to be so naive as to simply be unaware that I had been so approached – it has to be one or the other.

On climate change, I tend to agree with Dave Cockfield (that it is to a degree a natural phenomenon which we are exacerbating). Given that it is my understanding that we are in a brief inter-glacial period, a temporary blip in what would otherwise be the current ice-age, it is likely inevitable that climate change must occur more rapidly than when ice-sheets advance or retreat at their more normal pace. Not that climate-change is all bad. It was on the radio this morning that the Scots have over 400 words for snow and snowy conditions (isn't that even more than the bloody Eskimos? OK, yeah, yeah, I know, Inuit...but isn't it?) So, if we can cut down on the snowy conditions it might have the side benefit of shutting the Scots up a bit.

Actually, of all the upheavals Dave mentions ("social, religious, political, economic, geographical") I suspect the last to be the least of our worries. I do hope he is wrong about an impending "new Dark Age" because if he's right I'm afraid my money would also be on the cockroaches. If we regress there would probably be no way back. We have used up all the 'easy' resources and sources of energy. As a race I think we peaked too soon, we in the so-called 'developed nations'. Ours was the generation when many educated folk with a reasonable job were able to retire in their fifties. I can't see that happening again. Developing nations want their share of the good life, and as there aren't any more resources to go around people everywhere will have to settle for less. Possibly a lot less.

I sort of conflate this worry of Dave's with Joseph's letter. Wasn't privatisation of energy supply supposed to provide not only a one-off bonus of a cash injection for the country (long-since frittered away) but also wasn't it sold on the basis that private industry would generate the capital required for the updated infrastructure required?

Whereas the result is that private industry only generates, as Joseph pointed out, dividends for shareholders and any infrastructure will only be provided by guaranteeing a vastly inflated price for the energy generated...however it is generated. So far, as I understand it, 'green' energy is pushing our bills up because it costs more to produce than old-fashioned dirty energy. Nuclear power stations were supposed to be the way forward, but apparently we haven't yet come up with a way to make the equations work in our favour. You'd think, as an island, that we'd be able to make tidal power an economic prospect, but we don't seem able to do that either. Wind farms will never provide us with sufficient reliable energy. Could the country get by with solar panels on every rooftop? Fossil fuels will run out, so where is our future energy supply? If you look back at recent history we always seemed to come up with new, cheaper energy sources to move us onward and upward. Now the newer ones are dearer, and we are going to start going backwards.

Maybe Nic should keep on "shaving" those red lights whilst he still can...before they start going out.

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

DAVID REDD CONFESSES HIS COMPLICITY IN GARHAM HALL'S DOWNFALL

What do you mean muttering to Dave Cockfield, "Bring back truth and ethics and belief in politics"? BACK? I trust the boys have had a quiet word with you about this.

Re your comment about Graham Hall, I fear I was one of those who did indeed "provide liquor which could rot his liver," even if my provision was only an infinitesimal fraction of his total consumption. But at least my last sight of him (with bottle) was as a happy man.

I sought Peter Weston's "Lock Man" book on-line, without success. Luckily the Pickersgills have let me glimpse a copy. To my delight I instantly found a photo of a hexagonal-socket door handle, exactly the kind I'd struggled with years ago. How nostalgic. As with Mr Langford's own "Apricot Files", (a) most of the technicalities are beyond my comprehension, (b) there are moments of pleasure worth finding.

As for sax solos, I still treasure the memory, sadly faded, of Lol Coxhill enhancing Kevin Ayers' "May I" on TV ages ago. Hope it wasn't just a dream. (At my age you can never be quite sure any more.)

Good luck to Nic with the new firm.

David Redd can be found at dave_redd@hotmail.com

FRED SMITH

Fancy that! Up to number 19 already, and thanks for it as always. I do have a couple of complaints, tho: seems to me your correspondents are very left-wing (and rabid, at that!) and this time around devote too much space to politics. The other (minor) thing that I don't find particularly interesting is the stuff about encounters with pros, although i know you asked for the anecdotes. Are there any fans fond of David Cameron or the Tories, generally? Anybody happy with the election reult? Actually, I don't mind it, cosidering the mess Labour is in and how ineffectual the Lib-Dems are. And as for the SNP, their only policies seem to be independence for Scotland!.

Enough of this ranting! I was pleased to see more of you this time and interested in your comments about jazz, of course, and also the (rather brief) notes about your musical history. More, please!

Rest of thish is full of good stuff but no other comments come to mind so will have to leave you with this short missive. Think I may have made your deadline and look forward to the next time.

Frederick Smith can be found at f.smith50@ntlworld.com

ROBERT LICHTMAN STEPS UP WITH ANOTHER OF HIS *SHORT* LOCS

In his comments on the \$2 bill, Curt Phillips writes, "That bill sports the image of Jefferson and when I asked the staff at Monticello told me that they have the Federal Reserve ship them fresh supplies of \$2 bills every week for their use. It seems that Monticello is today the largest single customer in the nation that uses those bills and they're quite happy in that role. Someday I plan to dress up in an 18th century frock coat and a white wig, go to Monticello, and stand around outside the gift shop offering to autograph \$2 bills for kids." What a lovely fantasy! I hope that Curt actually does this eventually and writes it up for a fanzine, preferably mine.

I'm a little envious of those "crisp new \$2 bills" he mentions getting in change. I've got about 30-40 of them (which I got over several years by asking for them at the bank) tucked away in a hiding place along with a bunch of \$20 bills that are for use if and when a natural disaster (here, probably an earthquake) knocks out the power for an extended period so that I wouldn't be able to use my credit card. Some of the \$2 bills are in excellent condition, but not of them are crisp and new.

Thanks to Curt for his explanation of how the late Lee Jacobs was "a part of Southern Fandom because he chose to be by coming to southern conventions and participating in southern fanac. One "opts in" to Southern fandom. The list of non-Southerners who

were and are a part of Southern Fandom is long and distinguished, and includes such names as Lynn Hickman, Charles_Grant, and Bob Tucker. They all choose to become a part of the fandom we celebrate down here in the South, and we took them to our hearts. Anyone else can do the same – if you know how...”

On that basis, perhaps I’m also a Southern Fan on the basis of having been a member of the SFPA (Southern Fandom Press Alliance) apa for a year or so back in the late ‘90s – after having set some sort of record for being on its waiting since the late ‘80s. I kept hitting the top of the list, it wouldn’t be a good time just then, and I’d bounce myself back to the bottom. While on the waiting list, I produced the first issue of my SFPazine, *The Northern Californian*, in 1991 for the group’s thirtieth anniversary mailing. Then in 1997 and 1998 I published a half dozen other issues before determining that with its large mailings and frequent schedule it was, after all, One Thing Too Many for me, fanac-wise, and I dropped out with some regrets. More recently, since its formation I’ve been a member of Curt’s Southern Fandom Classic Yahoogroup and post there now and then.

David Redd writes, “R-Laurraine Tutuhasi lost a fruit tree to wildlife? I just lost an oak seedling when red ants colonised its pot; there's a commentary on life in there somewhere.” Thanks to the drought, we’ve probably lost a rather large plant that seasonally would put out stalks of purple flowers. I can’t find a Google image of them and don’t remember what it was called. It started life with us in a 4-inch pot brought home from the nursery and planted in the tight space between the road and our fence, and grew over time to be this enormous thing – a good five feet tall and nearly that wide – that required serious pruning back every year. I’m on the verge of cutting it back seriously because it looks so...well, no other way to put it...dead, with hopes that perhaps it will, phoenix-like, rise from what I leave after my hacking should the El Nino rains we’re told to expect actually materialize (as mentioned by Milt Stevens in his letter below David’s)

As always, Nic’s taxi column is good for a solid larf, and this one is no exception. Interesting about “mobileye” in the glossary-named-after-me. It sounds like a variant version of the sensors on recent model cars that tell you. when backing up, whether you’re getting uncomfortably (per its algorithm) close to whatever is behind you (and on the other side of the coin, when going forward as perhaps in squeezing into a parking space whether you’re about to bash the bumper of the car in front of you).

Robert Lichtman can be found at robertlichtman@yahoo.com

EXPECT NOT AND YE SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED: A BARCON 3 REPORT by Pat Charnock

I had trouble explaining to my son why I was going to Peterborough. Heck, I had enough trouble explaining to myself. It's not a tourist town, and fannish history doesn't do it for me. Tell me that a hotel has hosted previous conventions, and I'll sigh and roll my eyes. But this Barcon hit the spot.

Long ago - well, three years ago when the first Barcon was set up - it was decided that the hotel liaison person would tell the hotel that we were a reunion, not a convention. We don't need function room space because we're not a convention, we're a fan group. And besides, there's no programme. Historically, fan groups tended to be based in a particular place, but InTheBar being an e-group means we draw our members from far and wide. From all parts of England they came - Stockport, Sussex, Derby and Wonderful Ashford. (Yes, I've left some of us out, you'll just have to put up with it. If you want egoboo, you'll have to find a genuine conrep. And yes, there are members of our group living in America and Scotland too.)

So we converged on The Bull Hotel, driving through the rain and the traffic queues. Happily our new satnav delivered us right to the car park, and check in was a doddle. Strangely Graham and I were given rooms on different floors. The only time this has happened to us before is when we booked a cheap deal online in a posh hotel and we were told that for the rate we were paying, we couldn't expect much.

Then I found that my room stank. Some people like air freshener: I can't abide it, and excess use makes me gag. My first reaction was to open the window wide. My second was to phone Housekeeping and request that never again while I was in residence would they use air freshener in my room. They didn't. They got a tip.

There were people there already, but don't ask me who arrived first because I really can't remember now. I remember hugging people and thinking that just maybe it might be a good weekend after all. Then I headed out for a walk, I needed to stretch after hours in the car.

I walked straight out of the hotel and across the road into a shopping arcade. Suited me fine. I found Lakeland ("the home of creative kitchenware"), bought a couple of bits, and headed back to the hotel for a quiet time before the evening's frolics.

That evening all fifteen of us gathered in the hotel bar and planned dinner. Imaginatively, we ended up in two groups at the same Indian restaurant. (Thanks for the loan of the phone, Carrie.) The other group, who booked first, got a table on the busier ground floor. It's probably just as well that we were seated on the first floor, a little away from the other tables. I say just as well because halfway through the meal, Graham developed hiccups. (Hiccoughs? Hiccups? You say either, I say either.....) Most people's hiccups go away after a decent interval. Graham's don't. Most people don't thump the table and shout and swear when they get hiccups. We tried to get him to try everything - breath holding - he refused to die just because he'd got hiccups, sipping water - that was

fine for the first sip then he gave up because it didn't work, and then Rob J suggested deep breathing. "Come on, Graham," I exhorted him, "In, Out, In, Out, In, Out...." until we were heartily sick of it. But something worked. It may have been the breathing, it may have been just the elapse of time. I'm happy that Rob didn't suggest digital rectal massage. But the food was good, and we gave them a tip.

Next day, Saturday, we went cultural. (Yes, this is a bit of a linear report. But whatthehey, this is Vibrator, Graham's been asking me to write for him for ages, and he ain't gonna reject this.) I think it was Ian who suggested a trip to the museum, but I didn't write it down in my notebook. Once round the museum was to be followed by lunch in the museum cafe and a guided walking tour of Peterborough in the afternoon. It was a good plan. The museum wasn't much to write home about, but I spent a happy half hour watching a group of adolescents (exchange students? they spoke a mixture of Spanish and English) playing chess. The chess board was part of an Alice in Wonderland exhibition with Tenniel drawings and a floor size chess board and pieces. I haven't played chess for years, and it was fun to watch them and work out their moves. I gave up and wandered off when they reached stalemate.

Peterborough has a very old cathedral, built in the remains of an ancient abbey. I was glad that the walking tour avoided going inside the cathedral and explored the outside as I found the architecture fascinating. I like seeing how buildings have evolved, mutated from one use to another, how the ancient walls have had other walls and windows built into them. The result is not always aesthetically pleasing, but it's intriguing to me.

Then our group split up and I wandered round the city, taking in the Harvest Festival, the black-face Morris dancers, and the human statues. Every now and then I'd bump into another InTheBarite and we'd grin idiotically.

That evening, we made another fannish attempt at planning dinner, but this one was doomed to failure. There were two factions - one wanted to lunch at the Handmade Burger place over the road, and the other wanted fish and chips in the hotel restaurant (HR). I wavered: first I wanted fish 'n' chips, then burgers, then fish then..... I plumped for burgers, but it didn't work. While one group disappeared into the HR, Rob went to try and get a table at the burger place. He returned to report that they wouldn't have a table for another hour. I didn't want to wait an hour, and another group of us headed into the almost empty HR. There we were met by a very frazzled waiter. There was a wedding in the hotel that night, and the kitchen was pushed to its limit catering for the wedding, and we hadn't booked. He had been exasperated by the first group of five, and had pleaded with the chef to cook for them. Now WE had turned up, and really put the cat among the pigeons. He tutted, he pushed tables together, he tutted, he rearranged chairs, he frowned, and he finally served us with some excellent food and kept the drinks flowing. Later on, he was joined by a young waitress. When it came time to pay, we were pleased with the service and added a good tip. The money was collected by the young waitress who immediately brought back the tip.

"You've given us too much money."

"It's a tip."

She still looked bemused, took the tip away again, came back with it, and tried to refuse it one more time, but we weren't having any, and finally managed to persuade her that they were entitled to it.

People started going home on Sunday, but we Charnox were determined to wring as much fun out of the weekend as we could. We joined the walk to the Nene Valley Railway, one of those preserved lines that has an engine in steam every blue moon and not on the day you happen to want to chug along behind it. Still, the ride was OK, and the company was good, and the carriages were nostalgic.

There were only five of us left for dinner that night, and plenty of empty tables at the burger place. Their menu selection was great, and I ended up with a delicious bunless burger with Brie, and sweetcorn on the side. And the nicest apple juice I've ever tasted. Our waitress was enthusiastic and helpful, and couldn't have been better. So we were worried when she went home before we'd had a chance to pay the bill. We asked one of the remaining waiters if she'd get it if we left a tip. He told us all tips were pooled, which was fair enough. But when the bill came, it was way below what we'd expected, and we discovered that we hadn't been charged for any drinks. The waiter told us that they were being nice to us because we'd been trying to dine there for three days, and they hadn't been able to find us a table before.

We weren't having that! We'd had a great meal, with good service, and we added enough for the drinks and a good tip.

After, we sat in the hotel bar, and I asked people to share their outstanding memories of Barcon, and I wrote some of them down.

- Eddie Izzard's Chat Room - arcane knowledge gleaned in a conversation.
- Emotionally intelligent trousers. Don't ask. Or rather, don't ask me.
- The explosive glass in the Handmade Burger place. The brick floor was unforgiving when a glass was dropped on it ten feet away, but luckily the flying fragments caused no damage.
- The swans on the river.
- The Harvest meal. I told you there was a harvest festival in the city. In the main square they had laid out rows of long tables, and apparently residents had entered a lottery to win a seat for the meal.
- The Gurney Stoves in the Cathedral. Patented in Victorian times, the big round stoves have external ribs to increase the surface area of the stove.
- The people. InTheBar is a fannishly active group. A lot of them are fan writers and editors and artists and loc writers. They're good fun to be with.

And we tossed around ideas for next year - Telford, Taunton, Shrewsbury, Liverpool, Norwich. We need a town with a reasonably priced, centrally placed hotel, a few tourist attractions, and some good restaurants. – Pat Charnock

BARCON 3: EASTERCONS AND CATHERINE OF ARAGON by Claire Brialey

Sometimes it's easy to forget that not everyone else having breakfast in the hotel is at the same convention as I am. Sometimes it's easy to forget that I'm not technically at a convention.

In 2013 Ian Maule established the convention – as it were – that Barcon is a 'reunion', to help hotels understand why we're all there in the first place and encourage them to give us a group discount rather than expecting that we're going to want to hire function space and catering for serious conference workshops.

What we are reuniting is left as an exercise for the observer, although when we acquired an observer during Rob Jackson's reading of the Ig Nobel Prize highlights on Saturday evening we rapidly became a coalition of the unwilling. Whether our temporary acquaintance departed, as we did, with a new-found determination to time his urination, or whether he had an opportunity very shortly afterwards to conduct this experiment in the street since he'd only ever been trying to get past us to illicitly use the gents' loo in the hotel, is also lost to history and science alike.

Barcon 3 was in the Bull Hotel in Peterborough, previous venue of Petercon (the Eastercon, in 1963), RePetercon (the Eastercon, in 1964) and Re-RePetercon (Peter Weston's fortieth anniversary get-together, in 2004), but it was not technically a reunion of fanhistorians. Nonetheless, the early arrivals from Cambridge make a pilgrimage to the historic and authentic butcher's opposite to sample unauthentically fresh pork pies in honour of Brian Burgess's purchases over fifty years before.

It could perhaps have been mistaken for a reunion of people interested in history; not only did I seize the opportunity to be enlightened about tatting by Sarah Haddock on Saturday morning but, with David Haddock and then Carrie and Jim Mowatt, we then spent a happy but haphazard half-hour decoding the Stuart era paintings around the hotel and playing Guess That Cardinal. And inevitably the conversation in one of the equally inevitable pubs devolved to the historical events we might want to observe, if only we could safely time-travel without all of the equally inevitable hiccoughs that science fiction has taught us will occur.

Then again, all knowledge is contained in fandom, and the split-level excursion to The Banyan Tree on Friday evening gleaned the knowledge that Dr Rob can cure hiccoughs – or at least that he can cure hiccoughs in Graham. (No, I don't know quite how Dr Rob surprised Graham that much either; I was downstairs anticipating an espresso martini at the time.) So if we take these things too literally we might have time travel licked after all.

That might come in handy since it's possible that any other casual observers would have deduced we were ourselves a reunion of people from history. In the throes of arranging the multi-layered Banyan Tree trip – from which only Ian and Janice were absent, having ploughed their own furrow to Pizza Express by then, the splitters – Cas Skelton uttered a phrase you don't hear very often these days: 'Has anyone got a phone?'

But in practice it was more a reunion of people who'd been to other Barcons and who could still make it to this one, which could have made for some gloomy reflection if we weren't determinedly treating it as a blip (next year in Norwich?). It probably didn't help that most of us got to start off by talking about our recent or current illnesses and afflictions. On Friday afternoon I greeted Graham by asking about his foot, and when Mark and I got down to the hotel bar that evening Graham returned the courtesy by asking about my concussion, while in the corner Cas and Sarah were volubly comparing symptoms and procedures. We must somehow have missed the long-promised film of Ian's operation.

Fighting back nobly for the fit and healthy came the comparatively youthful Jim, who not only completed a 5 kilometre Park Run on Saturday morning but ran a similar distance twice just to get there and back. And he'd done a one-shot for the convention. It's possible he's an alien, you know.

But even Jim could not withstand grandmaster Mike Meara, who opened with the passing revelation of a recurrence of Gun Emplacement Knee (only known to be alleviated by time, or copious internal application of Ridge wines), followed up with a strong gambit of earwax and associated balance problems, and then swept the board with spontaneous nosebleeds. Once again we considered alien infestation, Mike as Patient Zero for a new plague, or evidence of miracles. Laying on of hands was mercifully averted by more wine.

Later we found a new way to tell that we are from the past: sitting around in the bar comparing whether our respective former anti-establishment stances in fandom hold up to the scrutiny of history, which still have resonance now and which have simply taken over the establishment. Maybe it's like this in the modern old Labour party. Maybe Nina Horvath (who wasn't at this convention, of course, having only just returned from her

triumphant TAFF trip to North America) was right when she pointed out that everyone else is just so old. Maybe it was simply that the whisky and games of previous Barcons were as absent as the other friends we missed.

There was nothing for it but to distract ourselves with funny animals. This time it wasn't us who started it, and we weren't even in a pub when it began. On Saturday morning Carrie recounted the Tale of the Mouse in Trousers; and so the scene was set. I won't steal the whole of Carrie's anecdote, but instead will just relate Jim's subsequent comment that there's nothing quite like the sensation of movement inside your trouser leg which you know isn't attached to you. He contended that was worse than the bite.

At which point it clearly was time to go to a pub and so we went out to meet Mike and Pat Meara on the river, at a restaurant on a barge. There were several to choose from, but after a little wandering and phone calls we found the right one – which it turned out we had already visited with fannish denizens of Peterborough past, including Max and Tobes, albeit to go to the restaurant on the upper deck rather than what's now a good real ale bar down towards the bilges.

To get there we walked past much civic activity in sunshine that was quite pre-autumnal. This weekend there was not only a fannish reunion but also a Harvest Festival in Peterborough, which in that city (and it really is a city, whatever you might think – ask any local resident, apparently) goes some way beyond what I remember from primary school. Although that, too, is a long way in the past. And so now we have craft markets and artisan cooking, performances and installations, buskers and processions and dancing and... yes.

Where there is a celebration of folk traditions there will be Morris dancing. And where there is beer there will be Morris dancers. Fortunately, although there were a lot of Morris dancers around the barge, there was also a lot of beer, and as yet no dancing. Having drunk some beer ourselves, we moved along before the rival Morris sides could open hostilities.

Two pubs later, we had settled into our own mists and mellow fruitfulness, and indeed were just about to sensibly call it a day, or at least an afternoon, when the group who had been sampling culture and history instead of beer decided to even the scales. Pat M sensibly retired to the hotel anyway, but we stayed and talked about time travel, and about the squirrel.

Readers of *Banana Wings* (I believe we have one or two left somewhere) or of the works of Richard Feynman will recall that there is only one squirrel, moving very, very fast. In Peterborough we rapidly clarified – led by Prof Paul Skelton – that there is only one squirrel but as well as being very fast it is also very, very large and occupies many

dimensions, so that the fast-moving squirrel we see is simply an extrusion into our universe of one part of the squirrel. And so it can travel through time. I might have reintroduced the concept of squirrel-aged beer at this stage.

Science has not previously recorded the existence of the giant multi-dimensional squirrel's sidekick, which appears to be a mouse in trousers – or its secret weapon, the projectile badger. This might be because science hadn't been in the pub all afternoon or joining up anecdotes since it sobered up. Personally I think there's some research in this just waiting for an Ig Nobel Prize some day, although possibly it's just waiting for the pub to open again.

Eventually Mark and I also thought that we should follow the path of good sense and the Pats, and return to the hotel for a siesta. As a parting shot I introduced to the time travel discussion the innocuous question of whether people would choose to travel to the future, rather than just the past.

By the time we went back to the hotel bar to learn that the Cambridge contingent had kindly waited for us before making a final sortie to the handmade burger place, from which the rest of the party had fled in order to have a reunion with the hotel restaurant instead, it transpired that the thought experiment had moved on. It seemed only fair to do our bit.

And so on Sunday morning at breakfast there we were, at a table next to Dr Rob and the Charnox – which must surely be the name of a band, doubtless on the same bill as Carrie and the Haddocks – but not quite close enough for our conversations not to be audible to anyone else who cared to listen and probably some who didn't. Thus, in the course of comparing desperate fun and making sure that Graham felt relieved he'd had an early night, it became necessary to summarise Trousers of the Future.

Whatever Pat C might think, I didn't make lots of notes – so lots of this is already lost in the mellow fruity mists unless it has been captured in amber for a future Jim Mowatt fanzine, or possibly in an interview for Radio Norwich which Graham evidently conducted with the Morris dancers after we left the pub.

Imagine, though, that you could have intelligent trousers. They could be mood-sensing trousers, and indicate to other people when you are feeling anti-social (oh, how I want grumpy trousers) or more friendly. They could – and I'm still not sure whether this is a good thing – indicate when you are feeling very friendly indeed in the direction of a particular person, possibly by radiating colour patterns from the groin outwards. They could, crucially, warn you when there's an unexpected rodent inside.

It's not that Jim's scarred, you understand, or at least not in a way that he could or should show us. But that's something else the trousers could help with, although who

they would be helping is a debatable point: with sufficient GPS functionality, you could set an alert when someone removes their trousers at a time or place that seems inappropriate. (The chastity belt upgrade is possibly incompatible with the groinal radiation signal setting.) As Graham commented at breakfast, intelligent trousers would logically have intelligent zips, avoiding a range of unfortunate incidents.

There was more. Much more. (One postscript came in another pub in Croydon on Sunday evening – where the whole thing started about the squirrel – after we had reported back, when a harmless observation about wrestling led to the prospect of Sting writing an opera about trousers being a thing of the past.) Suffice it to say that in Peterborough we were all resolved that it would be unhelpful in the current climate of the Hugo awards for Trousers of the Future to ever become involved with sponsorship of a Worldcon.

After breakfast on Sunday the Skeltons and the Mearas made separate breaks for points north-ish, we left to catch a train south, and everyone else went on a train from or possibly to the past. If any of those who stayed for another night – or indeed anyone who participated in any of the proper tourist activities over the weekend rather than loafing around drinking and talking bollocks about trousers – is moved to give their account of proceedings then Graham might even have one whole con report for *Vibrator*.

DEAF AND TAXIS by Nic Farey

The inevitability of that subheading just grabs you (by the dick, if you have one) doesn't it, as the perfect lead-in to: "I 'ad that Dave Langford in the cab once...", which of course I didn't, and since that occurrence is pretty unlikely, I might as well use the line and get it out of the way now, eh?

Also, a brief memo from the Department of Blinding Obviousness to Fred Smith, who writes (Letters, V19), of my "wonderfully descriptive phrase, "rub and tug establishments" which could well be applied to our so-called "massage" parlours." Er, yes. A "rub and tug establishment" *is* a so-called "massage parlor" (or parlour), mate.

In Gay News, not much to tell other than being accosted (as much as leaning into the driver's window a bit can be called an accost), by a hipsterly-bearded patron of Piranhas. As I was driving in to get in the taxi line, the bloke has it on his toes over at a quickish clip, and starts rattling off a spiel in Spanish, grinning drunkenly all the while. Now my command of that language is pretty limited ("*poquito*") to what I picked up on construction sites, so all he got out of me there was a shrug. Obviously wanting to be helpful, he translated: "I will suck your dick and you can fuck my ass", which apparently is several leering paragraphs in a romance language. As is the protocol of taxis, I informed him that he should really take the first taxi in the line.

So I'm a couple of weeks in with the new employer (Lucky Cab) now, and getting used to their methods and protocols which are a bit different to the previous lot. YCS is one of

the bigger firms, Lucky a smaller operation with a single owner (who is, perhaps unusually, directly contactable) and in some ways a bit more laid back. Rather than being slavish to the book money, if you come in with a lower number, they'll look at the number of rides you took, and if *that* is at an average level, the obvious conclusion is that you were working all right, just happened to get shorter rides that day. The other metric will be the percentage of paid miles to total miles. If this is below half (I think 48% is their line), the implication is that you were cruising around aimlessly (or daftly) rather than patiently staging. At YCS, the company paid for fuel (all the cabs being converted to propane), although according to my pals over there this has now changed, and the drivers are getting hit with a per-shift fuel charge, as well as the per-trip giveback increasing to 65 cents from 60. Nevertheless, it's still more feasible under that system to cruise more, if you care to. My paid miles to total miles ratio for them would be in the 35-45% range, since I had no worries about beetling off to the suburbs to catch rides if any came up, and deadheading back if necessary. Now I strategize a bit differently, working much more on the basis of picking up where I drop (always a good plan anyway), and working the airport more, and my paid/total mileage is more like 55-65%. I have to pay for the fuel (100% the first year), so trying to minimize the cruising is a decent idea. In one of the Chevys (Malibu or Impala), gas is about \$30 a shift, only getting 11 or 12 miles to the gallon. If I luck into a Prius it'll be half that cost.

The main issue I'm dealing with is not really getting enough sleep. Lucky doesn't have a myriad of shift starts, the options are 12-12 (not available to rookies like me), 2-2 or 3-3. In common with any newbie, I'm put on the day shift, so that's an am start. You need to be in a half hour before the shift starts, although they've brought in a rule for slower (midweek) days that lets you do 10 hours instead of 12. There's a call-in procedure where you phone the number to find out if you're on the 2 or the 3, trouble is this isn't on until after 5 or 6pm for day shift, so by the time you call in, if you find out you're on the 2 (meaning be there by 1:30am), you'll be lucky (ahem) to get 6 hours of kip. We're managing this right now by Famous Author(tm) Jen doing the calling in and waking me up at the appropriate time. I can actually function quite well on 6 hours of sleep, but then I'll end up spending a lot of my Thursday day off catching up (yesterday I probably slept a total of close to 14 hours) and Friday trying to cram in chores, errands, fanac ect ect.

The big news right now is that the rideshare companies (Uber and Lyft) have now restarted operations in Nevada, at least semi-legally, not without some continuing controversy. The next column will probably contain more on this than you'll ever want to know.

THE LICHTMAN FRED SMITH SPECIAL GLOSSARY

Cruising : Not related to Gay Sex, really. Driving around, most likely waiting for a radio call rather than staging at a taxi stand.

Deadheading : Driving empty, usually when you've taken a ride to more outlying areas, where you're unlikely to sit around and wait for a fare. Not necessarily under the influence of jam bands and certain substances.

Drive-through : Almost the same as "wide & waiting" (*qv passim*), a situation where there are a very few cabs and people waiting, so you get in, drop, and load and out quick.

Drop-to-load : A measure of how a stand is working. On a slow day, drivers on the YCS radio would be asking for "anything under an hour?" We'll use this a lot at the airport pits. Fairly straightforwardly, if I take a fare to the airport and drop them at, say, 9am, then go round to line up in the pit, getting a ride out at 9:30, the drop-to-load is 30 minutes.

Pit : The staging area at the airport, one each for Terminals 1 and 3. They can hold up to 200 cabs.

Rub & tug establishment : A massage parlor, Fred, really.

Wanker's Off : Something to do with rub & tug, probably, but also the lead-up to the punchline of an old joke featuring a puppy named "Wanker", and the homophonic "Wanker's off" (the puppy has run away), and "Wank us off" (rub & tug). It was hilarious, really it was. – **Nic Farey**

DON WEST HAS DIED

That's not anything I'd ever hoped I'd be announcing. I think we may all have a mental list of everybody we are connected to that we can consider dying because of what we know of their lives and their habits, but Don was never on my Radar, so I was genuinely shocked when it was announced that on September 25th he simply slipped away on a tide of medication for a recently diagnosed lung cancer.

I knew he smoked from an early age (possibly three) and I knew he was from Oop North and so probably had a bad diet, but as someone who consumed a bottle of vodka every day I was never really prepared to put him above me in the race for oblivion. Same goes for my mates, John Brosnan, Rob Holdstock, and even Graham Hall. I was genuinely shocked when they all died, because I didn't see how I could have possibly escaped the lottery.

I was introduced to Don by Graham Hall. The two were good friends, and were like-spirits, with keen intellects and dry wits and wisdom which seemed to me beyond their years, and so it was natural we should interact, and the resonance they shared in their friendship clicked with me as I worked my way through fandom.

Years ago, Pat and I spent a lot of time visiting old family sites in Yorkshire and Don was always on our itinerary. We learnt how he had worked at the Damart Factory in Bingley, helping to fashion warm and comfortable clothes to ward off the grimness of The North. His first wife Anne was a lovely forbearing lady who bore him several children, none of whom he seemed capable of dealing with. I once asked him why he had so many children

(it wasn't really a fannish fashion at that time), and he whispered lasciviously "We just can't keep our hands off each other."

We visited their house in Bingley and Don showed us the prototype duplicator he had made out of an old washing machine. Or it may have been a paint tin – apparently he had quite a few versions in various stages of construction. We played dominoes in his local pub. We played for money. He always won.

One day he appeared out of the blue on my doorstep in Notting Hill with A.N. Other fan whose name escapes me. It was raining and it was eleven at night and he wanted shelter. Pat and I were tired and didn't have any room to offer so we turned him away. He took it as well as he could, but I thought I saw him fashion a ancient gypsy hex in the air as he trudged away into the noir night. I'd like to think he hated me forever after for that, but hate was never in his heart. He continued to send me cartoons and letters throughout my fannish career. The last time I saw him was at Winchester. He had become cadaverous and grey, but remained as lugubriously intelligent as ever. He still had a fine line in gnomonic world-weary utterances delivered in a fashion which hinted he would perform physical damage on anyone who disagreed with him.

The last exchange I had with him was when Don sent me a letter complaining of the way I'd reproduced his artwork in Vibrator. It was a touchy, grumpy letter and I didn't really understand the grounds for his complaint. He complained of **ragged edges** and I didn't know what he was talking about. Anyway, it was only fan stuff, wasn't it? What was apparent, however, was how seriously he took his work and what a perfectionist he was. I approached him several times with a view to doing a collection of his artwork, but, somewhat surprisingly his reaction was extreme diffidence and disinterest. Simply, he thought his work was transient and not worth collecting or revering. For someone who was so concerned with the correct reproduction of his work, he was strangely offhand about its worth and value in the fannish pantheon. In reply to his complaints I wrote a letter chiding him for being unfannish and overly-scrupulous and intended to send it to him returning what unpublished artwork I still had. I never sent the letter and am glad I didn't. It would have been a sour note on which to say goodbye, even though I didn't know a goodbye was in the offing. At least I still have the illos and will reproduce them as best I can, honestly Don. It was sad he died of lung cancer, but he enjoyed smoking and who are we to deny anyone the comfort of what gives them pleasure, and I'm not sure it even appreciably shorted the normal term of his life. Most of my dead friends have died younger. At this point my sympathy goes to his partner Hazel Ashworth and Don's children and other immediate family.

A HISTORICAL NOTE ON FANDOM (UP NORTH) IN THE OLDEN DAYS

YON SCRUFFY
LAYABOUT
LOOKS LIKE ONE
O' THEM SCIENCE
FICTION FANS

AYE, RIGHT,
PROBABLY KEEPS
BOOKS IN
HIS BATH

NO NO, I
WOULD NEVER
DO THAT

THE SPIDERS
MIGHT NOT
LIKE IT



VIBRATOR ENDPIECE

Thus ends Vibrator 20, not exactly in the way I had hoped it would. But this has been Vibrator 20, an unashamedly left-wing not to say Bolshevik fanzine (sorry, Fred Smith). We control the horizontal and we control the vertical, although after a few quarts of vodka such orientation may tend to become confused. Anyway we are the Jeremy Corbyns of fandom, and piss on right-wing middle-class preconceptions fed to us by people who fuck pigs. Well, we all do silly things when we are young which we may regret later, don't we? No, David, I have never fucked a pig. I have also never taken away anyone's house because they couldn't afford the bedroom tax. I have never nibbled away at a widow's mite, forcing her to seek charity in food banks simply to stay alive. I have never sidled up to Saudi princes in a deal to ban human rights (but they buy warplanes from us!). I am hoping Pat Charnock will copy-edit this issue, but I'm afraid nothing can make the contents any more intrinsically readable. I will try to get the pages in the right order this time, and that may help, but as Uncle Johnny has proved, even numbering the pages seem to offer no definitive solution for this problem.

As usual I'm at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. This issue is dated 30th September, 2015. Yippee ki-yay, motherfuckers!