

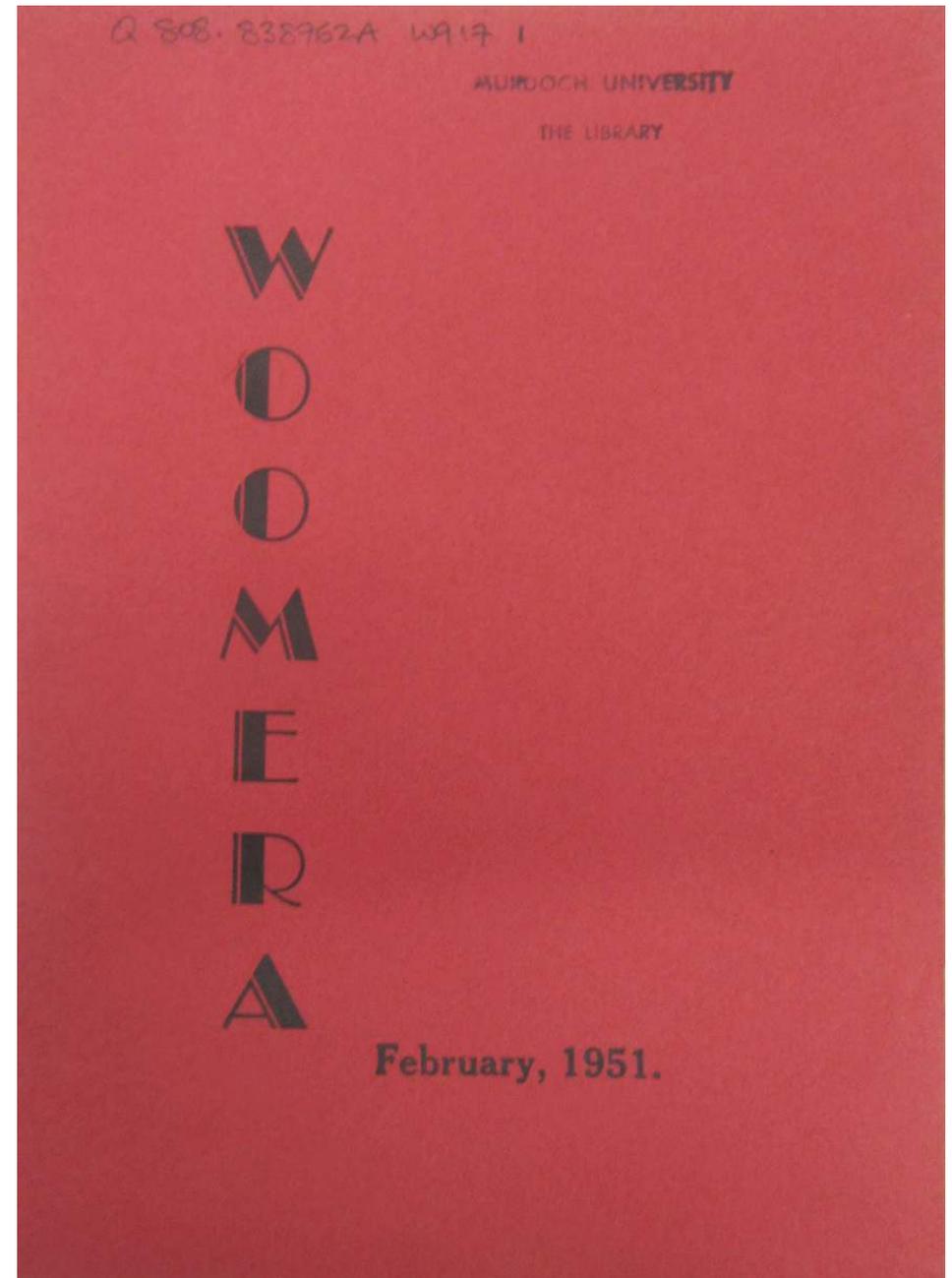
iOTA 08

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Art: Don Latimer, p.6, Dick Jenssen, p.18.



iOTA is the little efanzone put together by Leigh Edmonds who can be contacted electronically, and in almost no other way, at hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au.

This little efanzone is produced as a progress report on my current project to research and write a history of Australian fandom, focusing on the period between 1956 and 1975. *iOTA* is a research tool and document, containing some of the material and thoughts that will be used in writing the history. It is also a place where I publish bits and pieces of the writing and art of Australia's fannish past to help introduce you to the rich vein of material that previous generations of Australian fans have left us. If you want more details about this history project you'll find them in the first issue of *iOTA*.

iOTA is more or less available for 'the usual' but two things bring its editor the greatest fannish pleasure. One is great gobs of egoboo and the other is a contributions to the discourse of understanding and writing a history of Australian fandom. If all else fails, issues of *iOTA* are put up on *efanzines.com* fairly soon after I've completed them.

Thisish's Cover

Back in 1950 Vol Molesworth bought himself a letterpress printing machine, one of those machines in which all the type had to be hand set, letter by letter. The resulting pages looked outstanding by the standards of the day, just as they would be in a printed book, which was not surprising really.

Several Sydney fans of the time tried their hand at using this printing method for their fanzines and Nick Solntseff was one of them. It looked pretty good but going the next step and printing images as well was a whole lot more difficult and expensive, hence

the graphic but severe look of this cover.

Editorial - of sorts

A Little Guidance Please

At the recent national convention and through my distribution list for *iOTA* I published an attachment to the previous issue called 'Australian Fandom, Adventures in Time'. (I'm not sure if it became available through *efanzines.com* so if you didn't find it there and are interested in seeing it, let me know and I'll send you a PDF.)

In addition to a couple of pages of photos, it comprised an annotated chronology of Australian fandom from the beginning through to 1966.

The guidance I'm seeking from you is about whether or not you found it an interesting and worthwhile endeavor. From my perspective it was useful because having to describe why a date and name were important tested my knowledge and found a few gaps in it. Producing it was a little challenging and time consuming but what I'd like to know from you is whether it is something you consider worth continuing with. If I do continue it, it will be an adjunct to the completed history, not a replacement for it.

Hospital Reading

You know how they tell you that if you've got shortness of breath and chest pain you should get to hospital straight away. Well, I did and I did. Fortunately (if that's the word I'm struggling to find) it was only a blood clot in my lung and there is no permanent damage. However, it put me in hospital for the best part of a week and that old saying about blood being thicker than

water doesn't apply to me right now. What I learned from this experiences is a profound appreciation of oxygen, especially in my lungs.

The problem was diagnosed within a couple of hours and treatment started immediately so, apart from some scans to check for the source of the problem, I was kept in the coronary care unit attached, through numerous cantankerous wires, to a machine that measured lots of things to do with my insides. All I had to do was lie still until the medical practitioners thought it was safe to send me home. Fundamentally, it was an uncomfortable and boring time.

So, what did I do to pass the time? Catch up on my sleep for a start. In the evenings I watched Le Tour de France which ran until the wee hours of the morning. For the rest of the time I caught up on my reading - which is the point of this editorial.

First was Greg Benford's *The Berlin Project* which is excellent but hard to categorize. It would be a historic novel but many of the things in it didn't happen. It begins in the physics community of New York in 1938 but a decision made at one point in the novel shifts the story into an alternate time line, not much different from ours but in which the Americans drop the Little Boy atomic bomb on Berlin just before the D-Day landings in June 1944. After that the Germans block the allied advances with radioactive dust but things turn out happily in the end, more or less. The conundrum is; does the fact that this is a story about an alternate time line make this stf? I wouldn't have thought so, it certainly didn't read like it to me.

One way in which it is like stf is that it packs in a lot of scientific and technical information. Benford gives us basic

knowledge of nuclear physics, how to separate the isotopes of uranium and how to make an atomic bomb, and that's only the start. Because all this is central to the premise of the novel these sugar coated pills slip down very easily. They are made more palatable by the cast of characters, almost all of them people who actually lived during this period, which not only gives the story a sense of verisimilitude but also keeps us interested by introducing us to almost all the key people involved in nuclear physics and bomb making in the early 1940s. With these little touches of familiarity we feel as though we too have met Einstein, Teller, Oppenheimer and all the rest. We are also reminded a little of what it was like to be Jewish and to live in New York during this period. This makes a lively concoction of the historic novel and many of the techniques of stf.

Science fiction is also built into the story with prominence given to two well known stories about nuclear war that were published in *Astounding* and a visit to John W Campbell in his office which portrays an excellent sense of him. There are other minor characters and things introduced; for example Arthur Clarke has a walk-on part and when our hero takes his first taste of Bourbon he exclaims 'Smooth'. (People aren't accustomed to too much laughter in the coronary care unit - talk about the time binding nature of fandom.)

The other thing I enjoyed was the writing style. Not terribly literary - by which I mean rococo - but always clear in conveying its meaning and giving a sense of place and people. On occasions I felt as though the writing had dropped me into *Analog* land but overall I felt more in the land of Mark Twain than Robert Heinlein. (Not that I've read much of either in the past four

decades.)

While all this makes it a book that I happily recommend, it isn't what I wanted to write about in *iOTA*. What interested me was a comparison between *The Berlin Project*, being my favorite read so far this year, and my favorite read from last year, Stuart Macintyre's *Australia's Boldest Experiment* (which I mentioned last issue). They are both set in the same time period, the 1940s, they are both about 'big issues' and they both introduce you to casts of the key people in their fields at that time. They are both written without literary pretension but clearly in lively and readable styles. Neither are really un-put-downable, but I was always keen to pick them up again as soon as I could.

They are similar, but they are also vastly different. One is a story about something that didn't happen and the other is about something that did. In *iOTA* 06 I tried to make the point that just because something *did* happen doesn't make it any less fantastic than something that *didn't*. The story of *The Berlin Project* hinges on a turning point in the history of the American atomic bomb at which a different decision was made in the real world and the Little Boy wasn't ready until mid 1945 rather than 1944. The whole of *Australia's Boldest Experiment* follows from the decision made by two Australian members of parliament to switch their loyalty from the conservative parties to the Australian Labor Party, and who can say what Australia today might look like if that had not happened.

What makes these two stories different, apart from the fact that one is 'fiction' and the other is 'history'? They are equally fantastic. As is the history of Australian fandom that I'm working on. (Remember also Damien Broderick's *Transmitters* which uses

Australian fandom as a starting point and conveys some of its underlying precepts very nicely before turning them to Broderick's particular interests.) Looked at in the same way as *The Berlin Project* and *Australia's Boldest Experiment*, the whole of the history of Australian fandom turns on the chance meeting of Bob McCubbin and Race Matthews in the early 1950s. Things might be somewhat similar, but not the same as they are in historical 'fact'. That's one of the things that interests me about the study of history; the fantastic way in which things happened as they did.

The big difference between these two works is that Benford is able to use the techniques of the novelist to give us a perspective on his story that Macintyre can't in his. Most obvious is Benford's use of his father-in-law, Karl Cohen, to tell the story - or perhaps we should say a fictionalized form of him. Cohen thinks thoughts and has conversations that enliven the story and drive the plot forward in a way that is not available to a historian who are restricted by the available historical evidence. On several occasions, for example, Cohen is able to draw on memories of his wife and children as a form of comfort in difficult circumstances. The historian (unless they are making use of psycho history, and then only to a limited extent) cannot know what their subjects were actually thinking, only what the historical evidence such as letters suggest they might have been thinking. In the Macintyre story we cannot know what John Curtin and Nugget Coombs were thinking, only what the evidence they left us to suggest their motivations for what they did.

The other thing that separates these two books is that one has a plot and the other doesn't, sort of. *The Berlin Project* is

plotted so that it has a beginning, a middle and an end and the events and characters move seamlessly from a state of unresolved tension to a state of resolution. This is disguised to some extent by the historical setting of this novel which suggests that there is a story that begins before and continues after the events recounted in the novel. There are devices built into the plot that, while they probably might happen in real life, are so obvious as to be unnerving. For example, when Cohen's good friend Anton says he's enlisting in the US Navy it's London to a brick that he's a goner, to make a point about the dreadful waste of human life in war and, incidentally, wind up the main body of the story. Then there's the point where Karl goes to Switzerland to meet Heisenberg to find out what the Germans are up to. I was okay with this because it achieved two aims; to add Heisenberg to the cast of characters and to resolve a question that's been hanging over the entire story. But when he subsequently meets Admiral Canaris and the war in the west is over in a couple of weeks, my poor old suspension-of-disbelief was dangling over the abyss by its fingernails. But, hey, it's a novel, so the author can do what he likes. And, of course, things like this do happen in real life, although they don't seem so unlikely when they really happen and, more to the point in this case, they don't so obviously lead to such dramatic and unlikely resolution.

Earlier I said that history doesn't have a plot, 'sort of'. That depends on what 'history' you are talking about; either the events that happened in the past or the history that historians make. The events of the past have no plot, they just happen in endless succession. However, humans, and historians in particular, find plots in those events and write stories about them by doing things

like choosing beginning and ending points for the story (1956 to 1975 in this project, for example) and by defining the scope of the evidence they will use (Australian fandom, for example). This is a point we will probably return to in later issues.

Benford's afterword is highly illuminating, bringing us back to the real world in which Little Boy was not ready until 1945. It tells the stories of many of the characters in the novel and explains some of the technical differences, in particular about the decision made on the method of uranium isotope separation. Most interesting of all, for *iOTA* readers anyhow, is the opening paragraph:

Alternate history provides a way of thinking about the fragility of our past. It's fictional devices let us see what might later seem inevitable as the outcome of many unpredictable forces, and chance too - and so to learn from it. (*The Berlin Project*, p.449)

So, what then is the difference between 'history' and 'fiction'? We can learn from both, but perhaps there are different learnings to be had from them. History might help us understand and cope with the world in which we live our daily lives and fiction might help us understand ... understand what? Clearly, if I'd enrolled in different courses at university I'd be able to answer that one.

This brings me to my next hospital reading; E H Carr's *What is History?* This book, like Elton's *The Practice of History* that we've already dealt with, is the result of a series of lectures on history, but whereas Elton talked and wrote about what historians do, Carr was more interested in the philosophy of history and thus less relevant here. (Not that this isn't an interesting matter that

keeps my little grey cells working, just too long and complex as explained by Carr to be useful here.) Nevertheless, Carr does have some interesting thoughts to add about the kinds of stories that historians tell:

History is, by and large, a record of what people did, not of what they failed to do: to this extent it is inevitably a success story. Professor Tawney, remarks that historians give ‘an appearance to inevitableness’ to an existing order ‘by dragging into prominence the forces which have triumphed and thrusting into the background those which they have swallowed up’. But is not this in a sense the essence of the historian’s job? The historian must not underestimate the opposition; he must not represent the victor as a walk-over if it was touch-and-go. Sometimes those who were defeated have made as great a contribution to the ultimate result as the victors. These are familiar maxims to every historian. But, by and large, the historian is concerned with those who, whether victorious or defeated, achieved something.

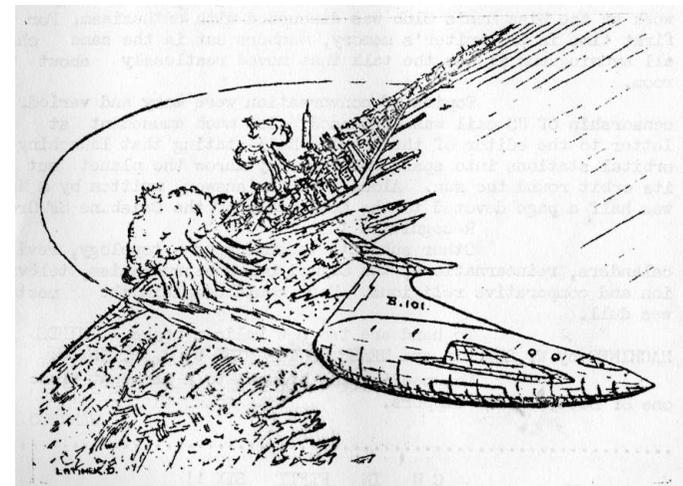
(E H Carr, *What is History?*, p.126)

Despite his philosophical bent, we will return to Carr later on. A historian we probably won’t hear from again is Tom Griffiths whose *The Art of Time Travel* I also finished in hospital. Not that Griffiths is not an excellent and inspiring writer, it’s that it became clear that his bias is towards history that deals with the environment, Australia’s indigenous past and, to a lesser extent, the business of writing history. In particular his chapter on ‘History as Art’ touches on the writing of history as a form of literature and describes in loving details how Donna Merwick

writes her history on lined paper with a propelling lead pencil and an eraser. While these might be important topics for an Australian historian they are not my current concern in working on this project, so Griffith goes back onto the shelf without further consultation so far as *iOTA* is concerned.

Next came a work by Doc Smith, *Second Stage Lensman*. By golly, George Turner is right about how Smith’s story rockets along. The writing might be labored and it might be terrible, but it has inertia - if you can ignore those other challenges. I’d just reached the part where the heros of the Galactic Patrol were about to vanquish the evil and dreaded Overlords of Delgon in their secret lair on Lyrane II when the doctor turned up and told me I could go home.

So I did.



Don Latimer, *Etherline 57*, undated

1955 - Fourth Australian SF Convention Good Event, Bad Outcome

It seems that things were not happy in Sydney fandom. There were at least three competing groups which was probably the result of personality clashes between some of the leading Sydney fans of the time.

At the Third Convention in 1954 the North Shore Futurian Society had been given the task of putting on the fourth convention, despite the wishes of some in the Futurian Society of Sydney who wanted Melbourne to host it instead. One prominent fan, Graham Stone, bitterly attacked the North Shore Futurians, refused to acknowledge the convention they were to run and did not attend it when it took place. It is likely that other fans, friends and associates of Stone's, were similarly badly disposed to the convention organizers but attended at least part of the convention anyhow.

The author of this report, Ian Crozier, became a central figure in the business session against his will, but says little about it apart from the fact that it was a childish disgrace. It seems that all the bad blood that had been festering in Sydney fandom over the years found expression at the meeting but that nothing was resolved then, or later.

At the end of his report on the business meeting Crozier refers to the Australian Labor Party which was, in 1955, beginning to self destruct in such bitterness that it took seventeen years before the party could again win a general election and form government. Something similar was happening in Sydney fandom but it was only fifteen years before another sf convention was held in Sydney, by a new generation of fans who knew next to nothing

Sydney's earlier fandom.

FOURTH AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION REPORT

As a prelude to the Convention, a very successful Fancy Dress Ball was held on Friday evening, March 18th, at the Convention site, Dunbar House, Watson's Bay.

This had to be seen to be believed. Although the attendance of 40 could have been better, everyone present had a whale of a time. Some of the sights of the Ball were Bill Veney and partner as 'Salome and the Wandering Jew', Arthur Haddon startlingly painted green as a Martian Grub, and, in my opinion, the best costume of them all Norma Hemming as the DYNAMIC cover, recently out as a BRE, a Venusian Swamp Girl. Fortunately, the color Norma used was a vegetable dye, and came off fairly easily but Arthur was still showing signs of the copper based chemical he used on Sunday evening.

The report of his demise is expected hourly.

Bill Hubble turned up as the character out of Sprague de Camp's 'Stolen Doormouse', while Doug Nicholson was in character as a ghoul. Crozier went as himself. Gaaaaah!

As a contrast to other years, this show went off with a bang, and set the tempo for the rest of the Con. We can only hope that the participants have recovered by now, though Bill Veney was still looking sick on it at the time of our leaving.

SATURDAY MORNING

Good publicity was obtained via the press and radio on the Saturday morning, and around 30 fans turned up for the morning session, which was mainly a get-together-and-meet-your-neighbor do. Original artwork was displayed from NEW

WORLDS and NEBULA, both of which lots were auctioned on Sunday evening. On behalf of the Convention Committee, I would like to go on record, and extend our sincere thanks to both these publishing companies for the support shown to the Convention.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The session opened around 2.30pm with Dr John Blatt being introduced by Convention Chairman, Pat Burke. The title of Dr Blatt's address of SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION, and in contrast to previous conventions, this was interesting. My opposition to serious and technical addressed at a SCIENCE FICTION Convention is well-known, and I was prepared to criticize Dr Blatt as much as I have previous Convention speakers, but I was agreeably surprised at the line taken by Dr Blatt. He made good points on the earlier stuff, pointing out that the science in those days in the main was long dreary descriptions of gadgets which nobody, including the author, knew what they were anyway. The renaissance came about under John W Campbell in the late 30's, in which he pushed stories featuring the effect of new inventions on society.

All in all, the address was most warmly welcomed by those present, and I for one hope to see more emphasis in future on science fiction at Conventions, as Dr Blatt gave us.

TRANSPORTATION IN THE FUTURE was the title of the address given by Mr John Spence, while Wing Commander Ian Scott gave a talk on Dianetics. I would assume these addresses were of interest to (a): a transport enthusiast, and (b): a Dianetics follower, but not to me, anyway, they were just so

much wasted time.

Guest of Honor Arthur C Clarke and Dr Blatt then went onto the platform, and provided the second highlight of the day, answering many and varied questions from the floor. I was amazed at some of the questions. They must have been boning up on them for weeks.

Mr Clarke disclosed that the Americans were advanced in their plans for an Earth Satellite Vehicle, and in his opinion, there should be one in operation within 10 years. One Sydney newspaper apparently got carried away, as they reported him as saying that man would be on the Moon within 10 years. It just goes to show you never want to say much when the reporters are around, or you'll surprise yourself in the morning.

This was a very enjoyable part of the proceedings, and after it had concluded, tea was taken.

Attendance at this session was 51.

SATURDAY NIGHT

Lead film was the 20th Century Fox epic THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, starring Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal and Gort. Most readers will know this, so I won't go into detail. Second film was the silent classic, METROPOLIS, made back in the 20's by Fritz Lang.

SUNDAY MORNING

Only about 20 fans turned up for the auction and as a result, prices were very low. There was only about 20 American items, the balance being BRE's and original British PBs and magazines. Top price was paid by yours truly for the pocket book edition of FANCIES AND GOODNIGHTS by John Collier.

This set me back 17/6. Mostly, the American stuff brought around 3/- and the rest around 1/-.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

To some, this was the best session of the whole convention, but I think it was a disgrace. Supposedly the business session, the business of presenting reports was finished fairly soon, and the matter which had flared up at the last convention was on again.

Reports were received from the Melbourne SF Group, delivered by J Keating, Adelaide SF Association by Margaret Finch, read by Arthur Haddon, Mr Bill Veney gave attendees an idea of the activities of the Brisbane Group, Ted Butt reported on the demise of the Newcastle Group, Vol Molesworth gave a report on the Futurian Society of Canberra, Mrs Molesworth reported that the Vertical Horizons femme Group was apparently non-existent, but it was hoped to form a new femme group within the near future for activities in connection with the FSS and the Thursday Night groups.

Mr Brian Finch was surprised to be asked for a report on the activities of the ARCTURIAN PLAYERS, but obliged as best he could. He announced the holding of a competition of would be playwrights. For further particulars, contact Brian.

Mr W Hubble reported on the activities of the North Shore Futurian Society, and mentioned that most of the energy of this group had been devoted to the Convention this year, so activities had been small.

Mr David Cohen reported on the activities of the Blue Centaur Book Center.

On behalf of the Futurian Society of Sydney, Ken Martin detailed this organization's activities over the past year, pointing out how close to extinction the club was prior to the return of P Click from Melbourne. This situation can be traced to the split in Sydney fandom which took place some 18 months ago.

Mr D Nicholson reported on the present position of FORERUNNER, saying that the 3rd issue will be the last. He mentioned that in his opinion, there was a great need for a magazine of the FORERUNNER's type in Australia, in order to develop the fan authors, and help them to break into the pro field. He hoped that some fan with more resources would start one.

A motion was moved by Vol Molesworth praising the work of Don Tuck in Tasmania in putting out THE HANDBOOK OF SF and FANTASY, which, I'm sure, every reader will join in with.

Mr Doug Nicholson reported on the activities of the Bridge Club Group and SCANSION. He outlined the reasons for the move to the Bridge Club, and the reasons for the local sheet SCANSION, which was a modern FUTURIAN OBSERVER, both in scope and popularity(?).

It was moved V Molesworth and seconded by P Glick that the meeting deplore the Obscene Publications Bill, now before the NSW parliament. This was carried unanimously.

The Chairman, P Burke, asked whether any progress had been made on the motion put forward at last year's Convention, that the two Sydney Groups meet and try to iron

out their difficulties. Motion was made and carried that this discussion be held under an impartial chairman, and delegate I J Crozier was 'bulldozed' into the chair. He made it clear that the position was most unhappy for him.

Discussion was held as to whether the tape recorder should be switched off, in view of the contentious matter being discussed. After a lot of heated discussion, it was decided that the recording continue, but be transcribed under supervision of the Convention Committee.

Discussion was heated, and acting chairman Crozier never had much hope of controlling the meeting. I won't go into the gory details here, but finish on the earnest hope that when the two groups meet on Monday April 4th, they conclude once and for all this childish wrangling. After all, it's only a hobby - to most of us, anyway - and should be treated that way.

Frown where I sat, it looked as if the whole thing is a clash of personalities, and the sooner these personalities are gagged, forced out or resign from fan activities, the better it will be for all concerned.

This type of thing was alright when they were immature schoolchildren, but one expects something a bit better from them now. My God, the Labor Party hasn't got anything on Sydney fandom!

SUNDAY EVENING

Highlight of the last portion of the Convention, an original play authored by Norma Hemming, had some publicity in the Saturday morning papers. Titled MISS DENTON'S DILEMMA, it was somehow tagged SEX WITH HEX in the tabloids, and as a

result, there was a very large audience present eagerly awaiting the raising of the curtain. When this was done by a very engaging nymph, there was an immediate raising of blood pressure among certain members of the audience.

[The] play was a very clever bit of work, reminiscent of the work of the late Thorne Smith, with gods, goddesses, nymph etc wandering around in gay abandon, and very little else. Capable acting of the cast was appreciated, with Jack Leggett superb in the alcoholic portrayal of the father of the gods, Bill Veney suitably loud as Mars, Norma Hemming as Miss Denton (younger version), Brian Finch doubling as Bacchus and the older Miss Denton, and an unbelievable Cupid in the person of Bluey Glick.

On the whole, the Convention was a great success, and congratulations are to be extended to Arthur Haddon, for the superb location at Dumbar House and to all other members of the Committee.

Only one thing was missing - the result of the Short Story Competition and Artwork competition. What about it?

The artwork from NEW WORLDS and NEBULA were auctioned on Sunday evening, and brought fabulous prices. Average was around 30/- each.

I was informed that all profits (if any) from the Convention will be passed on to the Melbourne Group. This is a common practice in the States, and we here in Melbourne will continue it. Thanks a lot, Sydney.

Ian Crozier

Etherline 47, undated (but probably late March 1955)

The Historian's Corner

Hypothesizing

You see, the problem is how to turn a huge pile of 'historical facts' into a useful description of what happened and why it happened. In the good old days one could turn to the great names of history and the social sciences for 'laws' about how human societies operated. One could, for example, turn to Marx for guidance and find that fandom was an outcome of class struggle and consciousness in the same way that other organizations such as the Mechanics Institutes were formed by those who had become aware of their oppressed status. Or perhaps we could move to more modern times with the French post modernists and see fandom as an attempt to escape from or, on the other hand, to create forms of power and dominance. Then there are all the other historians, sociologists and psychologists with their theories which might be used to analyze and give meaning to a pile of historical evidence.

I don't have any great objection to social theory - I'm quite partial to a good dose of 'social construction theory' from time to time and keep a copy of Bjiker, Hughes and Pinch's *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* close by at all times in case of emergencies. However, while theory can be useful in suggesting ways of seeing and thinking about historical evidence, it can also be a very confining straight jacket and a temptation to gather and analyze evidence to suit a favored theory.

So, while historians might be informed by theory, that is, take on board some general ideas that might be useful to them in the initial stages of their research, they ought not be slaves to it. Rather, they should let the historical evidence lead them where

they need to go, not by wandering around aimlessly but by using what they find to guide them about where they should look next and what they might make of what they find.

If you happen to find me at a convention, drag me down to the bar, prop me up with a glass or two of Jim Beam ('smooth') and I will explain to you the way I see historical research and analysis. This is the summary. Imagine yourself let into a huge art gallery. It is in total darkness and all you know is that there are light switches on the walls and that if you find one in the dark and turn it on a light will come on somewhere illuminating a tiny part of the wall, not necessarily a part close to the switch. There might be a painting, or part of a painting, revealed in that tiny pool of light. You fumbled around to find a switch and when you've turned it on a tiny pool of light appears somewhere, but you have no idea about what it might mean in relation to the rest of the gallery. If you're lucky, there will be another light switch revealed by that light which will allow you to light up another small part of the gallery. And so the process goes on, finding more switches to illuminate more of the walls and the paintings on them so that an understanding of the gallery and what is in it gradually emerges from the darkness.

This is, of course, a very simplistic, time consuming and inefficient way of going about the process if you want to, for example, see all the pictures without illuminating all the walls as well. A better way to approach the problem is to be more systematic and find out, if you can, any relationship between switches and what they illuminate, by a process of considering what has been revealed so far and which switches are likely to reveal more of the pictures in the gallery while not illuminating

the walls around them. To do this you develop a hypothesis about how things work, what Dr Google calls ‘a supposition or proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation’.

Taking this metaphor a little further (but not too far because it is already starting to show cracks), I’ve now been at this project long enough to have turned on enough light switches to begin to see and understand what is in this gallery called ‘The History of Australian Fandom’. I’m also beginning to form a few hypotheses which helps lead me to a better view of where to look for more and better switches so that the light becomes brighter and the story clearer in my mind about how to write the history. However, there is still a great more light yet needed before the entire gallery is light and bright.

In the meantime, E H Carr set out to explain how and why historians have come to use hypothesis formation in what they do, drawing, as he liked to do, parallels with the physical sciences.

... though scientists, and even social scientists, still sometimes speak of laws, so to speak, for old time’s sake, they no longer believe in their existence in the sense in which scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century universally believed in them. It is recognized that scientists made discoveries and acquired fresh knowledge, not by establishing precise and comprehensive laws, but by enunciating hypotheses which open the way to fresh inquiry. A standard text-book on scientific method by two American philosophers describes the method of science as ‘essentially circular’:

We obtain evidence for principles by appealing to empirical material, to what is alleged to be ‘fact’; and we select, analyze,

and interpret empirical material on the basis of principles.

The word ‘reciprocal’ would perhaps have been preferable to ‘circular’; for the result is not to return to the same place, but to move forward to fresh discoveries through this process of interaction between principles and facts, between theory and practice. All thinking requires acceptance of certain presuppositions based on observation, which make scientific thinking possible but are subject to revision in the light of that thinking. These hypotheses may well be valid in some contexts or for some purposes, though they turn out to be invalid in others. The test in all cases is the empirical one whether they are in fact effective in promoting fresh insights and adding to our knowledge. The methods of Rutherford were recently described by one of his most distinguished pupils and fellow-workers:

He had a driving urge to know how nuclear phenomena worked, in the sense in which one could speak of knowing what went on in the kitchen. I do not believe that he searched for an explanation in the classical manner of a theory using certain basic laws; as long as he knew what was happening he was content.

This description equally fits the historian, who has abandoned the search for basic laws, and is content to inquire how things work.

The status of the hypotheses used by the historian in the process of his inquiry seems remarkably similar to that of the hypotheses used by the scientists. Take, for example, Max Weber’s famous diagnosis of a relation between Protestantism and capitalis. Nobody today would call this a law, though it

might have been hailed as such in an earlier period. It is a hypothesis which, though modified to some extent in the course of the inquiries which it inspires, has beyond doubt enlarged our understanding of both these movements. ...

The controversy about periodization in history falls into this category. The division of history into periods is not a fact, but a necessary hypothesis or tool of thought, valid in so far as it is illuminating, and dependent for its validity on interpretation. Historians who differ on the question when the Middle Ages ended differ in their interpretation of certain events. The question is not a question of fact; but it is also not meaningless. The division of history into geographical sectors is equally not a fact, but a hypothesis: to speak of European history may be a valid and fruitful hypothesis in some contexts, misleading and mischievous in others. Most historians assume that Russia is part of Europe; some passionately deny it. The bias of the historian can be judged by the hypothesis which he adopts. I must quote one general pronouncement on the methods of social science, since it comes from a great social scientist who was trained as a physical scientist. Georges Sorel, who practiced as an engineer before he began in his forties to write about the problems of society, emphasized the need to isolate particular elements in a situation even at the risk of oversimplifying:

One should proceed [he wrote] by feeling one's way' one should try out probable and partial hypotheses, and be satisfied with provisional approximations so as always to leave the door open to progressive correction.

This is a far cry from the nineteenth century, when scientists, and historians like Acton, looked forward to one day establishing, though the accumulation of well-attested facts, a comprehensive body of knowledge which would settle all disputed issues once for all. Nowadays both scientists and historians entertain a more modest hope of advancing progressively from one fragmentary hypothesis to another, isolating their facts through the medium of their interpretations, and testing their interpretations by the facts; and the ways in which they go about it do not seem to me essentially different. In my first lecture I quote a remark of Professor Barraclough that history was 'not factual at all, but a series of accepted judgements'. While I was preparing these lectures, a physicist from this university, in a BBC broadcast, defined a scientific truth as 'a statement which has been publicly accepted by experts'. Neither of these formulas is entirely satisfactory - for reasons which will appear when I come to discuss the question of objectivity. But it is striking to find a historian and a physicist independently formulating the same problem in almost exactly the same words.

E H Carr, *What is History?*, pp59-62.

Encountering Science Fiction with Eric Russell

Eric Russell, and his brother Ted, became actively involved in fandom in 1938. He was secretary of the Junior Australian Science Fiction Correspondence Club and then a founder member of the Futurian Society of Sydney. He was also part of the group of Sydney fans that published Australia's second fanzine,

Australian Fan News and, with Ted, he edited Australia's first regular fanzine, *Ultra*. Eric was a full participant in Futurian activities including their many feuds and disagreements and, like all of them, he was swept up in the events of World War 2 that demolished fandom in Australia.

Like other Futurians Eric drifted back into fandom after the war, but the war and a decade had matured him and taught him different interests and activities. As result, by 1950 his attachment to Australian fandom and stf was minimal, but not so much that he could not be coaxed into writing a short article about how he became interested in stf for a new Sydney fanzine that had just started publication.

This story is similar to others told by this generation of readers and fans, of discovering in themselves an attraction to the fantastic in the reading that was available to them, and then discovering science fiction proper. It was a life changing experience for most of them.

A GLANCE OVER MY SHOULDER

It makes one feel old to write an article such as this: yet I'm not really, although I have seen many wet weekends since the last time when science fiction and its fan activities occupied a major part of my leisure hours.

Nowadays I don't count myself among the science fiction fans. I haven't the time for such activities, nor am I greatly interested in them - I have not even time to read stf. But I'm still able to recall with pleasure some of the more interesting things in my stf past.

Amazing Stories is a name with a tradition behind it. Opinions differ on the meaning of that tradition and this has

been the cause of numerous arguments that have raged in magazine letter sections and at fan club meetings. I like to remember Amazing under Dr Sloane's editorship. Others don't. Under Dr Sloan's guidance, 'The magazine of Science Fiction' published many delightful stories. Who can forget the 'Professor Jamieson' series, for instance? Or yarns of the order of Campbell's 'Uncertainly', and the longer novel 'By Jove'? I liked Leo Morey's artwork, too.

Certainly Amazing Stories lost ground in the middle Thirties and later fell on evil days, finally to fall into completely alien hands, but I do think that financial trouble was behind a lot of it. Fierce arguments raged on the question whether the 'old' (Sloane-edited) Amazing Stories was better than the 'new' (Palmer-edited) magazine. Vol Molesworth took the April 1937 and April 1948 issues of the magazine and compared (or should I say contrasted?) in a fanmag article. Needless to say it cut no ice with those who disagreed with him and I think it made Bill Veney and myself more determined to stick to our guns.

My interest in stf goes back a good many years to my schooldays. I remember Mr Vivian, my teacher in a secondary class reading storied to us from an H G Wells omnibus, and later my persuading an aunt to buy a copy for my birthday. Of course I read 'Scoops' and some of the English twopenny weeklies that printed science fiction of the blood and thunder type. I'll never forget the surprise I caused at Sunday School in 1936 when I told our teacher (a milkman, Sundays excepted) that I'd like an H G Wells book for my prize at Christmas. They gave me a 'Famous Deeds' book instead, but I got my mother

to buy me a volume of Wells' 'Scientific Romances'. From that time I became very interested in reading science fiction, but strange to say I never touched American pulp magazines, possibly because of a distaste for the current horror and terror pulps that were strewn so liberally in the newsagents and book stalls.

As far as I can remember the first sf magazine I did read was an issue of *Wonder Stories* containing a part novel by Eando Binder. It told of a man who woke up in the future and the cover showed one of Paul's future cities. Then I met Bill Veney science-fictionally in 1938 and we later formed the Futurian Society of Sydney. I've seen quite a few wet weekends since then and quite a lot has happened to me in one way or another, but I'm glad I've been through it all.

Given half a chance I think I'd do it all over again.

Eric Russell

Woomera 1, Nick Solntseff and Michael McGuinness, August 1950.

1953 - Perth Science Fiction Group Formed

When Grant Stone brought me copies of *Wastebasket* from the Special Collection at the Murdoch University Library he was delighted to find this article, written in 1953 by Lee Harding in *Wastebasket* 3, about a stf group in Perth. The existence and activities of Roger Dard are well known, but not wider fannish activities in Perth.

Unfortunately, this appears to be the only reference to this little group of fans in the West. We touched on this point in an

earlier issue: it may be true that this group existed and also that they did wonderful things, but unless they left more evidence of what they did in the historical record this may be all that we can ever know about them.

It came as quite a pleasant surprise when we heard, recently, that a Perth Group had finally come into being. Roger Dard, Australia's undisputed No 1 Fan has for long been thought to be the only active resident in that area, but the following statement, received from the PSFG some time ago, sets a decidedly different light on the subject.

Lee writes:

'Perth fandom, for long un-organized, has been brought together as the Perth Science Fiction Group, under the aegis of Roger Dard. Although it is Roger's aim to eventually give up all fanactivity due to pressure of personal business, coupled with a desire to devote all his time to his own book and magazine collection, he has long had the ambition to organize Perth fandom into a cohesive whole, and this had been finally accomplished with the PSFG. In addition, honorary membership has been given to: Leo Harding, Don Tuck, Dave Cohen, Bill Veney, and Arthur Haddon for the great work they have done in furthering Australian fandom, and Ken Slater overseas.'

The Group also issue PERTH FAN NEWS, a three f'cap page clubzine, the reproduction of which, by mimeo, is a lesson to all Australian amateur publishers. The editor is Ralph Harding, and he exhibits a very fine ability, especially at slick reporting. The following are extracts from the 'zine:

BRADBURYANIA: 'Mr Thomas mentioned a very interesting incident. He mentioned the name of a prominent Perth psycho-analyst, who is a personal friend of his. Mr Thomas had persuaded the psycho-analyst to read Bradbury's story of insanity on Mars, 'The Earth Man' in an issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES. The psycho-analyst had been so impressed that he had stated that the story should be required reading for all psychiatrists, and should be published in every psychiatric bulletin!'

Take a bow, Ray!

'Mr Dard read a news item in the local evening paper, THE DAILY NEWS, in which it was stated that 'space fiction' was becoming more popular in Perth, and that local booksellers were reporting heavy sales of this literature. Mr Dard said that some method would have to be devised whereby some of these new readers could be contacted and offered the advantages of PSFG membership. This could be gone into at the next PSFG meeting.'

It is quite evident that there is a backbone of experience and common sense behind the formation of this organization, and the future looks more than healthy. Let up hope that the formation of the PSFG is as successful, if not more so, as the other interstate groups.

The group has a staunch and proven worker in the form of Roger Dard to lend them a helping hand, but we need not fear that all the responsibility will be passed off onto one person, a thing that has recurred far too often amongst less stabilized groups.

My thanks to both Ralph Harding and Roger Dard for enabling the reproduction of the above passages and etc.

Lee Harding, *Wastebasket* 3, 1953.

Fanzine Review

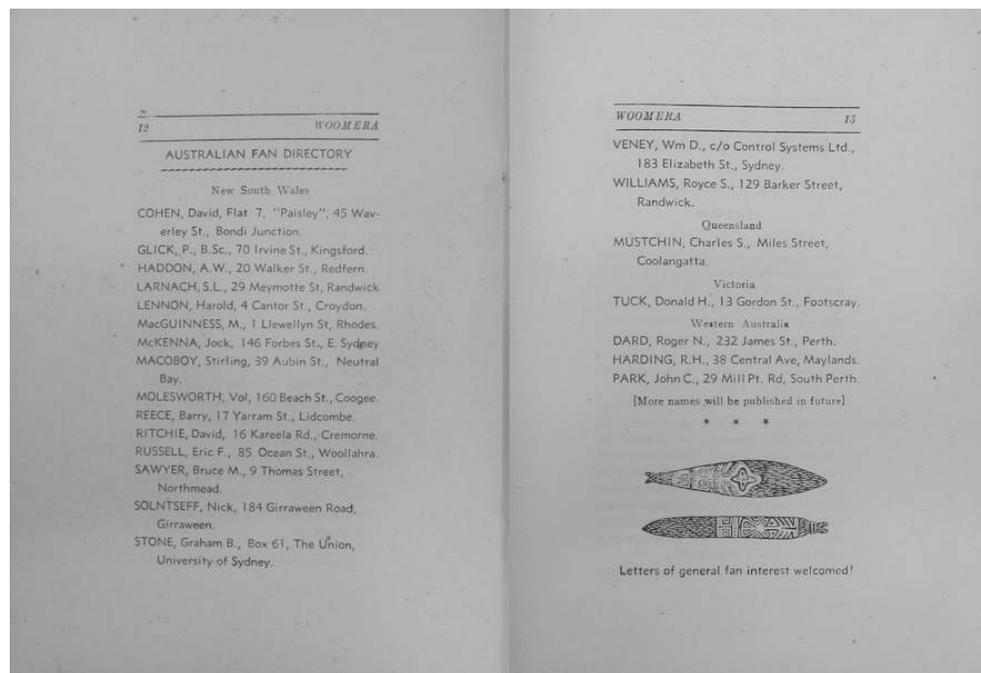
Woomera 1, August 1950, edited by Nick Solntseff and Michael McGuinness, 184 Girraween Road, Girraween, NSW, 6d a copy **and** *Woomera 1*, February 1951, edited and published by Nick Solntseff, same address, 9d a copy.

Nick Solntseff was a Sydney fan of the first half of the 1950s about whom I know next to nothing. He appears to have been one of the more active fans of that period but, since this was a time when fans published material about the state of stf and fandom rather than about themselves, he remains a mystery to me. Nevertheless, his fanzine, *Woomera*, is well enough remembered, perhaps partly because there was little else being published at the time.

Publication of two first issues tells us something about the state of Australian fandom at the time. The first issue is an extremely tidy looking little 12 pages mimeographed folded foolscap fanzine with a minimalist but interestingly designed cover by Eric Russell. The second first issue was 24 pages (including the covers) produced on Vol Molesworth's Futurian Press letterpress machine and looks very similar to Arthur Haddon's first issue of *Telepath*. Like the first first issue it is extremely tidy and carefully laid out.

Both these issues tell us about what Australian fandom aspired to be. Both are small but they are cautiously optimistic, which is about all one could be in 1950 and early 1951, given the state of world affairs. They exemplify order and organization in

the way they look and with writing about the Futurian Society of Sydney and the formation of the Australian SF Society. In the first issue Eric Russell looks over his shoulder early stf in Australia and in the second issue Graham Stone writes about the disorganized state of current fandom and the need for order. Still, the second version acknowledges that Australian fandom will have to grow from a very small base and the Fan Directory lists only 22 fans, 17 living in New South Wales and only one, Don Tuck, living in Victoria.



Of the two first issues, I liked the earlier one the best, perhaps because most of it was written by the, by then, old timers Eric Russell and Bill Veney. Both had matured since their pre-war FSS days and developed comfortable and relaxed styles.

Unfortunately both articles are too short to carry the enjoyment as far as I would have liked. Between them is another article which seems to be struggling to make the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle a new school of philosophy, so I was relieved at its shortness. Editor Solntseff begins the issue with an editorial about hopes for the future - including for *Thrills Inc* - and ends with a little questionnaire about what readers like in a fanzine, suggesting his plans for the future.

The second issue is more serious and less entertaining. Graham Stone launches it with an article about the state of stf which he calls 'A Survey of Fan Affairs'. It begins by informing the reader that there were about 35 stf and fantasy magazines in publication at the end of 1950 and goes on to lament the general poor quality of the stories in them because there were so many. He touches on book publishing in a short paragraph and then launches into a criticism of fandom which goes:

The state of fandom is chaotic. Fanzines are numerous, and in general sloppy and adolescent. Organization is badly needed, but what there is is inadequate. Science Fiction International, which is a very serious need, languishes for lack of support - yet there are at least five groups with essentially the same aims extending membership outside the USA. We note a lack of intelligent and critical elements - of old-time fans generally - among the influences at work.

Of course, there are lots of valuable projects. There are two excellent news magazines, Fantasy Times and SF News Letter. The NFFF service publications are good in intent, at any rate.

In Australia, a revival of interest is taking place. As

Woomera is being printed, the new Australian Science Fiction Society is in formation - a national association to keep Auslans in contact, as the expanded FSS used to do in its better days. With cooperative activity re-established, Australian fans, especially outside Sydney, can expect less complete isolation from the Science Fiction world.

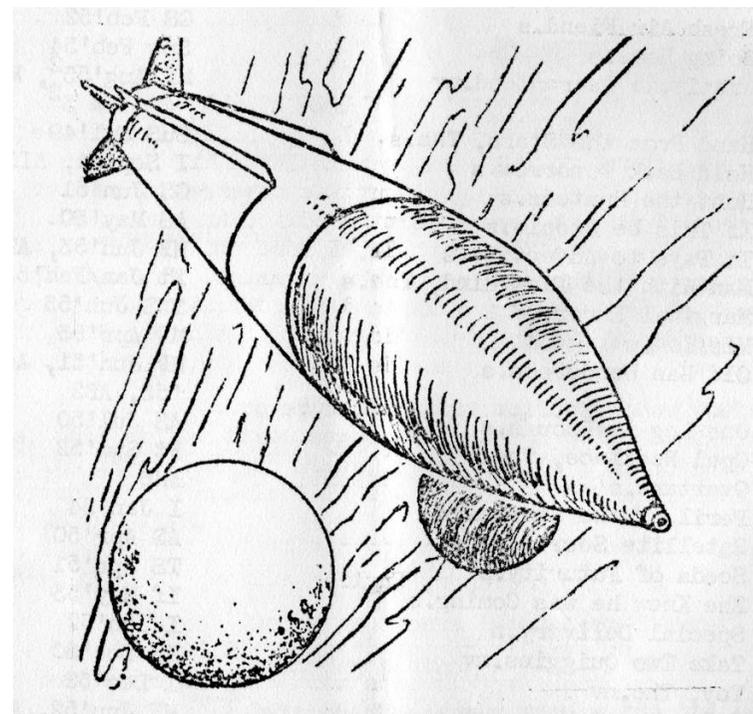
Graham Stone, *Woomera* 1, February 1951.

Following this Roger Dard writes briefly about the history of British prozines, the Australian Fan Directory takes two well spaced pages, there is the first part of Vol Molesworth's 'Let There Be Monsters' (which I didn't read for policy reasons) and, finally, a couple of pages of 'Fandom at Random' by Royce Williams which tells us mainly about the university results of some Futurians and hints at the possible demise of *Thrills Inc.* Most of this makes informative but dull reading.

Woomera lasted for another couple of issues published in the next year, all the product of Molesworth's Futurian press and looking the same, in style at least. I cannot help but compare these neat and tidy fanzines with the unkempt fanzines that would emerge from Melbourne a couple of years later; badly reproduced, poorly laid out and with sometimes appalling spelling and writing (even by my standards). But what these fanzines, *Perhaps*, *Bacchanalia*, *Wastebasket* and even *Etherline*, lacked in a polished look they made up for in enthusiasm and energy. Sydney fanzines like *Woomera* might have looked neat and tidy, but they also read as though the life and excitement of stf that had no doubt attracted their editors to fandom had been sucked out of them, dare one say by the studious attitude towards stf that seems to have developed in Sydney under the influence of Molesworth and Stone. This is

the kind of fanzine that would have been produced by a serious and dour Methodist, if they discovered fandom by mistake.

Frankly, these first issues of *Woomera* are not great fanzines. They might tell us a lot about the state of thinking in Sydney fandom at the beginning of the 1950s and they are interesting as historical artefacts, but I wouldn't be keen to add them to a fanzine collection as a fine example of the art of publishing - except as examples of obsessive tidiness. So, I wouldn't bother turning on the time machine for this one, unless you are also obsessive, and a completist



Dick Jenssen, *Etherline* 64, undated

Progress Report

What can I say, having a major cardio-vascular problem rear up and bite me has put a bit of a dampener on things. Nevertheless, in the first half of the month I made enough progress on trawling fanzines to keep me happy and I even ploughed my way through the first seven mailings of ANZAPA, a task I was not looking forward to.

To Be Done

More of the same. Having blood clots in my lungs and the danger that they pose elsewhere is going to limit travel for a few weeks to come, and I don't know when air travel might be again possible. Not to worry however, I've stored up enough work to keep me going for a couple of months at least.

I'm within a few cards of having to print off another thousand and with that comes the opportunity to update the chronology using the information on them. This updating process is likely to take a few days and the detail with which I do that work will depend partly on the feedback I get from you about putting more effort into an annotated chronology that I mentioned in the editorial earlier in this issue.

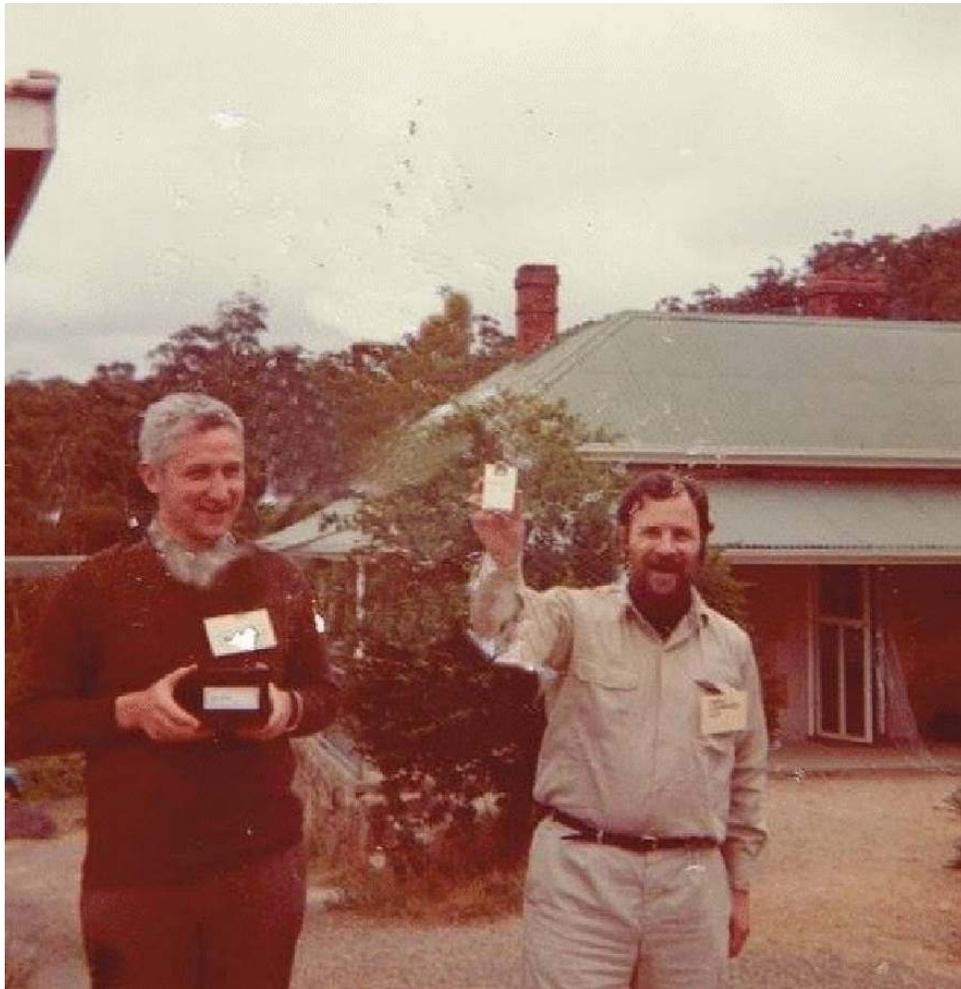
The Photo File

You will doubtless be relieved to see that our good friend Gary Mason has come to your aid again and made it unnecessary for me to publish here more photos from my own meager collection. Bruce Gillespie's article on the first Adelaide convention, *Advention*, reminded Gary of a handful of pictures of that event which he has sent for us to view. He tells me that he was not able to stay at the convention for long for family reasons -

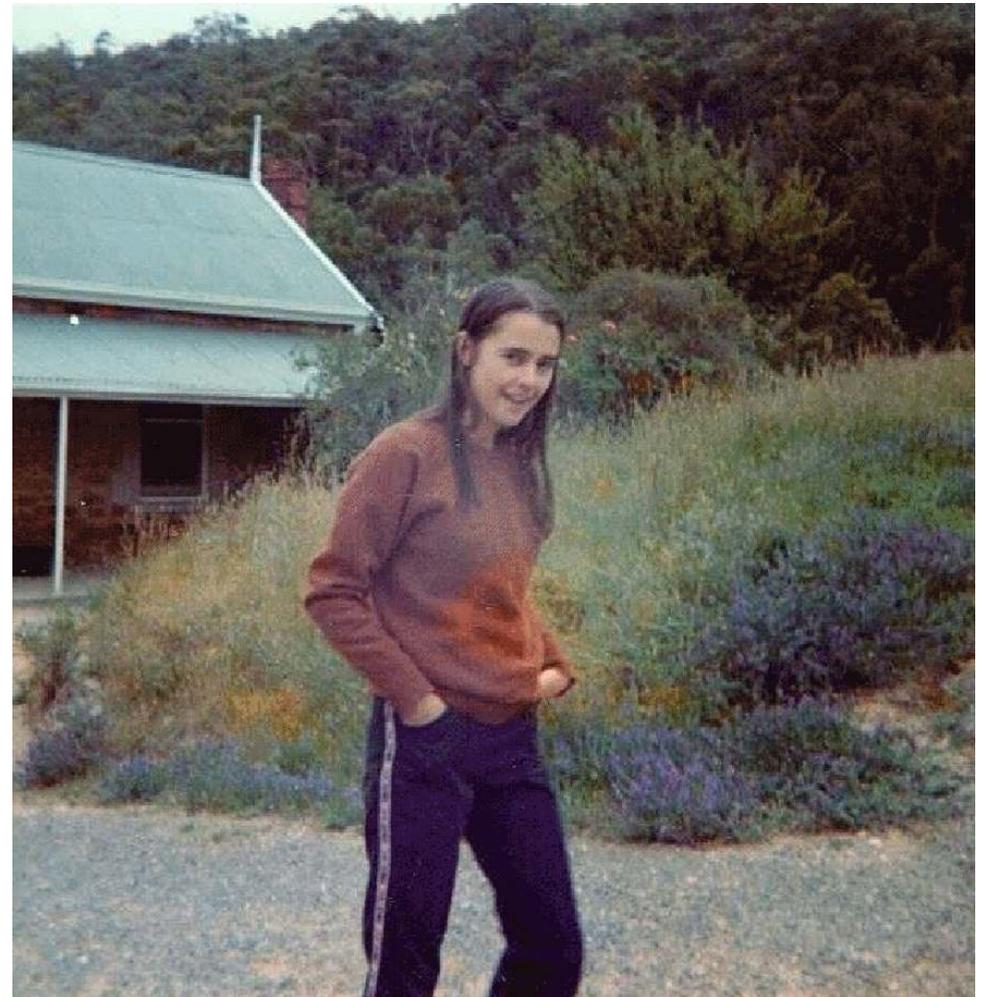
a tried and trusted excuse, that one - but offers these images as a reminder of humbler and, perhaps, happier conventions in the past.



Adelaide University's 'Melville House' in the Belair National Park about twelve miles from central Adelaide. The site of Australia's first 'live-in' convention.



Bill Wright and John Bangsund looking very cheerful despite the previous night's activities. What we need to know is; what is in that black box that Bill is holding so carefully.



Sabina Heggie, also known as 'Nomad', co-editor, with Shayne McCormack, of *Terran Times*, reviewed in our previous issue.

Your Say

We heard from: Bruce Gillespie, Jessie Lymn, Gary Mason (who sent the nice photos) and Roman Orszanski (who denies that he was in the photo on page 4 of the previous issue).

1968 - Launching the Australian Amateur Press Association

Perhaps the thing I did which has had the longest lasting effect on Australian fandom was to get ANZAPA (called APA-A for the first couple of mailings) going.

Not that I remember much about it. Unlike some people, I do not have a very good memory for things in my personal past - which is perhaps why I became a historian. As a consequence, the details of how the idea of an Australian amateur press association came into being and how I put it into action will have to turn up in the documentary evidence because they aren't in my brain. The only thing I recall with any clarity is having some envelopes stuffed with sheets of paper suggesting the idea of an apa and catching an early tram into work in a state of some excitement so I could get them posted to a bunch of fans (at a post office that no longer exists) before going to work.

As I recall it, I launched ANZAPA because I wanted to be in an apa and I was impatient. There were apas overseas and I was already on the waiting list for APA-45 and possibly SAPS, but getting into them was taking time because apas were a major form of fannish communication at the time and most had long waiting lists. So, the simple way to speed things up was to make a new one, and since there wasn't an Australian apa that sounded like the solution to my problem.



On the left we have Ron Clarke, but on the right is a man of mystery.
Any suggestions?

In reality, I knew almost nothing about how apas were run because I had no experience of them, although John Foyster was a member of SAPS and John Ryan and Gary Mason were members of CAPA-Alpha. These apas came from quite different traditions so while John came from a tradition in which a bundle of apazines was shoved in an envelope and sent off to the members John and Gary came from a more formal apa in which all the contributions were beautifully stapled together into one mailing. Their constitutions were also quite different. This led to a little friction to begin, but this was not a major problem as, to everyone in ANZAPA, the first priority was that it should succeed so I stapled together the first mailing in CAPA-Alpha style even though I didn't like it personally.

As it turned out, I was invited to join APA-45 in the period between launching the idea of an Australian apa and its first mailing so I set out to run ANZAPA along APA-45 lines. The initial ANZAPA constitution was copied more or less from APA-45 which had, I later discovered, been modeled its constitution on the FAPA constitution. This is perhaps fortunate because, had I been invited into SAPS instead, with its very minimalist constitution and decided to use it, the early friction in ANZAPA might have been at a higher level.

(A personal note here. APA-45 was called that because membership was limited to fans who had been born after 1945. In 1968 this meant that the oldest members were in their early twenties and, like me, beginning to have fun with 'sex and drugs and rock and roll', if they weren't already well into it. This brought me into a combined world of fannish fandom and young people beginning to experience the world for themselves, and it

was intoxicating. Quickly that apa became much more appealing to me than ANZAPA with the result that I began neglecting my responsibilities as Official Editor. The result was John Foyster and either Michael Jolly or Gary Woodman (or both) banging on my front door one night and taking away the next ANZAPA mailing that I had not got around to sending out, and they took over running the apa too.)

Thus we arrive, via a rather long explanation, at John Foyster's excerpt below, which comes from the first page in the first contribution in the first ANZAPA mailing. Obviously John thought of the apa as something more important to Australian fandom than I did. Being a relative neofan at the time, I thought Australian fandom had always been the way it was in 1968 and knew nothing of the lean times that had existed only a few years earlier. To John, with that experience, setting up an Australian apa was a big step forward in the development of st f fandom in Australia, for me it was just a bit of fun.

SMALL THINGS FROM DIRTY GREAT ACORNS GROW

There's not much point in my discussing at length what I think this little organization should do. This little organization might not even get off the ground. Furthermore, what I want others to do is of little consequence - what counts is that I should do something, and that me feller members should do something. Initially it doesn't matter too much exactly what appears in the mailings, excepting, of course that there will be some tendency to follow any precedent. Consequently we should all try to present as much material, of the kind we like, so as to influence others as much as possible. Pressure groups of one, as it were.

When I heard that Ron Clarke had Uttered The Word, and that Leigh Edmonds and Bernie Bernhouse had taken him up on it enthusiastically, I began to wonder whether I had perhaps been shuffled into another universe, for I just didn't think that there were enough fans in Australia able to produce regular fanzines. But I attended a meeting of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club, ostensibly to ratify a constitution, but in fact to discuss the whole matter with aforementioned Leigh and Bernie. Behold, great wonders! I was convinced, and even ran out of fingers when it came to a head count. After that the club meeting was anticlimactic: the fact that the constitution was thrown out, the notion of a constitution for the club outlawed forever, that the motion rescinded and the previously rejected constitution accepted almost unanimously (yes, me) seemed of small moment. An era had ended, and possibly new Australian fans would no longer be so isolated. Whether this happens depends on the success of this apa far more than it does on the success of, say, the proposed ASFS, or the present ASFA. I'll be sending copies of this to some non-members - and I urge them to join, if only on trial.

Anyone with access to a typer can be in it - and even if you haven't one (but have good handwriting), the medium known as dittography (or spirit duplicating - see the title of thisere) lends itself to such creativity as any member might deign to contribute. Apart from that it might just be possible for some fans, with names something like Leigh Edmonds or Ron Clarke, just to chose two extremely unlikely names, to produce others' material (for a small charge). But I'm just running this up the

pole to see who ignites it.

John Foyster

Ecchh-Toplasm 1, APA-A mailing 1, October 1968.

1974 - Paul Stevens Goes Boating

This one needs little explanation, except to say that I stopped filing my teeth a while back. I apparently asked a few fans to write articles for an extended issue of *Fanew Sletter* at the beginning of 1975. One of my victims was Paul Stevens and this is what he gave me to publish in the 23rd issue of that newszine in February 1974.

MY HOLIDAYS

Leigh Edmonds leaned over me and in a voice dripping with honey said: 'I want you to write me an article entitled "What I did during my Chrissy Hols"'. And then he smiled.

Now I don't know whether any of you have ever seen Leigh smile but his teeth are pointed. He reminds me of Count Yorga anticipating breakfast. I agreed to write his article. I would have agreed to go and collect for the Jewish Defense League outside the main mosque in Mecca. Those pointed teeth have that effect on me. The only trouble is that I didn't do anything over the holidays... except work.

You see, I work for a bookshop called Space Age Books and Christmas and the New Year period are our busiest of the whole year so consequently everybody works ... and I mean everybody. We have people on the counter wrapping books, people taking money from eager hands and putting it in the cash register, people putting books into stock so that eager customers can buy them and someone armed with a shove to

toss all the lovely money into a wheelbarrow to take down to the bank where there is this overdraft. As I said, everybody works!

Of course once the rush was over I was able to take off an afternoon and indulge in the newest fannish pastime, boating fandom. Now boating fandom usually takes place during the afternoon on the Yarra River. The Yarra? Of course you've heard of the Yarra River, it's the one that flows upside down, it's so muddy that the fish don't swim, they slide. You can't drown unless you take a shovel with you and dig down several feet. But perhaps I exaggerate.

Boating is done with style and aplomb, and if you can't get aplomb then get a bag of prunes (pause for terrible joke to die). Your boat must be wooden and be of the type you row and it must come equipped with two oars or rowing implements. You crew should consist of two girls and two boys, though you can bring one extra for ballast, someone you can throw overboard in an emergency and not miss (we had Peter House). You will find that the ladies are extraordinarily good at rowing and can last for hours. For supplies you should stock cold roast chicken (not Colonel Sanders), salad, sandwiches, cheese, grapes, strawberries and several bottles of champagne (chilled). Sunburn cream is also advisable, though this item should be applied externally and not internally.

You should seat your crew as follows; one at each oar and the other two at the stem and the stern. If the girls are wearing bikinis then they should be seated facing those rowing as the sight thus unfolded can stir them on to great efforts. Stephen

Solomon and myself rowed four miles inland when Irene put her bikini on view.

The technique of rowing is for both rowers to apply their oars simultaneously to the water, and with equal vigor, otherwise your craft can be a hazard to other river users and become over familiar with the river bank.

Our first combined river jaunt was on Melbourne Cup Day and so, equipped with all the necessities of life like champagne, food and women we assembled on the river bank and sorted ourselves into two rowboats. Unsinkable, the sign in my boat said. 'If this boat tips over it will not sink and passengers should cling to it until help arrives.' I had visions of the Titanic disaster in miniature occurring in our boat. However we set sail or whatever, and after rowing in circles to the great amusement to the assembled multitudes on the river banks for ten minutes, we finally got the hang of it and rowed upstream whereupon we found an idyllic spot under a weeping willow tree and tied up and had lunch. Did you know that if you open champagne bottles the right way you can lob the corks into passing boats? One friendly boater stood up and, handling his oar like a cricket bat, made a valiant try at a cork David Grigg lobbed at him. We gave him a round of applause and he rowed off into oblivion.

Having drunk all the champagne we rowed up river, Irene and Ann propelling our boat whilst Sue and Carey spun their boat in circles. How we got upriver without ramming any other river users has me puzzled but they say fortune smiles on fools. Once upriver I decided I had to go pee-pee (all that champers)

and so I tried to climb up the bank and, despite the rotten tree branches and thick mud, I made it. Getting back down to the boat was worse but by use of an arm technique for branch swinging that would have made Tarzan envious I finally made it back to the boat. Peter House also had to go up the bank and despite my most fervent prayers he didn't fall in, although he did hang most delightfully in a horizontal position three inches above the water for several moments whilst people tried to row underneath him and save him from a watery grave. That little drama over we lay back in the warm sunshine and listened to the horse I didn't bet on win the Melbourne Cup. And then it was a slow drift back down the river to where we had hired the boat from. On the way back we observed people rowing in circles and crashing into the banks like we had earlier. We sneered at them in the approved manner of veteran oarsmen and rowed on.

The second week in January I managed to get an afternoon off and Stephen Solomon and myself grabbed Irene for another row up the river. We had a marvelous time. Irene wore her bikini and put the golfers along the riverbank right off their games and I got sunburnt. After we had returned our boat Irene found a ten dollar note on the ground so we all trooped into Melbourne and after collecting Lee Harding went to see 'Juggernaut', the Richard Lester film about bombs on an ocean liner and then to a very delightful tea at a bistro bar in St Kilda. Boating fandom is here to stay.

(Paul Stevens, *Fanew Sletter* 23, 25 February 1974)

