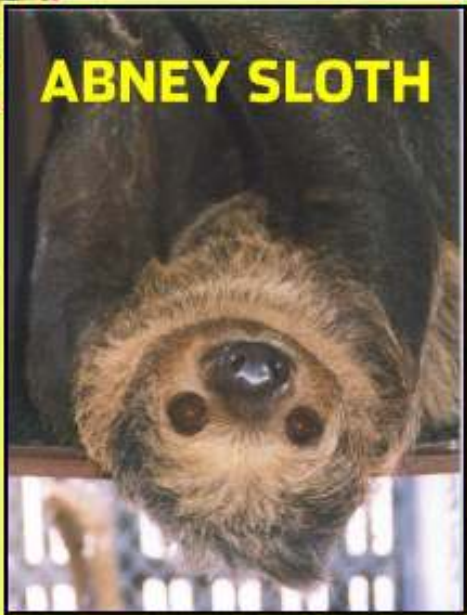


**By Philip K. Cartledge**



Still available at <http://www.cartiledgeworld.co.uk/alternative.pdf>

Here 'tis, yet another issue of the sort-of monthly incredibly-shrinking fanzine Vibrator. I say sort-of because it seems to be becoming harder and harder to keep to deadlines, and I say shrinking because it becomes increasingly harder for me to pad it out with the sort of rubbish personal recollections I specialize in. Life often intervenes in terms of taking people to hospital and even staying awake long enough to remain interested in living, let alone producing a fanzine. I have asked Pat to intervene and write for me about her brush with death in suitable dramatic terms, but she claims she can't see who would be interested in her struggle against the surgeons who wanted to wrestle parts of her gut from her. Still, I persevere, only helped through the process by watching copious amounts of television, and then when I wake up, copious amounts of late night television. Have I told you about my long-term love affair with vodka which seems to satisfy both waking and sleeping states?

This issue would appear to be No. 38.

I seem to have been spending too much time on Facebook lately, based on the number of people who have recently unfriended me, but that is probably only because Donald Trump irritates me so much. Well, not irritates, I just find it incredible that I find myself trapped in the same time-space continuum where he is President. It's like being in a Philip K. Dick novel. You know, you live seventy years convinced that America is an ally with a rich cultural heritage governed by reasonably sensible politicians and populated by friendly people (based on my own experience of visiting there) but then they elect a clown to govern them, and your worldview falls apart and you really don't care anymore. Even James Bond movies now seem realistic according to this developing scenario of madness.

## GRAHAM GOES SHOPPING

You may or may not know that I live a hundred yards from a very cosmopolitan high street known as Grand Parade in Green Lanes, in a region between Manor House and Turnpike Lane. It is a distinctive area of London. To the west rising towards the heights which will become Crouch End, Muswell Hill and then Hornsey and Highgate there is a range of steeply ascending roads known as the Ladder. To the east, flattening towards Tottenham and the Hackney Marshes lie more moderate parallel streets known as the Gardens, for

their road-names rather than any perceived horticultural or arboreal virtue. I live in one of the Gardens.

When Pat and I were ready to move from our tiny flat in South Acton, we gravitated towards the Green Lanes area of North London because several of our friends already lived there, Malcolm Edwards and his then-wife Chris Atkinson, and Roy Kettle and Kath Mitchell, not far from Rob Holdstock and Sarah Biggs.

We were already familiar with it and it felt comfortable and good to be among friends. Roy, Rob and I played badminton together virtually every week for several years. We were lucky enough to find a house which I remember as being priced then between 20 and 30k. It had been a house of multiple occupancy (every door had a Yale lock) and the house was damp without central heating so we had to slowly make improvements to it, after we had moved in. It was where we largely brought up our two children and neither of us were exactly rich, so things had to be taken slowly and surely. Pat had several severe asthma attacks a long the way before we managed to get the house dried out.

Green Lanes itself was always a major factor. My jobs were located first of all in Shoreditch, and then in Canary Wharf, and then in Hackney, so the north /south route into the heart of London that Green Lanes represented was, well, central.

As we settled in, so we found that Green Lanes, and specifically the Grand Parade (that area which extends north from the overground bridge at Haringey Station) developed apace. When we arrived we were unwary enough to seek out kebabs in premises that advertised themselves as Football Clubs and seemed mostly inhabited by old Turkish men, drinking coffee and playing cards. Sure, they would make you a kebab, but you never felt entirely welcome.

There was an admixture of Turkish and Greek citizens. The person who lived next door to us when we moved in was a lovely old Greek Lady called Elli who called Pat Patsy, and shared treats and sweetmeats with us. The Turks and Greeks, some of whom had fled when Cyprus was divided, lived as far as I could see in some kind of enforced harmony. Later they would maintain their interest in the area, but the wealthier of them would move out to areas further north, like Edmonton and Palmers Green and Enfield whilst immigrants from eastern European states, many of them embattled, replaced them. A current leaflet issued by the council is published in five languages besides English: Albanian, French, Polish, Kurdish, Somali, and Turkish. Of these the Kurds are most recently the most vocal and frequently hold marches down the High Street. Perhaps they have more to protest about than the others. It is significant that Turkey has its current problems with Kurdish terrorists, but as always in this little enclave of North London there seems little personal enmity between the

ethnic groups. They are all to a degree refugees and share a commonality in that most stateless of states. The Kurds also have a local Kurdish Centre. I don't think any Kurds have ever opened niche Kurdish restaurants: they probably can't afford the rent and rates, or else the cuisine isn't all that interesting.

You will appreciate then that when I come to go shopping there are a wide range of shopping destinations available to me of various ethnicities. There are a number of hardware stores where you can get useful things like caustic soda if you want to poison your wife, and even one which specializes in Bathroom Furniture, although I confess I have yet to visit that. Of course, most of my favourite shops are off-licenses. There used to be a Russian Shop which had a wide range of exotic vodkas, which unfortunately closed. Now my favourite off license (which just happens to be open 24 hours) is also where I can usually find the best lamb on their meat counter. There is another 24 hours mini-market open a short way away. One is really spoilt if one happens to run out of essentials like bread and milk, and even vodka, in the early hours of the morning. The grocery store Yasar Halim, which has a sort of notoriety in the district, is just at the end of our road. It has a wide range of fresh vegetables, an halal butchers and a bakery attached which does a variety of breads and cakes and sweetmeats. Many Turks and Greeks (and possibly Albanians and Kurds) from out of district tend to visit it regularly.

My most friendly local shop is definitely my chemist. I go there to re-order my various medications, you know the things every 70-year old needs these days (mostly in my case blood pressure and diabetes meds), and despite the fact that I only do this every couple of months they always greet me jovially by my first name, almost as if they really care about me. I appreciate that. I even went so far as to try and find out some of their names, asking one girl what her first name was. "Gunal" she replied, then I looked at the big badge she wore on her chest which read "Gunal" and felt like the fool she must surely have thought I was.

Once upon a time we had a shop that sold beds, and even offered such useful services as BedBug Eradication. I had very little cause to go in there, but then they suddenly started putting guitars in their window. It's true they were not guitars of any significant pedigree, but in fact a line of Chinese cheapos, I bought one or two acoustics, because they were cheap and serviceable, and gifted one to my elder son. They were cheap enough to be giveaways. The shop closed down eventually, of course, but now a coffee bar has replaced it, which also sells guitars. They also appear to be mostly Chinese or Korean in origin. I wonder how much this commercial model is being replicated throughout Britain.

There are no shortage of full-blown Turkish restaurants along Green Lanes, some of them very good. There are also a number of places you can get kebabs,

the best in my experience being King Kebabs, a small shop which used to have a gambling club in the back room sustaining its revenue, and seems much like the early football clubs I used to frequent when we first arrived in Haringay. I have known the guy who cooks the kebabs for perhaps twenty years, but we never get further than exchanging pleasantries.

Now, in smaller premises, more and more bistro-type cafes are opening. I'm not familiar with the markets they are aiming for (hip young professionals who enjoy cocktails?) so I can't give any personal accounts or assessments of them. If you go out on a Saturday night (for any other reason than to buy vodka) there always seems to be a cosmopolitan vibe going on with lots of youf on the streets and beamers parked up illegally on the kerbs.

I love Haringey (however you spell it) and would find it hard to imagine living anywhere else. Although if I could find a farm in Yorkshire with spectacular views over the Pennines, I might be tempted.

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## ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME AND SPACE IN THE WHITTINGTON

If you walk up Highgate Hill from Archway station you will soon come across several minor landmarks associated with Dick Whittington the former Mayor of London. One is a rather tawdry pub called The Whittington Stone, Virtually outside it is indeed a stone with a black cat mounted upon it. People were often exhorted to touch the cat for luck, but now stern railing enclose it and possibly discourage people from doing that, although people passing by on their way to the Whittington Hospital at the next junction, possibly need quite a lot of it. The cat and Dick Whittington are irrevocably linked in English folklore and most people will know the story, but if you don't here it is:

Richard Whittington (c. 1354–1423), was a wealthy merchant who eventually became Lord Mayor of London., The story is that he supposedly escaped his poverty-stricken childhood as a scullery lad (whatever that is) and made his fortune thanks to the ratting abilities of his faithful cat. It is hard to imagine how he managed to parlay the cat's abilities into making a personal fortune, but I guess career opportunities for cats and ex-scullery lads were more extensive in those days than they are now. Disappointing to learn then, that the real Dick Whittington did not come from a poor family of common stock, and there is no compelling evidence supporting the stories about the cat, or even whether he actually owned one.

But to hell with reality, the myth goes that one day Whittington was tempted to quit London (with or without his cat it is not known, although the cat is often depicted in Disneyesque terms walking alongside him with a bag on a stick over his shoulder) but as he made his way up Highgate Hill to head North, he suddenly heard a peel of local bells which seemed to say to him “Turn again, turn again Dick Whittington Lord Mayor of London”. This may however have been a local Morris Group practising a verse from Ecclesiastes. Maybe he had stopped by the Whittington Stone earlier and was a bit befuddled. Alternatively he may have realized that if he kept on walking he would not have encountered The North before being knocked down by rich burghers of Highgate and Hampstead in their SUVs.

As I say, one junction up from the Whittington Stone and its cat is the post-modern edifice of the Whittington Hospital, one of North London’s major NHS establishments offering Hi-tech medical care. Once it might have been considered post-war brutalist, but it has now been remade and remodelled so many times it is probably best considered as post-modern.

Archway these days is itself going through major changes. The old gyratory system which basically dealt with funnelling north/south traffic through this main hub has been reformed to incorporate a pedestrian area. The old gyratory isolated the old Archway Tavern and various other properties more or less on an island in its middle, accessible only to the most dauntless pedestrians. The new scheme makes the Tavern the centrepiece of what is obviously intended to make the area an attractive place for leisure and relaxation. They are planting trees for goodness sake. Whether the Tavern and its surrounding rather tatty commercial properties will remain or will themselves be redeveloped commercially to better reflect its new location, I don’t know. Well, I do know. Rates and rental fees will go up and eventually the area will become slick with bistros and coffee-bars. The taxi premises and charity shops and recruitment agencies for health professionals will soon disappear. The neighbouring streets where the classiest shop is currently the Co-op minimarket will experience the same rate-increase inspired gentrification and will soon become indistinguishable from a lot of shopping areas found in major and minor towns.

At least people walking to the hospital will be able to enjoy this new relaxed clinical environment which will somehow reflect the workings of the hospital itself. They will most likely to be walking, because there is no readily accessible parking in the area.

Here is probably now a good point to mention parking. The hospital itself has a set-down and pick-up point at the main entrance which I have used quite extensively, but also quite nervously. Up the hill you can get access to the third floor A&E drop off and access the only hospital parking area, supposedly limited

to the general public between the hours of visiting. It isn't, but then if you believe that you'll believe Jesus rose from the dead and was treated for his wounds in A&E. It is, however, limited in space, and if you managed to get in, via a numberplate recognition system, you may find yourself condemned to drive straight through (no charge, providing the Number plate Recognition system has worked. Often it doesn't and you must plead with the person operating the remote controlled exit teeth in the manner of an earnest supplicant on the road to the Haj. Normally it works.)

Other parking opportunities are in the side streets but all of the machines which once accepted cash are now \*pay by phone\* only. Fine if you have a phone. But not always fine if you have a phone as clumsy and unintuitive as mine. I have wasted more hours trying to type in code numbers with my fat fingers and then go back and recall them (impossible) than I care to imagine. The alternative is to walk several hundred yards and across a busy road to a shambolic Asian store to pay for a cash ticket, where the proprietor will invariably lose his pen (I had it a minute ago) long enough for the wardens to give you a ticket anyway, but this time a more expensive kind.

But we are not here to talk about these ancillary frets. The hospital itself, once you manage to get to it, is built into Highgate Hill. On the ground floor accessed via Magdalen Avenue is the main entrance and concourse. A short way up the hill from that you can access the A&E department and get into the third floor level of the hospital where most of the out-patient and ambulatory care clinics are located. Access to the hospital's rather meagre public car parking area is also located here as we have already discussed..

In recent years I have become quite familiar with negotiating the Whittington's complex of corridors and hallowed halls, although personally, so far, touch wood etc, I have never had to be admitted in my own right. My visits are limited to occasional health checks, for diabetes and most recently a liver scan, which was itself disastrous because my GP conveniently lost the result of it. I have in fact only ever been in hospital once when I was a teenager to have some eye-teeth removed under an anaesthetic. But I have a son who lives with us and suffers from several chronic conditions and on some occasions we have had to call out an ambulance to tend to him. He invariably ends up in the Whittington, so I am used to follow-up visiting.

Pat has not been so lucky with hospital admissions. She has had surgery for a fairly mundane condition but that was dealt with the Hampstead Royal Free Hospital (I don't know why). More recently however she has been such a regular visitor at the Whittington, she has almost taken up residency.

For as long as I can remember over recent years at least, my wife has always had what she sometimes called apologetically a small appetite, eating only small

portions at mealtimes and even then frequently not managing to clear her plate. Friends would comment on how skinny she was.

Then one morning she woke up after suffering severe abdominal pain and vomiting. Again we took her to hospital. They claimed to have performed a scan and found no evidence of an intestinal blockage, and sent her away with painkillers and dietary advice. Suppositories seemed to be their answer for her chronic constipation. She saw a GP in the next few days who essentially proscribed laxatives.

Over the next few days there seemed to be no relief from her discomfort. Eventually I took her to A&E one more time. This time a scan revealed what is called a twisted bowel or volvulus. It sounds so stupid but it is in fact a serious condition which if left over time can lead to a cutting off of the blood supply to areas of the intestine and eventually necrosis and infection. How long this condition had been affecting her before finally tipping her into a potentially critical condition, I do not know.

Her recovery from surgery is going well and she is now managing to eat and fulfil the necessary biological functions that accompany eating. Whether this will prove a long-term solution for her weight loss and inability to eat is unknown, but I am hoping.

This has been a Public Health Warning.

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### **WELCOME TO GARY LABOWITZ**

*(Editor: A new name to me. Yonks ago George Philles from something called N3F sent me an invitation to submit my fanzine for distribution through his network. I happily sent him Vibrator. This is the only response I have had to date, and I am glad to get it. I gather from my loose network of fannish contacts N3F is not highly regarded as a Fannish institution, but let us keep an open mind, okay).*



After having escaped Fandom Forever (!) by meeting with Darrell Schweitzer and giving him all my remaining odds and ends of fannish material (except I kept out the Jack Gaughan cover from Tightbeam 49, May, 1968), I find that N3F still has me on its list of old codgers that will never be let go. I semi-appreciate the thought, and now e-zines seem to have taken over. Every now and again I get an e-mail with a bunch of zines attached, produced with the modern day hectograph (well, on the family tree). I once was a writer, producer, editor, etc. using hecto, carbon paper, spirit duplicator, mimeo, Gestetner, and now ... e-mail loc.

I don't think we'll ever get to mental telepathy (as in *The Demolished Man*, I forget the term), but what do I know?

I was pleased to browse a few of the e-zines to find some interesting things, one of which was *Vibrator*. There were lots of names from the current and a few from the previous generation of fans/semipros/pros I suppose, and even some from two-three generations prior to that. I'm glad Richard Lupoff is still around, having read his letter. Gee, he's so formal. (You're still a "Dick" to me, Dick.) I too have had the change of heart, but lucky enough to just have afib and the minor annoyances of occasional doctor visits and monthly blood draws. Still, it is, as they say, better than nothing.

I realize now, as I look back on it, that science fiction and fandom began dropping away from me and I from it following on the Philcon I worked on. When was that? I only remember being on some panels and watching a NASA released film of one of our rockets blasting off and delivering a payload into "space," which means into some erratic orbit. All the following launches and successes (and sadly, a couple of failures) just seemed to take all the wind out of my fannish sails. It was, for me, over. We had done it. (I say "we" because I had worked on the development and programming of the 4-Pi system of twin S/360 computers used on the manned flights). Lupoff and I were both IBM workers at the labs in Poughkeepsie in the 1965 era.

It didn't help as fans and pros I knew, and some that I was lucky enough to meet at a few cons, began to leave the scene. That's my polite way of saying they left on their own space voyages ... or not ... depending on how you believe. The only thing I had left was a wife, soon to be third-stage separated by divorce (she got most of the "stuff") and some photos I had taken of fans at play. I run across them once in a while when rummaging around the house, but I re-lose them quickly thereafter. They are around here someplace, and next time I find them I'm going to digitize them so I can't lose them again. Anyway, it's a plan. The one's I particularly want are those of the little kids I had (now in their 40's and 50's) and some memorable to me snaps of the little one at the time (about 5-6) being led around by "Uncle Forrey" (Ackerman) or sitting on Asimov's lap. I

particularly want to find a couple of wildly amusing pictures of Gardner at the Worldcon in Toronto. That, and the framed Gaughan cover are all that remain. I'm sitting here now, typing and looking at it, hung over my desk.

All the rest is a gray mist of memory.

So, thanks, to the Editorial Cabal, for the zines, and thanks to all the publishers, and to Graham Charnock for his effort. I've had the crazy thought that I should start responding to all of you with locs, which is a sort of fanac. I can pretend. But unless I get into the habit it's just a crazy thought. Crazy thought II: maybe I'll start an e-zine. I always have a lot of things to say. It's probably easier than starting a blog.

Gary Labowitz can be found at [glabowitz@comcast.net](mailto:glabowitz@comcast.net)

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### **FRED SMITH**

Another lovely Steve Stiles cover that raises a couple of questions. Why does the alien (?) look very like a dodo and is that a time machine it's stepping out from? Is it a primitive era on Earth? These things bother me, y'know!

Your continuing series of damnable American stories are fascinating but they do portray the U.S. of A in a very bad light. What about giving us some good things that have come out of the country... just for a change (and a bit of balance)?

*(EDITOR: Fred, do you not think that would work against my general thematic principle of it being a series of articles on America the Damned? But I am thinking about subjects for the next one, and it may well be The Rolling Stones at Altamont. You may even be old enough to remember that.)*

Correspondents are still talking about their early reading, libraries, etc. and Leigh Edmonds remarks that he can't understand how people can live without books, mentioning that he usually packs some reading matter on his travels. So did I when I was on the road, always with a book or magazine on public transport or in the car. In the latter case for when I stopped for coffee or lunch, I hasten to add! My old pal Roddy, however, confessed that he never read a book, only a daily newspaper. Another peculiarity of his was his inability to remember the words of any of the standard songs that we'd known for years, although he could whistle the tunes. It gave me some simple pleasure to trot out the lyrics of any song that he cared to mention since I was able to claim that I knew (nearly) all of them! I came to the conclusion that Rod thought in pictures rather than words.

As far as my own early reading is concerned I started out, I think, with the "Just-So" stories of Rudyard Kipling and at an early age I was presented with a

large tome called *My Favourite Wonder Book*, containing classics like "Nutcracker and Mouse King". "The Reluctant Dragon" and many others. Some of the selections were a bit beyond me but I persevered anyway and although we had few books at home the library eventually supplied the usual Verne, Wells and Burroughs that we all know. And then there were the pulps, of course.....

Robert Lichtman tells of always knowing what presents he was going to get for Christmas or birthdays, usually books. In my case sometimes books but also (and very special) Meccano a real treat for a small boy. For the few years that it held my interest fine until I got into deep involvement in model airplanes (U.S. spelling to please spellcheck!). Alas, I didn't know about fandom or I might have been splurging on typewriter, duplicator, etc. instead. A little too early, actually!

Robert also talks about Trump's attempt to reverse Obamacare and it's somewhat encouraging to see that move being blocked (at least for the moment). Hopefully, health care will survive in some acceptable form but at least it's something.

Like Robert also remarks, it's nice to see Dick Lupoff back with us and, incidentally, it's also nice to see a young feller like Philip Turner turning up among the old codgers!

Fred Smith can be found at [f.smith50@ntlworld.com](mailto:f.smith50@ntlworld.com) .

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## **LEIGH EDMONDS**

Thanks for yet another issue of Vibrator which, despite it's shrunkeness, was another good read. As usual, I consumed it on another train journey, this time with a bag stuffed with papers and bits and pieces to take to our accountant in Melbourne to do our tax returns for another year. Consequently, when I read Nic's letter about not having to keep any records for tax purposes I felt, for a moment, like going to Las Vegas and driving a cab. But only for a moment. I'm sure that sitting in my little office here at home shuffling through the records of the past and tapping away on this keyboard is a much less stressful way of life.

I wasn't sure about your article about the West Virginia Mine Wars. You ended up writing about Mother Jones and not telling us who won the war. Don't tell me, let me guess. The bloated capitalist fascist rats. Right?

As for your fannish horoscopes; do you think you could be more specific about the lack of specifics in Gemini. I feel cheated, but here's your letter of comment anyhow, and I'll stay away from Facebook.

The letter column had a lot of nice stories about Peter Weston. It's a pity he's not around to read them.

The other thought that came to me as a result of the letters in this issue was about libraries. The little country town that I grew up in didn't have a library, the best we had was the high school library that the citizens of the town were allowed to use in the evenings, probably one day a week. I got my supply of stf from the state library which sent up, on the railway train, a packet of four books every couple of weeks for my mother and I and I used to go to the railway station to pick them up and send them back. My mother got two books of archaeology and I got two books of stf, usually those yellow jacketed Gollancz books. I don't know where I got the idea that I liked stf but it was probably from Dan Dare on the front of Eagle that I bought religiously every week.

The other library was the Murdoch University Library Special Collection in Perth in Western Australia where I spent three days a couple of weeks back. They started collecting fnz in the mid 1970s and now have a very nice collection of Australian fnz going back to the 1940s, as well as shelves and shelves of overseas fnz too. Unfortunately, only having three days to spend there I photographed as much of the collection as possible and I'm now reading my way through it all. I'm enjoying a lot of it too, given that 90% of everything is crap, there's a lot of good writing in there and interesting insights into the way that Australian fandom was way back then.

I'm aware that most British fen found/find Australian fnz dull. I was reminded of this when reading Rob Holdstock's *Then* where there is the offhand insult tossed in our general direction about our fnz. Maybe you have to be a native of this wide brown land to get the flavour of what was going on in the Australian general fannish culture. Anyhow, that leads me on to say that after I ran out of *Vibrator* I turned on the device and tossed up whether to go on to *Second Stage Lensman* or to do a bit more reading of *Then*, which I bought from Dave Langford for a mere A\$10. It's not a very exciting read (maybe Rob is a closet Australian) but it is of interest and I'm up to the bit where people are getting annoyed with each other about TAFF and Walt Willis is gafiating. It takes some skill to make such an interesting period of fannish history seem so drab - there's return of serve on that offhand insult.

Enough blabbing for now. That 276 pages I had to read after last issue has now grown to 292 pages after the photographs have been added into the text and I now have to go through and check the captions and then prepare an index. There's also the paper I have to write about government expenditure on Australian air transport 1939-1974 for a conference in Sydney in a few weeks. No rest around here.

*(EDITOR: God bless you, Leigh, for resurrecting Rob Holdstock of fond memory, but it was of course Rob Hansen (or Ron as he sometimes prefers to be called) who wrote and compiled THEN.)*

## **DAVE COCKFIELD**

I suppose that your faanish horrorscopes cover an unspecified period so may eventually come true, even if only in predicting the inevitable loc. I'm a Libran on the cusp with Scorpio. It is a great many years since I last read a Badger book. Rarity did not come into it, they just looked great. Secondhand bookshops are dwindling at an alarming rate due to the rise in rates and the profusion of charity shops. Those that do exist, including the charity shops, tend to have very little science fiction on their shelves and that tends to be relatively new. So there is more likelihood of spotting a State endorsed dead Badger than an actual book. Your prediction was almost correct though in a past tense. About 2 years ago I spotted a very good condition 1919 6<sup>th</sup> edition with dust jacket of the Rackham illustrated "Midsummer Night's Dream" in a shop in Cecil Court. A snip at £275. I already had a good condition 1920 7<sup>th</sup> edition without dust jacket so decided to think on it. Next day I drew out the money from the ATM and eagerly visited the shop only to find that it had sold. My maxim now is to buy and be damned rather than lose out.

I might win some taffy at the fair but never TAFF. I do actually read science fiction although lately I've been returning to the likes of Asimov, Clarke, Bester, and Dick to get my juices flowing. I also occasionally remember to wash, but I'm probably too old, or at least too fat, to shag.

Both David Redd and Robert Lichtman have taken me to task over my lack of understanding of the current situation America finds itself in. I tend to be informed by News channels and in particular the excellent France 24 ever since they reported a day on which Saudi Arabia executed, by beheading, 45 people, including three women, accused of treason. No mention in our media though. I wonder why. Since Trump was elected I watched many reports of large protest marches in the US and UK that seemed to primarily be about the fact that Trump is a Racist, Sexist, slug that shouldn't be allowed to be in charge of a Gerbil let alone the most powerful nation on Earth.

Most of his pontificating and threats have come to nothing because of their incredulous nature. However there is now something very damaging on the horizon, something really terrible because it has a possibility/probability of success. A Bill that tears up all the meaningful aspects of Obamacare that many in the Republican Party think doesn't go far enough. This would affect the people that really need Obamacare most. So this is the time that I think large

positive demonstrations against these proposals should be happening but so far I have seen little in the way of this on the News.

Hell I've even seen short pieces on BBC news interviewing the Trump supporting working / unemployed classes who are still arguing that he will deliver the lies that he has promised.

His proposed Bill failed to get enough support and he has said that he will return to this at a later date. However to satisfy his Republican Senators it is likely that next time he will aim for Obamacare to be repealed.

I hope that Robert's optimism is fulfilled and that by 2018 some normality is restored.

I was enjoyably quaffing my 3<sup>rd</sup> pint of Stella Artois, in no way influenced by Eric Cantona the Kronenburg 1668 man, in my local The Cutty Sark whilst reading for the first time an Asimov "Robot" story called "Feminine Intuition". Half way through the alcohol was taking effect and I was nodding off when up jumped a ~~Swagman~~ Tabby Cat onto the couch next to me and hypnotised me into stroking and scratching her (behind the ears of course). After 5 minutes of purrfect pleasure she departed to a windowsill. However this rejuvenated me into finishing the story. Did she somehow exert her own brand of fe(line)minine intuition to help me out.

The world may be going to the Dogs but we must remember the Cats. At least Ian Williams is there to rescue them.

Dave Cockfield can be found at [daverabban@gmail.com](mailto:daverabban@gmail.com)

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## **ROBERTLICHTMAN**

Regarding Steve's lovely cover, I can't imagine the horror felt by those prehistorical humanoids of that dodo bird-like alien emerging from a spaceship with a copy of *Awake* in hand. Well, actually I can. Back in the '60s it seemed like every time I settled down in my San Francisco house for a nice acid trip, a Jehovah's Witness would appear at the door bearing copies of *Awake* and their companion magazine *Watchtower* and *Wanting To Talk*. Depending on what stage I was at in the trip, I might talk or I might not. I wish I remembered anything of what transpired. This is definitely a case of "if you remember the '60s you weren't really there."

Regarding the family situations that led up to *Vibrator 2.0.37*, I've said enough over in the Bar and hope the situation continues to improve. But here you wrote: "When I turned 70 I was fully prepared in accepting imminent death. I just didn't figure the younger members of my family would be cueing up behind

me to have their own shot at it.” I felt the same way back in 2001 when my younger brother succumbed to lung cancer, and fortunately everyone else younger than me has stayed healthy. (And it’s “queuing,” not “cuing” – guess Pat didn’t proofread this issue, with “Charnokj” being another sign of that.)

I know who Mother Jones was, not least because there’s a magazine named after her, and I’m pretty sure I read about the West Virginia Mine Wars at some time in the distant past – but with no memory of specifically doing so. By the way, it was Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, not Franklin D., who she “pursued...with many petitions to meet with her.”

Regarding “Gypsy Graham’s Fannish Horoscopes,” I’m glad – even relieved – that the stars only incline but not compel, and that there may not, after all, be a photograph of me at a convention with a bucket over my head. “Slumped in a chair” is a strong possibility, though. I’m reminded of the 1985 Sacramento Westercon in that regard. Paul Williams and I decided to drive in his car from Glen Ellen to spend an evening there socializing with the idea that we would drive back late the same night. However, Paul hooked up with some woman and bugged out on the return trip, with apologies, and I ended up attempting sleep in one of the comfortable but not that comfortable chairs tucked away in one of the inner recesses of the Red Lion Inn. That attempt was largely unsuccessful, alas.

As Dick Lupoff says for himself, “losing Sid Coleman was a real blow,” and particularly so because of the way he was taken from us, from Lewy body dementia. This is the same thing that also took Robin Williams – who noticed all sorts of uncharacteristic behavior manifesting themselves, which scared him and led to his suicide. The whole world knew Robin Williams as he was before this change happened, and those of us who knew Sid well saw the changes in him before his diagnosis and had the same sense of loss that everyone felt about Williams.

In commenting on Curt Phillips’s article about books, Leigh Edmonds brought up something I might have as well in my own letter: “We’ve passed a rule that we don’t buy any more books because we don’t have room for them....How do we not buy any more books? We don’t go into book shops and we don’t even stop to look in the windows. It’s not impossible, it can be done.” There are fewer book shops to go into around here these days, and I no longer make time in my life for making purposeful trips to the ones that are out of my normal driving range when shopping and running errands. One big store, Moe’s on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, still draws me in now and then – but with a difference. I’m only there to look in a couple specific sections for a few lingering wants, and while doing so I do not allow myself to be caught in the print headlights of new books that in past years might have snagged me into

purchasing them. And since the items I'm looking for are scarce and obscure, I manage to escape the store empty-handed.

So these days my book buying is entirely on-line, and much of it is small press stuff that might or might not turn up on Amazon. Ideally I'd like to offload a book or two for each new one I allow to enter the house, but I haven't been very successful on that account. Some years ago, though, when I had a space crunch in the science fiction section of my library, I summarily removed several dozen paperbacks that Paul Williams had passed along to me when he was cutting down his own library in preparation for moving from Glen Ellen to San Diego. I realized that I was never going to reread (or in some cases read for the first time) the rather large batch of Heinlein books and various others, and it was but the work of a moment to add them to a bag of stuff we accumulate for occasional trips to the donations window of a local charity shop.

I had my own experience similar to Paul Skelton's finding pages of John Berry's Detention report missing from his copy of *Cry of the Nameless* #134. Back in 1941 a fan named Al Ashley (yes, of "You bastard, said Al Ashley" fame) published the first issue of a fanzine called *Nova* which contained a 3-page article by none other than E. E. "Doc" Smith. Somehow I came into two copies of that rather scarce fanzine, and one of them had those pages removed. At least it was done neatly – restapled afterwards – and not by rudely tearing out the pages in question as Paul describes for the *Cry*. Given the possibility that many people may have possessed that issue over the ensuing decades, there was no way of knowing who'd done the excising or, for that matter, if subsequent owners even noticed the absence – or, if they did, simply shrugged their shoulders and didn't sweat it. I passed that issue along to someone who wanted it more for the lovely silk-screened cover art and didn't mind the missing pages.

Fred Smith recounts his December 2014 exchanges with Pete Weston and wonders "if he did in fact have any further communication with fandom during his remaining two years, even in a small way." Hopefully, in reading this issue he will have noticed my mention that I had contact with Pete in 2015. There were several exchanges in April about our respective situations, with a final one in June from me to which he never replied.

In his etymology for "86," Nic offers several possible definitions that are Vegas-centric while noting that it "apparently has general currency throughout the US." He adds, "Its origins are a bit misty." Actually, not so much.

Several explanations of its origins, all predating 1950, are offered in the article. My own first encounter with it was F. Towner Laney's "Lovecraft Is 86," which appeared in an early (Autumn 1949) issue of Redd Boggs's fanzine *Sky Hook*. In that article, Laney suggests that HPL is overrated and "if Derleth and



one or two other pros stop beating the drums for Lovecraft for even as little as a year, HPL will drop back to his proper status in American literature – almost completely unknown and forgotten.” This was a pretty amazing statement for someone who had built his earlier fan career as a “sincere acolyte” of Lovecraft and published fourteen issues of a fanzine, *The Acolyte*, largely devoted to a study of his work.

As always, I enjoyed Nic’s ongoing diary and completely agree with him about the unfairness of hotel valets who refuse to let customers who want to take their cab trip with Nic to do so.

Robert Lichtman can be found at [robertlichtman@yahoo.com](mailto:robertlichtman@yahoo.com)

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### **LLOYD PENNEY**

Thank you kindly for Vibrator 2.0.37. I shall keep that great Stiles cover away from the Kingdom Hall just up the street, even though we’ve wanted to put a Merry Christmas sign in front of the building. Comments will follow, don’t you worry.

We are of the age where illness can take its worst course. Yvonne’s mother died less than a week ago as I write, and too many friends are fighting disease. No fun, but I am trying to stay healthy with nutritional supplements and a steady low-carb diet, which has helped me lose about 20 pounds. I would like to think I’ve lengthened my life by doing all this, but only time will tell.

I am writing my locs to Vibrator, and I am a Gemini, so no dickhead am I. Almighty rows on Facebook is another thing, and if they piss me off, unfriend them I will. Some are asking for it...

I was at the New Orleans Worldcon, but of course, didn’t know all the people I know today. Wish I’d been introduced to Peter Weston then. I remember that Worldcon for many things, like Yvonne learning how to cook Cajun, and us taking a paddlewheel cruise, but also that a hurricane was threatening NO at the time, and arms of the hurricane would douse the downtown every few minutes.

We definitely do live in those interesting times, Fred Smith, no matter who the curse comes from. I hope America can rouse itself from its intellectual slumbers, and stop the madman in the Oval Office. In other locs...As much as I love having the wall full of books in our apartment, I may have to take it down, and start getting rid of big portions of it. I really don’t want to, but as we get closer to retirement (Yvonne’s almost there), we will have to bring our expenses down, which means we may have move out of Toronto to someplace cheaper, and that will mean being more moveable, with fewer things to move.

After such a long time, I have found work, but it is a grotty office doing telephone fundraising. I hate it, but it will be my first regular paycheque in over a year. I am praying that other potential job offers will rescue me from that dump. In the meantime, writing locs for fanzines keeps me sane, or as sane as I'll ever get. Thanks for this one, see you with the next.

Lloyd Penney can be found at [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

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### **PHILIP TURNER**

Thanks for Vib 37 and I hope you're soon free of your hospital visiting duties; I know from experience that it's an exhausting business. I don't think I'll mention that my only recent interaction with the NHS was a flu jab last October (didn't work, didn't get flu) in case the Universe grots on me again to put me back in my place. No, my only recent challenge has been trying to work out why the same version of WordPerfect created a 17 MB PDF of Rogue Shooter (2003-2017) when my laptop's PDF from the same source file came out at 2 MB and change.

Good luck to Leigh Edmonds with his prof of reading. The only way to do it carefully is line-by-line with a piece of paper hiding what's below the line you're inspecting. It's a very lengthy and exhausting business, and you do keep spotting things you'd like to change.

Swami Charnock seems keen to solicit lots more LoCs but he neglected to mention whether what followed his horoscopes was examples of 'how to' or 'how not to'. As usual, Taxi Nic left me drowning in information I'll never use, but eddycayshun is supposed to be a Good Thing.

It was very hard to concentrate on LoCing after the wonderful news I got this week: my state pension is going up a magnificent 3 quid per week from next month. How will I be able to cope with all this extra wealth? Well, that's not likely to be a problem, given that I have yet to receive the next Council Tax bill, which is bound to demand my 3 quids and a lot more.

p.s. You don't have to worry about President Trump any more. Captain Picard of the Starship Enterprise has baldly gone to the United States, where he plans to become a US citizen and sort out The Donald.

This has been a communication from Philip Turner [farrago2@lineone.net](mailto:farrago2@lineone.net)

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### **PAUL SKELTON**

I'm afraid mine and Cas' stars must've been found in the gutter having fallen off the back of a flitting. It is true that Cas, as a Virgo who frequents Facebook, has many contacts who purport to be friends, but her demeanour at the few

cons she's attended has (almost) always been above reproach and the concept of her 'slumping' in a chair is inconceivable, having spent untold decades instructing several children to "Sit up properly, don't slump!"

Must have been some foggy/misty/cloudy nights (delete as inapplicable) from late July thru the bulk of September as I think Staples and Ryman's are the only stationery stores I (as a Leo) have been in over the last twenty years, and they are never tucked 'out of the way'. Mind you I was pretty much only in those to buy A4 transparent sleeves and double-sided stamp hinges so that I could use all the spring binders I'd picked up from work whilst dumping obsolete systems documentation as photo albums to replace those self-adhesive ones belonging to my mother, which we inherited long after their adhesiveness had vanished and they become cupboards full of almost empty albums and loose photos. Having said that, no sooner had I paid out for the supplies and spent weeks and weeks redoing the albums, my youngest brother 'borrowed' them and we haven't seen them since.

It was some time in the early 1990's when I got my first computer, and that was when I actually bought my last paper from a stationer's. That was Staples, and I picked up four five-ream boxes of 90gsm white A4 for the super-wonderful fanzines I knew I was going to be producing with this new technology...only of course I never did. This paper lasted me for all my obscure requirements (photo-album pages, daily Sudokus, printing of LoCs to proofread, printing off WO4W (and other long) emails as I'd rather read them as paper, etc.) and it's only been in the last couple of years that I've had to use whatever decent paper was being jobbed-off at our local Tesco.

I still have nearly a drawer-full of staples, many for sizes or types of staplers I no longer own. I have no need for more, coloured or otherwise. I do actually have a good need for less, on the grounds that it would ease the house-clearing duties of our kids, after we pop our clogs. I do though still hanker after producing one more issue of SFD, of only to confound anyone who thought they had a full set, though why I should have this aspiration given that only me, Cas, and whoever got Mike Glicksohn's fanzines, have complete sets, unless Mike Meara kept his when he passed the rest of his fanzine collection on to me. I suppose I could produce just a single copy to ensure I had the only complete set. Cas would then of course kill me, get banged up for the crime, and the kids would bin the lot straight into the skip thus rendering the whole scheme pointless. Perhaps I have been hanging on to those staples too long, after all.

I'm a bit puzzled about this 'America the Damned' series. Yes, bad things have happened in America. Bad things have also happened here in the UK; also in lots of other places in the world. Why are you making such a point about the US instances?

*(EDITOR; I think I explained somewhere that in making selections for the America the Damned series I was trying to select events which hinted at something intrinsic in the America National Character and its historical development, in the hope that it might better help us to understand what is going on there these days. If it is not doing that, then I am clearing failing in my aim. Not for the first time.)*

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

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### **DAVID REDD**

Thanks for yours of February 2017. Hope Robert liked the Steve Stiles cover; I did. If TRAP DOOR did colour covers...

Not that I read horoscopes, but the Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Gypsy Graham seemed fun. Almost made me think they were hand-crafted to fit Vibrator readers - I even found my own birth month in it. The Capricorn first line does sound like me, so well done Gypsy Graham.

Nic Farey - in addition to his latest instalment of the soon-to-be bestselling memoirs, i.e. soon as he leaves the taxi business - has absolutely nailed Peter Weston's bar conversations as Pete at perhaps his most fannish and convivial.

Skipping over all other letters, sorry Skel, Robert and all, I feel sucked into dialogue with John Nielsen Hall within several fanzines. Perhaps I have a special talent for getting up John's nose? Must correct his assumption that I have only lately "woken up to find" that I'm living in sf. In lieu of a long-overdue bar conversation, let me say that I've known most of my life that I'm living in the scientifiction age Uncle Hugo promised us, ever since childhood and space rockets. (You've seen the archive clips of Britain's sole satellite launch from Woomera? Straight out of Dan Dare.)

I did eventually realise, in the 1980s, that we weren't getting quite Uncle Hugo's future. With hindsight, maybe the high point of Western civilisation's physical technology and humanitarianism was the Live Aid concert of 1985. People came together to help Africa from two stages 5000 miles apart, broadcast worldwide, and a certain workaholic Phil Collins played on *both* stages, travelling between sites by scheduled supersonic airliner. He couldn't do that today.

*(EDITOR: Thank goodness...)*

In those mid-Eighties times I noticed that the tide of the 20th century, having flowed as far as my native West Wales, was now flowing out again. Our few high-tech industries (oil refineries) having opened up with fanfares over the previous two decades were now quietly closing down. Local financial services

branches (Prudential etc) were pulling back to the nearest city. Later, the double boom of Concorde overhead went away. (Moon landings had already stopped, now seeming a step too far just like the old Vinland landings by Norsemen.) Globalised culture started mimicking the symptoms of brain damage, echoing certain rodent experiments of overcrowded cages leading to aggression and deviant behaviour and Charles Platt saying "I told you so." Increasingly dysfunctional children appeared in schools and grew in numbers until their presence became normal. (My wife noticed that one happening; she was a school secretary.) Studying nature conservation in the 1990s, I heard a colleague express his view of conservation of the human species as "I think we're doomed," unquote. Couldn't disagree.

In this dystopian millennium, what I *did* wake up to around 2010 - JNH is at least partially correct here - was that we were at a tipping point of UK farmers and food supply going into an unstoppable wipe-out implosion. And nobody did anything about it. (Apart from appointing a Groceries Code Adjudicator, hurrah.) Even worse, we were busily destroying for fun and profit our own planetary life-support system of ecology, soil and sea which keeps our atmosphere consisting of oxygen/water rather than its original methane/ammonia. The Anthropocene (which I label the Pleistocene Terminal Event) ought to be called the Fermicene. I like to point out a spot in mid-Wales where almost side by side are a 1600-year-old abandoned Roman camp, the bare remnant of a Norman castle, and a decommissioned nuclear power station. That's progress.

Well, I've muttered all this before in fanzines over the decades, but I thought a brief recap might clarify the situation. At one time my younger self was indeed as John puts it "foolishly naive" in believing the future would be better, and that time was of course the Fifties - but I'd better have *that* conversation over in Banana Wings the way Claire wanted it.

Thanks for continuing the paper Vibrators. Yes, several trees were killed to produce this issue. Man's a predator, right?

David Redd can be found at [dave\\_redd@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_redd@hotmail.com)

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# TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER

by Nic Farey

## THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES: ALL CATS ARE GREY

A very drunk woman gets into a cab at the Cosmopolitan for a ride home to Henderson, during which she's mostly passed out. Next day she realizes that she's lost her purse and cellphone, possibly in the cab, so she calls the company to see if we have them. The property hasn't been reported or turned in, but the cab is identified from the credit card record. Unlike some other companies' systems which work on camera triggers, ours record 24/7 and get downloaded both randomly and in case of an accident or dispute, so the office gets the chip out of the recorder to have a look to determine whether the driver has been a naughty boy in not reporting lost property. What they find is much more disturbing. The woman, unusually sitting in the front passenger seat (we prefer to seat riders in the back) is subjected to a 40 minute sexual assault by the driver during which she is basically unconscious. The video recording is forwarded to the police, the driver called in and terminated on the spot. This all happened March 8th.

One week, yes, that's *one whole week* later, the guy is arrested after the woman has been shown the recording, confessing to having no memory of that night's events, and tearfully pressing charges. During that week, the driver has turned up at her house *three times*, once with flowers, to apologize to her. She's told him each time to go away, not knowing what it is he's apologizing for. After the arrest, the po' put out a news release unnecessarily including the pretty contemptible victim-shaming statements that the woman was excessively drunk, passed out, and had complained to the driver that she "hadn't had sex in weeks". (This was properly called out by the executive director of the Rape Crisis Center.)

Unsurprisingly, this gets reported on local news, where it gets a typical sensationalizing two-minute treatment, most of which isn't kind to our company or the cab industry in general. One vox pop, "cab rider Peggy Rodriguez" faintly praises Lucky for their immediate response to the discovery of the incident, with the damning aside "a lot of companies won't do that". She now says she'll think twice about getting in a taxi (because all cats are grey). Utterly ridiculously, "Cab rider Steve Landry": "We are more on Uber now. Uber has been better because they have the ratings." Clearly, because if your Uber driver rapes or sexually assaults you, you're not going to rate them 5.0, are you?

The driver was identified as Abdul Based, 25, supposedly a former translator

for U.S. forces in Afghanistan who boasted about fighting the Taliban. He must have passed the FBI background check we all have to go through (as our company spokesman pointed out). I was told by a supervisor that the guy had worked for us since January, having previously been with another cab company. I don't know which (at the time of writing), nor do I know whether he left his previous company or was fired, and if the latter, for what reason. This raises the issue of how useful the standard FBI check is going to be when applied to a 25-year-old recent immigrant, as opposed to someone like myself with a ten years past quite extensive arrest and incarceration record in Maryland. In general, *any* 25-year-old isn't necessarily going to have had the opportunity to display undesirable habits which have engaged the attention of law enforcement. Is there an answer? I don't know. Do we need to extend the screening of aspiring cab drivers to include some kind of psych evaluation, or do we rest on the FBI background check, even though the perception might now be that it's about as useful as the essentially non-existent Uber one. There's going to be renewed chatter among the drivers (no doubt much of it with racist overtones) that with the companies pushing more and more cabs onto the streets and continually advertising (if not actually pleading) for drivers, the screening and background checking process might be getting a little lax, although it could be pointed out that if you take several steps back to see the forest, this is *one* driver out of probably 6,000 or more (on the basis of 3,500+ cabs, two shifts a day). That kind of simple math, however, doth not a news item make (because all cats are grey).

It's undoubtedly trivial and insensitive to compare what happened here with Yelp reviews of cab companies, but there is a parallel. I've cynically observed (in previous futile comment board exchanges) that no-one ever writes up a good, or even merely satisfactory cab ride. (I got the actual response: "That's because there aren't any". Because all cats are grey.) All companies, including ours, have drivers who skirt or even willfully ignore the regulations on long-hauling, for example, returning ridiculously high book to which most companies will turn a blind eye, although that's getting less common now that TA is having what seems like a continual crackdown on that and other infractions. So when you see a Yelp review stating broadly that "this company is terrible" for whatever reason, it's actually the individual driver who did you wrong, and your deduction that this must somehow be company policy could well be misguided. But, y'know, all cats are grey.

I'm fully expecting to hear anecdotal evidence next week that passengers are refusing to get in a Lucky cab. It'll be less easy to determine whether they're forgoing cabs generally in favor of other transit options. I wouldn't be surprised if a refusal happens to me in the coming week, and I'll know exactly why.

Because all cats are grey.

Yo ho ho and a bottle of vodka. I'm sorry, I recently binge watched all five of the Pirates of the Caribbean series of movies. I'm a sucker for pirates, and all that leaping from the rigging, and the cgi is usually quite fulfilling. When I visited Las Vegas there was a Pirates feature in front of some hotel or other, but I managed to resist it. I understand several Disney theme parks have them, but unfortunately I am not twelve years old. I like Johnny Depp, but I hated Orlando Bloom so was pleased to see him finished off in The End of the World. It was nice to see stalwart UK actor Tom Hollander in a couple of versions and sorry he was eventually killed off for reasons I didn't entirely understand. The inclusion of Keith Richards was interesting in Stranger Tides, but I don't think they made the best use of him, since he did not play rhythm guitar at all.

But enough of this Persiflage (trivia question: who's fanzine had this title?) and on with the important stuff. I am Graham Charnock and always have been. It's a curse, but one I wear with pride and acknowledge readily Send me messages, happy happy messages, to [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk). If any of you are nubile females and want to send me photographs, that is okay too, as long as they are not photographs of cats.

Pat has now recovered from Operation Horror to perhaps proof-read this issue, but the proof will be in the pidding.

Bye bye, Graham, go to sleep now...