BRITISH SF CONVENTIONS

Volume 4: 1958-1965

edited by

ROB HANSEN

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Cover photo: Jimmy Groves, Ted Forsyth and Ethel Lindsay in the convention hall at LXIcon, the 1961 Eastercon held in Gloucester. Photographer: Terry Jeeves.

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Foreword

This is Volume 4 in the British SF Conventions series, and the fifth to be published.

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This one bridges the gap between our first two Worldcons, spanning the period from the birth of the British Science Fiction Association up through the first half of the 1960s, when the BSFA was very much in the ascendant. Although the Eastercon would still be organised by local SF groups, our annual national convention officially became the BSFA convention as of 1959, and would remain so until 1967.

It's a peculiarity of our annual conventions prior to 1968 that most are now known by names other than the official designations they were given at the time. A listing of those designations would go something like this, with changed or shortened names shown in square brackets where applicable:

1. Whitcon
2. Loncon

(-) The International Science-Fiction Festival Convention [Festivention] *

3. London Science Fiction Convention, 1952 [London SF Con]
4. London Science Fiction Convention, 1953 [Coroncon]
5. Supermancon: The Second Manchester SF Convention [Supermancon]
6. Cytricon
7. 1956 Kettering Science Fiction Convention [Cytricon II]
8. Kettering, Easter 1957 [Cytricon III] **
9. Cytricon IV
10. National Science Fiction Convention, 1959 [Brumcon]
11. British Science Fiction Association Convention, 1960 [Kingcon]
12. British Science Fiction Association, LXIcon 1961 [LXIcon]
13. British Science Fiction Association Convention, 1962

[Ronvention]
14. British Science Fiction Association ’63 Convention [Bullcon]
15. British Science Fiction Association Convention, 1964 [Repetercon]
16. BSFA Convention, 1965/Brumcon [Brumcon II]
17. British Science Fiction Association Great Yarmouth Convention 1966 [Yarcon]
18. British Science Fiction Association Convention Bristol 1967 [Briscon]

** In all but name (and almost that) the first Eurocon.*
*** No known publications. “Official” name taken from a trophy presented there.*

I wouldn’t have been able to put together composite coverage of the conventions featured in these volumes if not for those who reported on them at the time. When they did so with wit those reports were a delight to read. Sadly, the writing of convention reports seems to be a dying art. Which is a real shame. More than almost any other form of fanwriting they capture the social history of our little sub-culture, a sub-culture based not on pro-worship – as so many other fandoms seem to be – but on being worthwhile in and of itself. Conventions were where we let our hair down and had fun. Not everyone appreciated or even understood this. As Michael Moorcock observed about J.G. Ballard in a 2023 email to myself and Dave Langford:

> ...he had imagined he would meet a bunch of intellectuals interested in surrealism and absurdism and it was a shock to him. He could never understand why Brian *[Aldiss]* and I enjoyed cons. I did believe that parts of fandom (probably ones I contributed to!) didn’t do SF any favours when trying to be taken seriously.
>
> I was somewhat shocked at the last big con I attended to be asked how much I was charging for my autograph! Luckily there were still enough old-time fans to make it possible to enjoy a con within the larger, commercial con!

In these pages expect to find fans and pros – including, yes, Aldiss and Moorcock behaving badly – in an era when the SF community really *was* a community with virtually no “us-and-them” divide between fans and pros.

The years covered by volume 4 were a time of notable cultural change in the world at large, which was mirrored in fandom at this point

only to the extent of a generation gap that developed, though these were generations defined not by age but by how long the individuals concerned had been in fandom. Its origins lay in the difference between the BSFA's stated purpose of promoting SF and the actual purpose of bringing new people into fannish fandom intended by its creators. The friction this created is covered at some length in *Then*.

In terms of passing the torch, it's worth noting that those who took over the various offices of the BSFA at the 1964 convention consisted entirely of people who came into fandom after the birth of the association, as did the committee who ran the 1965 Eastercon.

As always thanks are due to Dave Langford for turning the files I send him into an actual book, and for so much more; to Greg Pickersgill for his help with scanning and advice; and to Pat Charnock for heroic proofreading. Further thanks to Sandra Bond for a correction.

– Rob Hansen, October/November 2025

1958 and Earlier

1. The Slow Death of British Fandom

Sid Birchby writing as "Phoenix":

Shortly before the Cytricon while I was talking to Sam Youd, he remarked how few neofans came to "The Globe" nowadays. It was becoming nothing more than an Old Fans' Club. Back in the days when Londoners met at "The White Horse", there was always a strong turn-up of the younger set. They could be seen any week over in the corner swapping magazines. Indeed, I remember them from my own infrequent visits.

Unfortunately, said Sam, hardly any of them survived the move to "The Globe". Suddenly, and en-bloc, they disappeared from the scene. What happened? This is where we hop into my time-machine. We set the dial for 1937, and we vernier it *[i.e. fine-tune with a vernier scale]* for a Thursday evening early in December. The mists clear, and we see a London street. A thin, not-too-well-dressed teen-ager is walking along, reading a letter. Hovering unseen over his shoulder, we read it with him:

"...some of the boys meet every Thursday in London for a jaw and a cup of tea – why don't you come? – Yours for science-fiction, Eric Williams"

We watch him going down the tea-shop steps to join a group of chattering youths over in a corner. The waitress brings him his order – it's before the days of self-service – and lets him sit as long as he likes. He spends an ecstatic two hours swapping magazines with Carnell, listening to Temple's latest story-plot, and arguing with Clarke about Mossolov's "Steel Foundry" music. Total cost 11d. Later that night he writes in his diary:

"After work I went up to Holborn and in a Lyons' teashop joined 6 of the SFA gang in poached eggs on toast and a talk. A nice friendly atmosphere. If nothing else, science-fiction has given me this – the friendship of kindred spirits."

Great days, those, dewy-eyed days. I know this about them, though, that if those first meetings had been held in a pub, I for one would have had to drop out of Fandom fast. Even the monthly SFA meetings at the Druids' Hall were a constant strain, because it had a bar, and I had to keep my end up, and I couldn't afford it. Not on £2 a week, and me courting.

So where are the neofans today? Sam suspects that they couldn't

stand the pace either, and that they've formed a breakaway club, meeting somewhere in the London suburbs, perhaps, at one of their members homes. If he is right, what a pity. What a loss to fandom. London fandom began in a tea-shop, not in a pub, but it seems to have forgotten its origins. The result is – well, how many neofans did you see at the George Hotel, Kettering? [1]

Peter Weston:

Conventions were declining mainly because no-one was promoting them properly. The Supermancon in 1954 – "in the provinces", as they would have said – showed what could be done when a local group made a big effort to put the word around; its attendance figure was really very respectable for the day. The first Cytricon didn't do badly – there was comparatively little publicity, but at least it was announced in good time by an enthusiastic local group. After that, however, the Kettering events became an exercise in creeping lethargy, more so by the year. No-one wanted to organise them, things were left very much to the last minute and details were circulated through fanzines which were only going to the in-group, anyway. Here's Eric Jones... in *Spasmodic* II (March 1958):

> Recently, Vin¢ Clarke published "Don't Just Sit There" – a frantic call for a new SF society designed to inject new blood into the veins of fandom. In this I take up St Fantony's sword and stand by Vin¢'s side in the battle to perpetuate fandom; yes, *perpetuate* fandom, because if something isn't done to counteract the tendency in fandom over the past few years to deride constructivism ("reading or even mentioning SF is S&C fanning") fandom will die. There will be no mourners at the funeral. SF can exist without fandom; today's fandom can, perhaps, exist without SF. But what of the future?
>
> *Nebula* 26 has a letter from someone enquiring about fan-clubs. The editor's reply said, "In Great Britain there are a number of science fiction fan-clubs but, to my knowledge, none of these is specially for younger readers, few of them are very active, and some have even grown away from the appreciation of genuine science fiction altogether."
>
> Doesn't this about sum-up today's situation? We have an Easter gathering at Kettering. It isn't a convention, it's not advertised or meant to be such. Does that really mean that we have seen (unless the Worldcon comes again) the last British SCIENCE-FICTION convention???

The editor of *Nebula* was Peter Hamilton, a keen fan himself, who had attended conventions every year until 1956, despite his close encounter with Brian Burgess's entrails, but it sounds here as if he, too, had about given up on British fandom. What was the matter with these people? The 1957 London Worldcon had been a tremendous opportunity to put some life back into British fandom. If someone had announced an Eastercon (at Kettering or anywhere else), put up a few posters, handed out leaflets, set up a desk, I bet they would have attracted 100 registrations before the Worldcon was over. As it was, all we had was an unpublicised "gathering" – no wonder Vin¢ Clarke was agitating for something to be done! [2]

Two notes:

S&C above stood for Serious and Constructive (sercon for short) discussion of science fiction, deprecated by many fans who preferred partying and other social fun.

Entrails: at the 1954 SUPERMANCON Brian Burgess had used Hamilton's room to store animal innards intended as props for a mock human sacrifice. The weekend was hot and a terrible stench ensued.

[1] *New Futurian* #5 (Summer 1955, ed. J. Michael Rosenblum)
[2] *Prolapse* #7 (June 2007, ed. Peter Weston)

2. The Fourth Cytricon

For the fourth year in a row the venue for the UK national convention was the George Hotel in the town of Kettering, over the Easter weekend, Friday 4th April to Monday 7th April, 1958. It was the first convention to be held in the UK after the previous year's Worldcon, and attendance was around 50. No Programme Book or other convention literature were produced as far as we know. The committee consisted of Dave Newman and Norman Shorrock. There was no Guest of Honour.

Thursday 3rd April

Barry Hall:

Kettering. To me, that name now has a definite meaning and significance, but three months ago I'd hardly heard of the place and didn't even know where it was. In fact, I still don't. All I know is that you pay 37/6 at a Booking Office, change at Marks Tey and Cambridge and you're there. Actually, it's not as easy as that because I lost the tickets, but that's another story.

After five boring hours, Bryan *[Welham]* and I arrived at Kettering, where we immediately searched out the George Hotel. We gave the register a quick once-over and found that we were the first fen to arrive, thus winning a private race with Ron Bennett. Ron was our first contact with extra-Clactonian fen, and he wasn't forthcoming until 4:15 in the afternoon. I found Ron a sincere fan with a streak of humour in him that makes him doubly nice to know. He invited us up to his room where we perused photographs of past Ketterings and got to know each other a little better. Ron told us what to expect over the coming weekend. But it wasn't anything like what actually did happen.

Not long after this, Ron introduced us to Dave Newman, that most likeable of characters who must get his energy either by direct link with a power station or a bheer barrel, for I didn't once see him relaxing. Thursday evening, Gillian Adams and Ken McIntyre arrived, both of whom we came to know better over the weekend.

Friday 4th April

Things were a bit slow Friday morning, but we passed the time before lunch playing a weird game of Brag involving umpteen packs which Dave Newman had found in some dark recess.

After lunch, Bryan and I retired to the Devils Kitchen – a form of lounge facing the Hotel entrance (from the inside) – to wait for the main bulk of fandom to roll in. One minute there was hardly anybody about, the next we were surrounded by a veritable flood of fen. There was Archie Mercer, John Roles, Sid Birchby, Eddie Jones, Terry Jeeves and dozens of others, including Eric Jones and Bob Richardson, who came enmeshed by masses of electronic apparatus such as tape-recorders, mikes, loudspeakers and Humph *[John Humphries]*. Introductions became such lengthy processes, that they were finally given up and people came to know each other over the communal drink. [1]

Sid Birchby:

The sound of breaking crockery echoes through the hotel, and I wake thinking; “The con’s started.”

Someone in the kitchen has dropped a good selection of what is most breakable, and with such accuracy that I can identify each casualty by sound, starting with the hollow clonk of teapots and ending with the rattle of spoons. I should say that the teaspoons and maybe, the tray are all that survive.

Cytricon started for most of us on Good Friday. The Devil’s Kitchen, the nearest lounge to the entrance, is the centre of activity from lunchtime till supper, when there is enough of an audience to make it worth while playing over a tape from Dale R. Smith. There’s a most pleasant air of greeting, and as I sit beneath the assorted weapons adorning the lounge walls, I can ask for nothing better than to be at Kettering for the Con.

Should one analyse a good time? Isn’t it a leetle fugg-headed to try? Maybe it’s just there to be enjoyed, like jazz.

Have a statistic. First at the Con, beating Ron Bennett by hours, are Clacton fans Welham and Hall, who arrive so early on Thursday that as time passes and no-one else shows up, they begin to think that the con has been called off. [2]

Roberta Wild:

I know it’s usual for most fen to be exhausted at the end of a Con, but this year I reversed the process and was exhausted before I even arrived at Kettering. Ella (who has the makings of a Trufan except for one thing – you have to stand over her with a blunt instrument before she will put pen to paper) told me that she would be catching the 12:30 train from St.

Pancras.

It was twenty to four when I left Tresco *[Pam and Ken Bulmer's name for their house]*, and I honestly didn't expect to arrive at Kettering until some ungodly hour as with my usual foresight, I hadn't looked up the timetables. I was lucky as I didn't have to wait anywhere and much to my surprise (and Ella's) I walked into the George Hotel at six thirty. Ina Shorrock saw me at the desk and immediately breezed over to bid me welcome. You know, if ever I throw a really big party, to ensure its success I shall ask Ina to be hostess. She has the most wonderful knack of putting the shyest persons at their ease and making them feel welcome and thoroughly at home, which must help to bring them out of their shells. [3]

Barry Hall:

Friday evening was most enjoyable. Groups of fen collected in the Devils Kitchen and, going from one group to another, Bryan and I soon came to know many of them. Fannish names became fannish faces, and fannish faces became definite personalities; we didn't find one person out of all the 48 attendees whom we didn't come to like. Terry Jeeves was one pleasant shock: I found him an extremely nice chap with a tinge of an accent in his voice which gave him added character. Looking at him, you just can't convince yourself that this bloke actually draws the soggies you see climbing all over *Triode*. Sid Birchby was another fan I enjoyed talking to, although you had to watch what you said in his presence because his pencil and notebook were always to hand. I recognised John Roles from the cover of the Fan Directory; I'm going to send John a sub for *Space Diversions*, which is the highest praise I can give. Archie Mercer Was Always On The Pun, and you can see that the ideal place for Archie is under the shadow of a Malleable Iron Works. I met so many new fen that to describe my feelings on meeting any separate one is a very difficult thing to attempt; suffice it to say that I found everyone excellent people to know. [1]

Sid Birchby:

Friday evening. Ivor Mayne, Ron and I go to see *Pal Joey* under the impression that Frank Sinatra will sing, Rita Hayworth dance, and Kim Novak act? If this were not a decent family magazine I would describe how our eyes were opened. It takes a two-hour tape session of the Goon Shows and Little Richard, back at the Hotel, to stop me twitching. [2]

Roberta Wild:

Friday night, of course, was the gathering of the fans, many of whom hadn't seen each other since the last Con. I was sorry to see that none of

the Belfast contingent were present, and very, very few of the London Circle. Brian and Barry from Clacton were there and a couple of very pleasant and intelligent chaps they are, too. However the rest of British fandom was well-represented. For someone who was dog tired I managed fairly well as I seem to recall it was half past one in the morning when I suddenly realised that by some oversight I hadn't had a cup of tea since before I left Tresco. Ella hadn't had one either, and Bill, that wonderfully kind night porter, said he would bring some to my room. He did too, and after that it was easy to tumble into bed and drop straight off to sleep. [3]

Sid Birchby:

We mostly turn in about midnight, so as to gather strength for the next two nights. A few choose to wait up for Brian Burgess, who has phoned the hotel to say that he is hitch-hiking very slowly in the wrong direction, and that, having reached Scotland, he is now back on course, and will they leave the front door open. [2]

Barry Hall:

I decided to stay up that night to meet the indefatigable Brian Burgess who wasn't arriving till late. This is an understatement as he didn't get in until 3:30 on the Saturday morning. However, meeting him, I think it was worth it. Brian is slightly eccentric, and shares his one bad habit with my brother, which is his ability to drop off to sleep at the slightest provocation. [1]

Saturday 5th April

Sid Birchby:

I hear that when *[Burgess]* arrives at 4 a.m. his first action is to chase one of the girls along the passage, but I can hardly believe that. Who can have so much energy? When I breakfast with him at 9 a.m., he is perfectly fit and talking chiefly about having had trouble with a Jaguar's big end.

We are last in for the meal, and I notice with alarm that there are no other fen in sight. Have they all left during the night, hitch-hiking slowly, perhaps, towards Scotland? I realise how the Clacton boys feel on Thursday and hurry down the street to search for someone. Happily, after several awkward situations due to grinning at total strangers, I use my intuition and make for the local Post Office. It is, as I hope, full of fen milling brightly about, buying stamps for the despatch of fannish mail.

"This," says Dave Newman, "will be the first time I've been thrown out of a Post Office"... as everyone changes their mind and decides to buy

stamps at the hotel instead.

Norman Shorrock is carrying an enormous curly balloon, four feet long; “What’s this for?” I ask, touching it.

“You like it?” he replies. “It’s yours.” And they all move off, pretending not to know me, and leave me trapped among strangers in the main street, clutching the damn thing, and whimpering. My friends.

A long time later, I scuttle off the streets into a small untidy bookshop crammed with old magazines and fans. This is the collector’s shop, new to me since I have not been to Kettering before, but a major attraction for those who have. Between conventions, a fair amount of s-f accumulates here, and in one weekend the fannish locusts descend and raid the lot. Everyone seems to be here. Who says we no longer read s-f?

John Roles finds a book of Victorian poems titled *The Works of Willis*, including one on the “Death of Harrison”. This is at once snapped up and enriched with suitable quotations. Proxyboo Ltd has been busy. [2]

Roberta Wild:

Saturday, after breakfast, Ella wanted to see the town and it wasn’t until we were halfway up the street that I blithely informed her that this was only my second time in Kettering and that I hadn’t the slightest idea of the geography of the place. After that, she looked round rather grimly for likely places for tea. So intent was she on this search that she absent-mindedly stepped in front of a vehicle that came out of a side road. Fortunately, I saw it and hauled her back to the kerb – she’d said that she’d pay for the tea and I wasn’t going to let her take such drastic steps to get out of her promise. The vehicle turned out to be a hearse – of all things! – but although it was empty of cadavers, the driver looked so mournful you’d have thought there were half a dozen bodies in the back. Maybe he was just driving round practising or maybe some peace loving citizen had heard about the Con and had hired him to winnow the ranks of fandom.

On our return to the hotel who should be sitting on a chair outside the main lounge but Harris himself! He had already written to say that it was unlikely he would be at the Con, but when he found out that Vince Clarke would not be there, he had come up so that he could write the Conrep for *Hyphen* himself. “Come and eat” were his first words and Ella withdrew before I could tell her it was customary for fans to form up in crowds and take eateries by storm. A dozen of us set forth eventually including Paul Hammett and his wife – and I must say that Paul talked far more sensibly about the horrors of the H-bomb than did the pugnacious pacifists who marched to Aldermaston and tried to overturn a car (with the occupants inside) because the people in it disagreed with their views.

Back to the hotel and the peripatetic way that is so much a part of a Con. I recall being in some room for awhile – I think it was Ted Tubb's – with some fen. John Roles and I discussed OMPA while absent-mindedly drinking from the glasses that were thrust into our hands. Ted Tubb was trying to persuade Norman Wansborough that he had started a marriage bureau and was offering to find Norman a wife for a small fee. "You know the sort of thing Norman. Young country gentleman seeks wife with similar tastes." He also offered NGW a drink which he assured him was quite innocuous, but had all sorts of mysterious ingredients in it with the result that Norman, who doesn't drink anything stronger than cider, was quite ill later on.

Eventually most of the fans gathered in the main lounge, prior to adjourning to the Basket Lounge, where the party was to be held. Throughout the day John Roles and Ina Shorrock had been collecting money from the sale of raffle tickets for TAFF that I had brought with me and they were still doing a brisk sale with them. It was originally intended that the draw for the cover paintings should be held at the Saturday night party, but those fans who were there will no doubt realise why it slipped my mind. There were several tapes to be played – mainly jazz and much too much of Elvis Presley. I was sitting with Harris (he had a bottle of Scotch), as it was getting low, we were getting high. Paul offered his last cigar to Phil Rogers, who had already appropriated Joan Hammett. "You've taken my wife, you've taken my last cigar – there's a bottle of liquor in my room, would you like that too?" asked Paul. "What's the number of your room?" asked Phil, immediately losing interest in Joan and the cigar. [3]

Barry Hall:

After dinner out at the Gaumont theatre, all fen collected in the Billiards room where a party had been scheduled. It was soon after this that fandom and the Con really began to go with a swing. Amidst flashing camera bulbs, Eric Jones tape-recorder playing back a mixture of Jazz and Goon music, dancing and jiving, people shooting each other with starting pistols and Brian Burgess asleep in the corner, I remember drinking one of Dave Newman's special brews of potent quality. The next thing I remember is being interviewed by Eric Jones for a tape the Cheltenham group were preparing. With my oesophagus still twitching from Dave's fiendish brew, and someone shouting "Rubbish!" at the top of his voice into my ear, I bravely tried to make sense for Eric. Thank Ghod I didn't hear the play-back.

After a guitar session with Sandy Sandfield, we returned to the

Billiard room only to find it decimated of fen. On enquiring we were told that the fabulous room parties had already started, whereupon Bryan and I hastily rushed off to find where the first one had gathered.

We piled into someone's room, had hardly got ourselves settled before someone – who shall be nameless – shouted "Room 28!" With a ragged cheer the fen moved out and we found ourselves swept along by the mob to Sandy's room again. It was here that Terry Jeeves had us all enthralled for half-an-hour whilst he told the shaggiest dog story I've ever heard and balanced a glass of bheer on his nose at the same time. Brian Burgess came in full of life, promptly plonked himself down on the nearest bed and dropped off to sleep. Sandy tried hard to get everybody to sing his latest composition, "Charlie Mopps", but nobody seemed interested and the room gradually emptied of fen.

Passing that way several hours later, I saw my very first example of Norman and Ina Shorrock's handiwork. Sandy's bed had been turned upside-down and inside-out and the bedclothes were scattered all over the floor. Together with Sandy we tracked down the two guilty Liverpudlians, who hotly denied being the cause of such goings-on. If I'd had any sense I would have locked our bedroom door then, but I was too busy bringing ruin to other sleepy fen.

It was about this time that we mislaid Sid Birchby. We later heard that he had gone to earth in a kitchen to write his conreport and spy on the nefarious activities of Dave Newman. Throughout the evening Sid had been following us around with note-book in hand taking down masses of notes, and everybody frantically tried to remember if they'd said anything that could be used for blackmail. All through the evening I can best remember Norman Shorrock saying over and over again in a form of ritual of his own: "SSSHHS! Be quiet, we might hear something!" We never were and we never did. [1]

Roberta Wild:

In the meantime Harris was pondering on the mating habits of snakes. I don't know what put the idea into his head unless it was the fact that I'd wrapped myself round him in a half-Nelson so he couldn't get away (there was still some Scotch in the bottle). "Perhaps they lay out flat – or maybe they coil up together." Since I had never thought about it I couldn't tell him. Besides I was too occupied in trying to tell him that blasted chair-back was digging into me every time we went into a clinch. We solved that problem by only using one chair, though at one point I had to shove Ina off his other knee. Just as the last of the Scotch, which Chuck assured everyone was made out of old space socks, disappeared, Ina and Dave

Newman appeared with the punch.

It looked and tasted quite mild, but Ina told me that the base was 140 proof Polish white spirit. She forgot to tell me that the other ingredients included rocket fuel and a dash of Brasso, I came out of another clinch to find Ron Bennett regarding us in rather a bewildered way. “But, Bobbie, you’re really puzzling the Ompans,” he said bemusedly. For those who don’t know, Chuck and I tore each other up in the last OMPA and no doubt a few thought battle would be joined when we both turned up at the con. Well, you saw a wrestling match, didn’t you?

Suddenly all I wanted to do was go to sleep. Maybe it was the punch or maybe it was the fact that I’d felt tired even at the beginning of the con. Harris was bidding me farewell in the approved manner when his mind suddenly reverted to the problem of snakes. “Maybe they tie themselves in reef knots,” he said into my ear. That did it! I suddenly had a mental picture of two unhappy and puzzled snakes trying to untangle themselves, and sitting on the ground I burst into a fit of the giggles. “This isn’t the sort of moment to get the giggles,” he said indignantly. But I couldn’t stop and it was his fault anyway, for bringing the subject up again. In the end, he stalked away muttering “I’m going to get you some coffee.” This was a mistake as by the time I got to bed after drinking it I couldn’t sleep.

This year the fans had a new idea, not room parties, but corridor parties and I lost count of the number of times they marched up and down. It sounded like the Afrika Korps and the Montgomery lot fighting to get the front row at the Folies Bergère. I recall that round about six o’clock I bellowed shut up to some fans near my room. Sorry, Archie, but I was so tired I was on the point of screaming with fatigue. [3]

Barry Hall:

A group of fen including Norman and Ina Shorrock, Humph, Archie Mercer, Pete West and several others, all went back to Sandy’s room to help straighten things out. When we arrived Ina Shorrock, that Queen of trouble-makers, had disappeared. Frantically I ran back to my room – just in time to see Ina and Humph trying to make themselves inconspicuous beneath our beds. At that moment I was pushed from behind by some ruffian called Pete West, and soon our room was full of screaming fen giving it the same once-over treatment Sandy’s had taken. I valiantly went down with my bed, fighting to the last. I was rolled up in some blankets and then some clot sat on me. I scrambled out just in time for Pete West to take some photos of the shambles; it was only when everything had been put to rights that Pete discovered he hadn’t had any film in the blame thing, so that small piece of fannish history was lost to us, as well as one of

Ron Bennett being dragged feet first up the stairs. Ina Shorrock felt some little remorse and helped us remake our beds, on which Bryan and I swiftly collapsed. [1]

Sid Birchby:

The Saturday night party goes with a rhythm-and-blues beat. Your editors whirl each other round their heads; laughter and music fill the air in the Basket Lounge; Bill The Barman (a really likable gentleman who it is a pleasure to meet) bustles back and forth with trays of bottles, and at midnight a fanfare of trumpets announces the entry of Formula Four Blog. The party grows livelier yet. Laurence Sandfield hands out copies of a comic song written for the occasion, and I put my elbow in my beer. TJ and Bob Richardson fight a duel with plastic cocktail sticks. These little sword-shaped items, first seen in the bar, are now in every lapel.... a fannish motif clearly ordained by St. Fantony to mark the occasion.

At 4 a.m. the party tails off and the survivors either totter off to bed or begin to make the rounds of the room parties. Gradually the numbers shrink until by 5 a.m. only a dozen hard cases are left. Allow me to describe the scene at this time. It may help to convey some of the Marx Brotherish atmosphere of the night.

A smell of coffee drifts up the stairs... that's Bill brewing up, I suppose. A little while ago, someone has locked me in a pantry, and while getting the door open again, I have made tea. Through the skylight I watch the... uh... sky lightening and hear a thrush singing. All is peace. Then with a wild shriek, Ina Shorrock flees past the pantry door hotly pursued by Sandfield and the mob. I never know why. Staggering along in the rear is Ron Bennett, roused from slumber, but fast relapsing. I shrug, and go back to my pantry for a second cup. Peace again... thrush singing like mad. Thunder of footsteps. Bennett races past. There's no one else in sight.

"How d'you do?" I say politely, putting my head into the dark corridor. "How d'you do?" he replies, not pausing to see who it is, and steams into the distance. Again, I don't know why, because by now the hotel is at last asleep, apart from a groaning far off, like the unquiet spirit of Archie Mercer's accordion. [2]

Sunday 6th April

Roberta Wild:

I could have sworn I hadn't been asleep for more than five minutes when I was awakened by a knock on the door – and there was Harris with

a tea-tray in his hands. I dived back into bed, just as well I wasn't sleeping raw, he might have had some breakages to pay for. "What's the time?" I asked. "Half-past six!" he grinned, then took a look at my face and said hastily, "No – half past eight – don't throw the tea at me." Then he poured his own, tossed me the uninteresting part of the *Sunday Pictorial* and sat down with his feet on the window sill. I wondered if this taking tea off the maids and bringing it in to other fans was an old Con Custom that I'd missed out on until now and since Harris was ignoring me I was also wondering if I should be relieved or insulted. [3]

Sid Birchby:

After breakfast with my patient room-mate, Jack Wilson, I join a camera shoot in the square. This is Sunday, the official business day, starting with an OMPA meeting at which a tape is played from Vin¢ and Co. Me? I feel frivolous. At lunch-time, some of us go to a café where Ron Bennett knows the waitress, one of those places where each table has a battery of condiments and sauces on a check cloth. Barry Hall exchanges glances with me. Silently we begin to play surrealist noughts-and-crosses with the sauce bottles. Whenever anyone else begins to guess the rules, we switch to salt-shakers.

Engrossed in such far-out pursuits, we return to the George almost with regret. In a smoke-filled lounge a warming-up session is in progress. Most people are already there, and the rest, like us, are arriving as lunch finishes or as the bar closes. Norman and Archie are murmuring a commentary on the scene for the States. Mr. Wansborough sends a message to Dick Eney, complete with a background of lowing cattle, given free by the audience. There is a raffle for some paintings. [2]

Barry Hall:

An OMPA meeting was held on the Sunday morning, which Bryan and I missed as Bob Richardson had invited us up to his room together with Ina Shorrock, Eric Bentcliffe, Sandy Hall and Eddie Jones. We looked through some photographs showing Dale R. Smith in his natural surroundings and discussed Bob's *Arms and Armour* venture. It was in Bob's room that I came to know Eric Bentcliffe, and I personally consider him a damn nice chap. Same as everybody else was. [1]

Roberta Wild:

Later Sunday morning we held the traditional OMPA meeting and listened to a tape from Vince Clarke anent waking up British Fandom which was the subject of discussion later in the day. The meeting concerned the state of British Fandom.... [3]

Barry Hall:

In the afternoon everybody gathered in the lounge pending the arrival of Dave Newman who had the difficult task of starting a discussion on the forming of an SF Society. At first, the atmosphere was very sleepy, but within five minutes I saw a most dramatic change come over all fen present. In under 24 hours I saw fandom change from the light-hearted mood of the room parties to the deadly serious manner of the discussion.

Dave Newman did an absolutely grand job of getting it running smoothly, for he had been relying on a tape from Vince Clarke and Walt Willis to set it going. The results of the discussion far surpassed anything hoped for, and at the end of the afternoon a vote was taken of all those in favour of setting up an SF society. This was practically unanimous, there being only two dissensions – that of Brian Burgess and NGW, both of whom were asleep.

In the evening a few of the basic problems were thrashed out, the chief one being a name. Finally, it was given the brave title of THE BRITISH SCIENCE-FICTION ASSOCIATION.

Everything that had been said during the complete proceedings had been taken down on tape, ably managed by Eric Jones, which was to be sent to Vince. This tape finally ran to 2 hours 40 minutes and I have a feeling that it's going to make fannish history. [1]

Sid Birchby:

The open discussion which now begins, and which ends in the formation of the BSFA, is the outcome of Vince's OMPA appeal for Something To Be Done about the Incredible Shrinking Fen. In other words, there aren't enough of us in Britain. With only a break for dinner, this meeting lasts until 10:30 p.m. The recruiting problem is in everyone's mind, and Vince has clearly said what many have been thinking. Suddenly the spirit of the con has changed. You know the way a cat plays with a mouse, batting it this way and that? Just when it looks like escaping the cat pounces, and you know that all the time it has meant to, even when it is playing hardest. Well, for "cat" read "British Fans" and for "mouse" read "Fandom".

For a moment we see that fandom is slipping away, and with a unity of action and lack of heroics that is rare in fan politics, we do something about it. The feeling of the meeting is extraordinary. This is the third national fan society I've seen, and the most likely to succeed where the SFA and the BFS have failed. [1]

Roberta Wild:

Dave Newman was voted in as Chairman, two members of the Cheltenham group as librarians, Ted Tubb as editor of the OO*, Archie Mercer as Treasurer, and Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves as joint secretaries. At the annual membership fee debate Tubb surprised some of us by being against having the youngsters in at a reduced fee, If we don't encourage them who is going to take over when we are old and tired? Next came the discussion for the venue for the annual meetings and a seaside resort was voted for. [3]

** Official Organ or magazine of the BSFA, which was titled* Vector *and still continues. [Ed.]*

For Dave Newman's detailed account see "Appendix 1: The Birth of the BSFA".

Sid Birchby:

We stay talking in the lounge till 2 a.m, when Bobbie Wild and Ella Parker invite Jack Wilson, Ivor Mayne, and me to a room party. Somehow, after settling in with sandwiches and coffee, we find Brian Burgess in a corner, reading the Bible aloud. We feed him the sandwiches, to stop him. He hides the crusts in Ella's bed, where she finds them, with a merry laugh, at 6 a.m., and he begins anew. In desperation, we turn off the light. So he quotes from memory. We light up again, and give him some s-f to read. That quietens him. He goes to sleep. At 5 a.m. Phil Rogers taps on the door, says hello and falls to the floor asleep, the weakling. This signals the invasion of everyone left awake in the hotel... final count 24 in a room for two. Uproar, flash photos from Peter West, Bennett handing out beer and swapping stamps with Norman.

As daylight shows through the curtains, we turn off the gas fire and lights, and the mob goes off on a mission of vengeance with Barry Hall, whose room-mate, Bryan Welham, has locked him out. Most then turn in, leaving only eight of us to take coffee, brewed by the kindness of Bill, in a Devil's Kitchen eerie in the flat dawn light. [2]

Roberta Wild:

That evening we once again clustered into groups. Towards five in the morning, Barry decided he wanted to go bed. So we all decided to take him. He was sharing a room with Bryan Welham, but for some reason or other when Jill sang out that we wanted to put Barry to bed Bryan wouldn't unlock the door. We all pretended to go away, but Bryan refused to be fooled. Five minutes later, when we were momentarily off our guard, the door was suddenly opened, Barry was yanked in, and the door locked

again before we had a chance to get a foothold. Those boys have makings of true fans. [3]

Monday 7th April

Barry Hall:

For me, the morning of the Monday was just as enjoyable as the rest of the weekend – in places more so. This was because I had now got to know nearly all the fen and could talk to them without searching for words and feeling embarrassed over the long pauses in conversation. Bryan and I didn't rise till eleven, and on coming downstairs we found that a great many fen had already left, but those who were still around had gathered in the Commercial room where Jazz was being played on Archie Mercer's temperamental record-player.

My last jumbled fannish memories of Kettering include Sid Birchby expertly placing a glass of bheer on the lid of Archie's machine in an effort to get some response out of it; Norman Shorrock taking cine shots of Pete West blowing bubbles past some cardboard spaceships; Eddie Jones passing a box around for people to put in any rubbish they could find so that it could be sent to Ken Slater as a memo of Kettering; and, finally, Norman Shorrock buying us a last drink just before we left.

After a few touching farewells to Gillian Adams, Ron Bennett, Terry Jeeves, Norman and Ina Shorrock, John Roles and many more I can't remember, we left the George Hotel – perhaps for the last time.

As the train pulled out of Kettering, we left a wonderful experience behind us, but took some wonderful memories home with us. [1]

Roberta Wild:

Monday of course, was farewell day and Ella, Jill, Ina and Norman, self, Jean and Peter piled onto the train, calling out to Archie on the platform and asking him to send on the various things we had left at the hotel. I hadn't made a really outrageous remark for the whole of the con so at the very last moment I bawled one to Archie, then turned round and found a parson staring at me in horror... Thank Ghod I'd had the sense to ask for Tuesday morning off from the office. [3]

Sid Birchby:

So the good times pass. Monday is all departures. We check out of our rooms and get the use of the Commercial Room, where Archie and I take turns as disc-jockeys in a non-stop jazz session. As a last group effort we make up a souvenir box for Ken Slater, absent through illness. Among

other items it contains a sheaf of hotel bills, the receipts torn off, endorsed “Please Pay At Once”. I hope he feels better for it, but I doubt it! [2]

[1] *Perihelion* #3 (1958, ed. Bryan Welham and Barry Hall)
[2] *Triode* #14 (Summer 1958, ed. Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves)
[3] *Femizine* #10 aka *Distaff* #1 (1958, ed. Ethel Lindsay)

1959

3. The Brumcon Programme

The Brumcon Programme Book was 36 pages long (including covers). The majority of those pages were ads. What follows is the editorial material minus the rules for the Tea Drinking Contest, which can be found in 1957: The First UK Worldcon, *the previous volume in this series. As always, not everything listed on a programme necessarily took place.*

Please note. All timing of programme items is approximate only, but will be adhered to as strictly as circumstances allow. All items are subject to change, cancellation, substitution, acts of the G.D.A. *[Goon Defective Agency]*, and to there being insufficient audience participation where necessary!

Programme

March 28th. Saturday

For your pleasure, and with your co-operation, the Convention Committee wishes to present the following entertainment.

Before 12:00: Please complete your registration with the ConSecretary.

*** OMPA. There will be a meeting of OMPANs in Room .... at 11:00 a.m.

Afternoon

2:30 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN. General introductions, pleas for programme assistance etc. This will be mercifully brief!

2:45 SCIENCE-FICTION TWENTY QUESTIONS. Panel members will be required from the audience. Objects and miscellaneous “things” (!) have been prepared, but we promise that they will not be *too* difficult!

Quiz-master – Terry Jeeves, assisted by John Roles.

3:30 INTERNATIONAL FANDOM. An informal tape recording session where all fans are asked to send their individual and/or collective greetings, personal messages etc, on a tape to be sent to the World S.F. Convention in DETROIT later this year. (This will be in an ante-room if

available).

MEANWHILE, back at the Con hall....

3:45 onwards, AFTERNOON TEA DANCE, and simultaneously the THIRD ROUND OF THE GRAND INTERNATIONAL TEA DRINKING CONTEST (BRITISH CHAPTER). We hope John Berry will be with us.

Saturday Evening

7:30 “TAFF” RESUME. A talk by Ron Bennett on the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund in general, and of his adventures in the United States last year in particular. This will be illustrated by 35mm colour “stills”.

8:15 FEMFANS OF THE LONDON CIRCLE PRESENT....

9:00 AUCTION. We hope to have something for everyone here. Help to save the Convention from the traditional bankruptcy by bidding until it hurts

AUCTIONEER for this session.....

9:30 and onwards FANCY DRESS PARTY

Now this does not mean that it is obligatory to wear costume – but it will be more fun if you do, won’t it? Even a “gimmick” or “disguise” will be better than none! All invited. There will be a prize for the most original effort.

Later Pete Taylor and Mike Moorcock will give us their “act” – SONGS OF MOSCOW AND OTHER PLACES – and you will be given an opportunity to enter the

RUSSIAN DRINKING CONTEST which probably is not quite what you imagine it to be and so on....

“GOOD MORNINGS BEGIN WITH A.M.” unquote.

Be sure to get your RAFFLE tickets from the Femfen. Prize will be displayed in the Con hall. The Art “EXHIBITION” is open to all and a worthwhile prize will be awarded to the best. KEN SLATER’S “COVER” competition is worth entering too.

March 29th. Sunday

11:30 to 1:00 AGM of the BRITISH SCIENCE – FICTION ASSOCIATION.

AGENDA

1. To receive the Hon. Secretary's report.
2. To receive the Hon. Treasurer's report.
3. To receive the Publications Officer's report.
4. Election of Officers for 1959-1960.
5. Any other business.

Afternoon

2:30 DISCUSSION ON THE CONSITE FOR 1960. (unless decided before lunch)

3:00 SF FORUM: Dr. Arthur R. Weir will discuss ATLANTIS – and invites questions.

3:45 We are calling this FANTASY FREE where anything might happen.

Any suggestions? otherwise we may be forced to re-play the Liverpool tape, *Last and First Fen*, for those who wish to hear it.

4:30 RESULTS OF COMPETITIONS, RAFFLES, Etc.

Evening

7:30 Final AUCTION. Everything that is left must go. Make sure of *your* bargains this time

8:30 A PROGRAMME OF 8mm AMATEUR CINE FILMS
in colour and monochrome, some with sound. Presented by
THE CHELTENHAM SCIENCE-FICTION CIRCLE,
MERSEY And DEESIDE PRODUCTIONS,
TED CARNELL and
NORMAN SHORROCK.
"By fans, for fans, about fans."

10:00 VALEDICTION

The Year One – Eric Bentcliffe

Slightly less than a year ago the British Science Fiction Association was formed. I don't intend here to go into all the details of how and why it was formed, for this topic has been well covered in the past and should any of you require a reminder of the salient points you will find these adequately covered in Ken Slater's article elsewhere in this issue. I would though, like to recall, briefly, the Committee meeting held at the Kettering convention

last year after the election. One of the many things discussed at this time was how many members the BSFA were likely to have when convention time came round again – the general consensus of opinion was that we should do quite well if we had brought in some seventy members.

I'm most pleased to say that we were unduly pessimistic. At the time of writing the membership has passed the 100 mark and is still steadily rising. We are not complacent about this for 100+ members is not all that many, and certainly, it isn't enough to make the BSFA a real force in the world of S-F. However, considering the early set-backs which the committee suffered and the fact that we had to start out from scratch I think that a reasonably good job has been done by all concerned.

A resume of the year's BSFA activity is, I think, called for so here goes. Held at Easter weekend '58. A Committee of Dave Newman, Chairman; Eric Bentcliffe & Terry Jeeves, joint Secretaries; Archie Mercer, Treasurer; E.C. Tubb, Editor; was elected. Peter Mabey was elected to the non-committee post of Librarian – the Library was based on that of the already existent Cheltenham S-F Society Library.

The first thing done after the convention was the circularizing of known fans, informing them of the formation of the BSFA and inviting them to join. Dave Newman went to work on formulating the Constitution. E.C. Tubb started to assemble the first issue of *Vector*. Terry and myself got busy contacting publishers and magazine editors in an attempt to get as much free publicity for the BSFA as possible – it should be borne in mind that at this time we had no operating expenses other than our own subscriptions to the BSFA, we could not afford to pay for advertising.

In early September a double blow hit the BSFA; E.C. Tubb had to resign from the committee and editorship of *Vector* due to lack of time, and Dave Newman (who for some considerable time had been completely inactive) had to be given up as "lost".

I took the step of sending a circular to the more active fans who had joined the Association informing them of the state of affairs, and asking for volunteers to help with BSFA work. Whilst this did not result in a flood of offers of active assistance, it did provoke quite a number of useful suggestions which were later put into practice. The Committee was reshuffled; Terry Jeeves took over both the editing and production of *Vector* – he had been responsible for the production of the first issue. Archie Mercer continued as Treasurer, and I took over all the Secretarial chores.

During this period the membership was rising steadily, if slowly, and it became evident that the fears expressed by a few fans that our

subscription rate was too high, were not founded, in fact. The principal reason put forward by those who thought that £1.0.0. was too much to pay for membership in the BSFA was that they considered 5/- too much to pay an issue for a quarterly journal. Completely forgetting that the BSFA was intended to be a lasting National organization, and that many other services were to be provided apart from the journal. To point up how unrealistic this attitude was I'll give just one example. It is quite impossible to reach those people not yet known to fandom without advertising, and advertising costs money. For example, a half-page advertisement in *New Worlds* costs £8.10.0. To be consistent in your advertising, and it is necessary to be so to be effective, you need to advertise regularly in the same magazines. A year's advertising in *New Worlds* alone, could cost £102: I'm quite sure that if the subscription rate had been less than it is now we should have not been able to afford even the small amount of advertising we have been able to book, and that we wouldn't have the number of members we have today.

During this first year of the Association's existence there have been many initial expenses which should not recur in the near future, and I hope it will be possible for a larger proportion of the next year's income to be allocated to advertising. It will only be possible to reduce the subscription when the membership has increased considerably, and the membership can only be increased by advertising.

However, let us turn from this rather dull wrangle to some of the more positive things which the Association has accomplished during the past year.

I think it can be said that the Committee has done everything time and money (or the lack of!) would allow. There are several things we would have liked to have done which we haven't been able to accomplish, but we are reasonably satisfied with the year's progress. The Association is now firmly established, it has a ratified Constitution and a method of working. It is known to both the s-f publishers and the readers of the media. *Vector* has seen three successful issues, each one an improvement both in content and production – credit for which should go to Terry Jeeves and his assistants.

The first BSFA general publication – *A Checklist and History of New Worlds* – has appeared, and this, it is hoped, will prove to be both a commercial success and an ambassador for the BSFA (by further acquainting publishers, librarians, and s-f readers of the work we are doing). A working relationship has been established with Fantast (Medway) Ltd, for the Trade Distribution of this and similar forthcoming

publications – *The Galaxy Checklist,* for example. It is intended to publish in the near future several listings of hard-cover British s-f publications in conjunction with Ken Slater and Fantast (Medway) Ltd. The Library has seen a successful year's use, and has been considerably enlarged due to many contributions from both members and friends; credit is due to Peter Mabey, Eric Jones, and the other members of the Cheltenham Group for the smooth running of the library service. A liaisonship has been established with several of the Continental s-f Societies for purposes of ensuring that we get news of their activities, and they get news of ours.

These are some of the more concrete things which have been accomplished; more difficult to assess are the contacts and friendships made through the BSFA and the resulting pleasure to the members in question. And then there's the Convention....

Which brings me to the point where I'd like to thank both personally and on behalf of the Committee, the co-opted convention committee, Bob Richardson, Norman Shorrock and Ron Bennett, for the sterling work they have done. Without them there just wouldn't have been a convention this year. Thanks also go to Eddie Jones, D.K. Fawcett, LaSFaS, The Cheltenham Group, those who have contributed auction material, and all those who have contributed to the success of our first convention in one manner or another.

And whilst I'm handing out bouquets – I'd like to thank those people who have helped with BSFA work during the year, those who have cut stencils, contributed material to *Vector*, and provided helpful suggestions – people such as Arthur H. Tavinder, Karl Dollner, Jim Linwood, Keith Freeman, Eric Jones, Ivor Mayne, Ken Bulmer, Bobby Wild. Thank you. Then there's our most able American Representative Dale R. Smith. You've all helped to make the committee's task a little easier and we appreciate it.

I'll be looking forward to watching the progress of the BSFA from a comfortable seat in the stalls, during the coming years and I'd like to wish the next committee every success. I and the rest of the committee for '58/59 wish you well.

...Eric Bentcliffe, Hon. Sec.

...BUT NOT LEAST

Reading through my brief secretarial report I realised that there were several people to whom the BSFA owes thanks, but who had been omitted from the list. In particular, Peter Hamilton who has been kind enough to allow the Association free advertising in *Nebula S-F*, and John Carnell for both reduced-rate advertising in the NOVA PUBLICATIONS magazines

and for his kind cooperation in the production of the *New Worlds* Checklist. It's nice to know that the editors of our leading magazines are still both fans at heart.

And last... the many fanzine editors who gave plugs to the BSFA, and helped to spread the "good word" during the past year.

Thank You

...Eric Bentcliffe.

4. A Fresh Start

At Cytricon IV it had been announced that this years's con would be held "at the seaside" at Whitsun. It was not. "Brumcon", the 1959 Eastercon, the first to be run under the auspices of the British Science Fiction Association, was held over the Easter weekend of Friday 27th March – Monday 30th March at Birmingham's Imperial Hotel, Birmingham being about as far from the sea as you can get in England. During the 1970s, the Imperial Hotel would be the venue for many of the early Novacons of that decade. Guest of honour was Ken Slater, and the committee were Ron Bennett, Terry Jeeves, Bob Richardson and Norman Shorrock. If I'm interpreting the Convention Balance Sheet correctly, the con had 59 paid up members, though presumably not all of those would have attended.

This composite report opens with London fans Ivor Mayne, Bobbie Wild, Ella Parker, George Locke, Sandra Hall, Peter West and Pete Taylor gathering at London's Euston railway station....

Friday March 27th

Ivor Mayne:

Friday morning dawned bright and clear. I needn't have worried though. It started to rain before I left home, it was a typical Good Friday, in other words.

Bobbie and I met at the station so we walked on to where we were supposed to meet Ella, who was already there, A few minutes later George turned up, he and I went to get tea while Ella and Bobbie looked for the others. We'd just paid for the four cups when Bobbie told us Sandra and Peter West had arrived, She took the tea we'd already brought and George and I went back for two more cups. We just got back with those, to be met with the news that Pete Taylor had just stumbled – half asleep – out of a taxi... back for more tea!

On the platform we found there a relief train as well as the scheduled one. They were both full, so we climbed into a luggage compartment, expecting to be hauled out any minute. Nobody seemed to mind 'tho,

except the two cyclists who were already in there, they gave us rather a peculiar look, but didn't say anything. We slung our bags down, hung our coats up and generally made ourselves to home. As soon as the train left the station we all relaxed.

Somebody suggested putting out a oneshot, but Bobbie had forgotten to bring her duplicator. It isn't a spirit duplicator, but the idea was still scotched, Then George had the bright idea of writing his conrep as he went along. He borrowed Sandra's typer, and whenever he ran short of ideas Pete Taylor or I took over for a spell. It was just plain unlucky that neither George or I was used to the typer, so we produced the most amazing collection of typos you ever saw in your life. The people in the corridor kept giving us funny looks. Maybe it was because Pete was hanging on the wire mesh telling them what it meant to be a leper and ostracised. [1]

Brian Jordan:

Even on Good Friday morning, it hadn't really sunk in that I was actually going to a con. But then, it was such a miserable wet morning it didn't seem possible that anything at all wonderful *could* happen.

After an uneventful journey to Manchester, I met Alan Rispin. We hurried across the city to get our connection to Birmingham. This turned out to be a diesel train, something I'd been wanting to see for quite some time. Once inside though, my interest turned to disgust, as I found that it was just like a bus on rails, with a temperature which made it like hell.

As we travelled along, there was still no sign of the expected excitement, other than a horrifying apathy towards food – and *that* was probably due to Alan's case falling on my head.

We reached Birmingham only about an hour late, and wandered off the station. We found the hotel without much trouble, but we were amazed to see it was lit by candles! I thot maybe Vince Clarke had come after all, but the porter said it was because they were having the mains changed.

No doubt from water to bheer. The register revealed that no-one had arrived before us, so after unloading our baggage, we went out to find food. [1]

Ron Bennett:

It was with no small misgivings that I attended the National Con at Birmingham held over Easter weekend. For one thing this was the first convention held under the auspices of the British Science Fiction Association, and the policy of attempting to provide interesting items for both the hard and grizzled veteran and the freshly talcumed newcomers suggested that there might be failure on both counts.

To make things worse, the first news that greeted me when I walked in the hotel in the company of Terry Jeeves, Archie Mercer and Phil Rogers, all of whom I had met on the train, was that there had been a mix-up in arrangements concerning the provision of alcoholic refreshments and that the bar closed at 9:30. To complete the dismal picture, the hotel itself seemed to be disappointing for a three star AA rating. Quite apart from the frayed stair carpets and dingy decorations, the service was of the standard normally associated with a hotel in the western backwoods at the turn of the century. This point alone, combined with the hotel's high prices, decided fans to eat out. [2]

Ivor Mayne:

The journey to Birmingham didn't seem to take too long. On seeing Birmingham we almost wished it had taken longer. Still, there was really nothing else to do but face up to it. We took a taxi to the Imperial Hotel, the driver cheerfully told us we could have walked it quicker, then took us round a maze of side streets to prove it, I could see I was going to love Birmingham. When we reached the hotel it was lit by candlelight! I thought the staff had arranged a specially ghoulish welcome for the fen, but the explanation was just a simple, mundane power cut. We signed in – in the semi dark – and then went to the dining room to eat. We eventually reached a compromise between what we wanted and what the staff were still prepared to serve. While we were waiting – and waiting – and waiting for our food, George and I decided to go out and see who else had arrived. The receptionist snatched the register away from us saying it was private. I think the receptionists were just about the worst people on the staff, the others were a Ghodawful shower too. Two suspicious looking characters approached us, I thought for a moment they were two of the Birmingham toughs you hear so much about, but they introduced themselves as Brian Jordan and Alan Rispin. [1]

Brian Jordan:

Returning stuffed with dingy chips (bought at an even dingier shop), we found the register bore the mark of Ken Slater. We could see into the lounge from our vantage point at the receptionist's desk. While we were trying to decide which of the few people there was Ken (it was later that he dyed his moustache green), Ivor Mayne and George Locke came up to us and introduced themselves, then taking us to the hotel dining-room they identified for us the rest of the London contingent, they were – Bobbie Wild, Peters West and Taylor, Sandra Hall and Ella Parker. Service in the dining-room was terrible. Ella took to muttering imprecations when they

wouldn't serve her with whiskey.

After helping Ella upstairs with her luggage, I wandered into the lounge with Ivor and Alan. We had just located Ken Slater, Alan Burns and Ken McIntyre, when we saw coming towards us a Tall, Ghodlike youth. One single aspect of His features dominated all else – His EYES. They held a "far look", of great power, and wisdom, this alone made Him as a Ghod. We gazed reverently at Him. He spoke. "Er... are you all... uh... fans?" Yes. *This* was Jhim Linwood, Lord of Sherwood. For some unknown reason we took him to show to Ella. We had a sub-sub-room party, drank liberally of her whiskey, and chattered about things fannish (serconfannish, that is). [1]

Ron Bennett:

Friday's session was one of informal meetings. I met Jim Linwood and Brian Jordan for the first time and renewed acquaintances with Norman and Ina Shorrock (whom I had not seen for three whole weeks), Pete Taylor, Dave Cohen, Ken Potter, Ken McIntyre, Ella Parker, Bobbie Wild, Bob Richardson, Eddie Jones, Sandra Hall, Ivor Mayne, John Roles, Paul and Joan Hammett and Norman Wansborough. [2]

Ivor Mayne:

The crowd of us went back downstairs and settled round a small table. Jhim and I wanted to talk about things generally since our last meeting had been some time ago. This was the first time we'd met Brian Jordan, so we all had a lot to talk about. In a way, it was just like the Globe, with the younger fen sitting on their own around a table and all the other fen talking round another. Later our little group broke up and Jhim and I spoke to Norman Shorrock and Ron Bennett. Ron, of course, was selling subscriptions to *Ploy* and *The FanDirectory*. No old mags this time, but he's got a new racket in TAFF. I hope nobody was stupid enough not to give money to a no-good character like Bennett.

When the bar opened all the fen gathered round it – natch! Norman Shorrock was distributing copies of the programme, a very well produced book of 40 odd pages, and I *do* mean odd! [1]

Brian Jordan:

We got quite a shock, when we found that a rumour which had been going round, proved to be true – the bar was to close early, in spite of previous promises that drink would be available most of the night. [1]

Ivor Mayne:

Someone rashly mentioned to Pete Taylor that nothing much seemed

to be happening so he decided to hold a party. He dragged me out with him to help him get the bottles back to the hotel. Getting them back was okay, it was getting them IN that was the trouble. The staff weren't particularly friendly – you've gathered? – and we hated to think what they'd do if we walked in with £9's worth of booze. While Pete stayed outside to look after the other stuff, I stuck one bottle into my pocket and two others under my coat. I walked straight through the lobby and upstairs to Pete's room, I'm sure that both the hotel staff and fen gave me some peculiar looks, but I didn't dare look round to see. After leaving the stuff in Pete's room, I found Ina and told her the mess we were in. Ina came out and helped carry some more in and then Joan and Paul Hammett drove up and agreed to smuggle the rest through for us in their cases.

The Hammetts would turn up sporadically throughout the con, and then disappear about five minutes later, muttering something about having to join the Aldermaston march*.

** They did indeed leave the con at some point to join the annual Easter march from the Aldermaston atomic weapons research establishment to Trafalgar Square in London. Nuclear disarmament was a hotly debated topic in fanzines of the period. [Ed.]*

After all that I never got to the party in Pete's room anyhow. I found myself in Bob Richardson's room, along with Norman and Ina, Peter West and Sandra Hall. Quite a lot of the time Pete was there too. We sat around and talked, then listened to a tape Bob had made for Norman. [1]

Brian Jordan:

We had all been told the number of Pete's room and that there was to be a party there. Eventually we reached it, way up at the top of the hotel, surrounded (roomwise) by mundane types. The hotel was large and rambling, so the manager had naively spread us all through it. Slowly a party began to take shape as people filed in. Some of the folk around were Pete (of course), Ron Bennett, Dave Cohen, Arthur (Doc) Weir, (who saved the evening by producing a corkscrew in a moment of great need), and more, but more.

Ivor Mayne:

Eventually, we decided, it was time to look in on Pete's party, but there was nobody in his room, It wasn't long after twelve, so obviously the party hadn't finished yet. Ina did one of her celebrated reccies and located the party in Ella's room. Apparently the manager had come round to Pete's room complaining of the noise, so they had all moved down to more fannish territory. It was quite a Party too. Norman Shorrock and I managed

to wedge Ron in between the washstand and the wall and started explaining to him why he was Penelope Fandergaste. Then Ron got freer and started explaining to us why he wasn't Penelope Fandergaste. Then the three of us and Archie Mercer went downstairs to get coffee. The talk now was of fannish matters generally, and pretty soon everybody from the party had come down to join us. I think it was about 4:30 when that session broke up and people moved on to start playing brag etc. [1]

Ron Bennett:

There was a good deal of chatter and wild laughter which was not unduly rowdy, and it was therefore surprising to find the manager coming along to complain about the noise. I think we made a tactical error in not inviting him in for a drink, but Ella Parker rescued the situation by suggesting that we moved along to her room which was in a "fan" block. We did so and it must have been well after four that the party broke up for early morning coffee. We returned to the lounge until we were all ready for bed. We did not play brag. Instead we indulged in a session of what was to become the predominant card game of the weekend, pontoon (blackjack). [1]

Saturday March 28th

Brian Jordan:

Saturday morning I was up early, ate a cautious breakfast, and collected Alan for a wander round the town to look at some of the shops. Back to the hotel, where Ella lured us away from the impending OMPA meeting by mentioning food. On our way to the restaurant we spotted Archie Mercer, standing in the middle of a rush-hour crowd crying: "Please, can't *anyone* tell me how to get to the OMPA meeting?" We hustled him away from the approaching policeman, and directed him to the hotel. Before reaching the restaurant – which was the same one Ron and a crowd of us had used the evening before, Alan and I, under the disbelieving eyes of Ella, bought ourselves some carrots, she was even more disbelieving when discovering we were too early for a cooked meal, we sat and ate with evident relish rolls and butter with raw carrots.

Back at the hotel AGAIN, we found that Archie had reached OMPA safely. [1]

Ivor Mayne:

This was pretty well the same as last year's OMPA meeting. Everyone else just sprawled around in armchairs listening to Ron talk.

That isn’t meant as a crack at Ron either, it’s meant as one at everybody else. Near the end of the meeting Ina looked in to break the glad news that Burgess had just arrived. This was enough to drive Jhim and I straight out of the hotel and into a jazz record shop that Jhim had located. We browsed around here, and I was surprised to see such a good selection of records, even one or two American L.P’s, Birmingham was surprisingly well stocked with books and record shops. After we left there Jhim and I wandered vaguely Impwards, looking for something to eat. We met Barry Hall, but we weren’t that hungry.

At the hotel the first session of the con was being held in the Connaught Room, Terry Jeeves as Chairman welcomed us, then introduced Ken Slater as Guest of Honour. Ken spoke for a few moments on the BSFA, then the programme started. Like most fen at conventions I had promised myself that I wouldn’t attend anything on the official programme, but somebody had obviously tipped them off, and they forestalled me by arranging a practically all-fannish programme. Damned good it was too.

I wanted to talk to John Roles about the loan of his hat for a play which some of us from the London Circle were doing. Unfortunately, he was involved in the tea-drinking contest, and when he withdrew it was hurriedly; he dashed off somewhere, I can't think where. Brian, Jhim, Alan and I went out to eat. [1]

Ron Bennett:

The first programme item was held on the Saturday afternoon, although there had been an 11 a.m. OMPA meeting. Strict interpretations of OMPA deadlines had been thrashed out. After general introductions by Chairman Terry Jeeves, the programme moved to Science Fiction Twenty Questions, which balanced Terry’s polished performance as Chairman by being extremely ragged. Apart from newcomer Ken Cheslin’s inclination to “have a go at all costs” the panel seemed unwilling to put forward any guesses, whether wild or logical and the most interesting parts of the session came from some unruly comments and heckling from the audience. Questions included Van Vogt’s Games Machine and *Ploy* No 1. [2]

***Vector*:**

Quizmaster Terry Jeeves was aiming to confound each new panel as it appeared. His system of panel selection was extremely reminiscent of Service days.... “You”, “you” and “you”.... consequently Keith and Eric found themselves included in the last panel of the session. After finding

the answer relating to “an abstract” – which on the 17th question turned out to be “The other side of the Moon”, the team were rewarded with pocket-books from Ken Slater’s display. Ina Shorrock was kept busy during this session, conveying the answers to the audience alone by means of cards.

At 3:30 p.m., Norman Shorrock started off an informal tape recording session. The main purpose of this was to send greetings from individual fans, or collective groups, to DETROIT, where the WORLD S-F CONVENTION will be held in September. [3]

Ron Bennett:

Later in the afternoon there was a tea-drinking test which I entered, having been given a little practice at the Solacon*. Here, however, there was a difference in the rules, for the preliminary ten cups had to be drunk in *half* an hour. I’d drunk five in twenty minutes when I found out that anyone failing to qualify with ten had to pay for the cups already consumed. Seeing myself doomed to failure I opted out. Peter Davies, a newcomer from Stourbridge, won the contest by being the only one to qualify with ten cups. It was a meagre affair, all told. Why, nobody was even sick. [2]

** The 1958 Los Angeles Worldcon at which he was the TAFF representative. [Ed.]*

***Vector*:**

Among the contestants were Norman Shorrock, Bob Richardson, Les Childs and the winner Peter Davies. Exactly how many cups of tea Peter consumed escapes us, but the Judges presented him with a silver chalice, duly inscribed “Champion Tea Drinker, Birmingham 1959”.

Strangely enough, there was then an adjournment for TEA – until 7:30 p.m.! This gave us an opportunity to view the displays around the hall. Ken Slater (Fantast Medway Ltd.) had secured a corner for his book and magazine stand, whilst at the side of the stand was his cover competition. For this competition one had to state the magazine title, year and month or number of issue – all these of course had either been cut out or otherwise de-faced.

Next to Ken’s stand, on the wall, was the yearly Convention Cartoon by Ken McIntyre. This covered a space some five feet long by three feet high and was auctioned on Sunday and bought by Norman Shorrock for the Liverpool S-F Society’s clubroom. Moving down the hall another few feet we came to the “S-F Art Exhibition”. There were many entries by Eddie Jones, Terry Jeeves, Ken McIntyre, Jack Wilson and Bob

Richardson in poster paint, oils, and line drawings. On the other wall of the Convention Hall, there were many original cover paintings which were later to be raffled in aid of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. Last, but not least was an advertisement by the Cheltenham S-F Circle for their film *The Test*, with still photos of film sequences. This film was to be shown on the Sunday evening. [3]

Ivor Mayne:

When we got back Ron was just getting ready to give his talk on the TAFF trip he had enjoyed so much. I saw John in the hall and we went up to his room to get the hat. As he said, it wasn't really the sort of hat a reporter would wear but still, you can't have everything. We got back just as Ron was starting his talk. This and the slides with it made things very interesting. The slides were projected in a most unfannish manner, i.e. right way up, and in the right order. Apart from this they were a wow, especially when Ron showed one of the White House, just to prove it was against the law to stop and photograph the White House.

After this came our play, no doubt this would have been enjoyed much more both by me, and the audience, if I hadn't been in it, but still.... I still want to see a photo of what I looked like in Pete Taylor's coat and John's hat. It was a play in two scenes. We cut most of the first one out, and didn't do most of the second, but what was left seemed to go down okay. Ella, George and I weren't taking any chances though, we stayed behind the screen and disclaimed all responsibility. Not even Terry Jeeves could bully or coax us out. [1]

Brian Jordan:

The play was hopeless, but it was redeemed in part by the wonderful sight of Brian Burgess as Monster, wearing tin-foil boots, and green make-up on his face. Afterwards he made a tour of the public bar, much to the consternation of the customers. [1]

***Vector*:**

Brian liked his disguise (green face and pipe-cleaner antennae) so much that he walked around in it for the remainder of the evening, and a barmaid was heard to say "I think he's collecting for charity".

Nine o'clock and the auction started. Chief Auctioneer – Bob Richardson. Magazines, old and new, went for a song, and certainly helped the BSFA funds, as far as the Convention was concerned. Doc Hammett of Stafford put in a brief appearance at this point, purchased a telescope and magazines and then proceeded to Aldermaston for the route march to London.... At the close of the Auction a panel of judges for the art work

was set up. Two paintings, one by Terry Jeeves, the other by Eddie Jones, and one line drawing by Bob Richardson, were awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively (the line drawing was actually composed of thousands of dots) They were titled “Power Failure”, “Lunar Encounter” and “Enchantment”. [3]

Ron Bennett:

Bob Richardson auctioned a pile of books and magazines during which Eric Bentcliffe arrived and the convention moved on to the fancy dress party. This promised to be quite a fine affair, but was marred during the early hours by a religious maniac who crept into the proceedings and upset a couple of femme-fans with his rather thoughtless insults. Sandra Hall, with sparkling green finger nails, won the fancy dress prize.

The promised Russian Beer Drinking Contest didn’t come to pass. Instead a group of us played Pontoon on the Committee table smoking Russian cigarettes – the type you have to twist in order to stick the foul taste. Around three we adjourned to the nearby railway station whose tea room boasted an all night service. Afterwards there was a room party thrown by Bob Richardson. [2]

Brian Jordan:

The clearest memory I have of that evening is wandering round the corridors with Jhim and Alan, drinking the milk we had invested in, mindful of the night before.... chasing Bobbie Wild and Sandra Hall into a bathroom... drying up when confronted with a mike. Most of the evening was jumbled. We, Alan and I found Bobbie on the verge of collapse from malnutrition, she claimed. We saved her life by feeding her some of the milk we had bought earlier. Unfortunately, she went into a trance, and wandered off muttering. “Omighod. MILK at a con!” We followed her and Sandra to a party in Bob Richardson’s room, where she collapsed again. This time I revived her with a packet of biscuits I found in my pockets. After a while, everyone went down into the conhall. People there were spread too thinly for much to be going on, so Jhim, Alan, Ivor, Archie and I went up to the top floor, and down the fire-escape onto the roof. We wandered round drinking brandy and gin, but couldn’t find any skylights to drop the bottles through. We found an open door which led to the second floor. Back inside, we stood in an empty room for about an hour discussing religion and like that, mostly like that. The night ended for Alan and me, sitting in Ken Slater’s room, sleepily sipping whiskey and listening to Ken and the Shorrocks discussing cyclic changes in dance music... and so to bed. [1]

Sunday March 29th

Brian Jordan:

Sunday morning, which everyone spent chattering in the lounge, and passing round photos of the 1958 Cytricon. A few of us went collecting hotel stationery, and found some photographic slicks *[glossy magazines]*. We loaned them to Norman Wansborough – they were never seen again. [1]

***Vector*:**

The official programme began at 11:30 a.m. with the A.G.M. of the BSFA

After a congratulatory telegram had been read – from Dick Eney – and extracts from a letter by Bob Madle (Kt.S.F.), who wished the first BSFA Convention well, Eric Bentcliffe gave the assembly his report of the year's progress since the inception of the organisation at Kettering last year. He said that between 500 to 1000 members would be needed before the Association became an effective force in Science Fiction. Up until the Convention membership stood at 112 (we may be in slight error here). Archie Mercer gave us a breakdown on expenses over the nine months; 11 per cent of which was devoted to advertising, mainly in *New Worlds* and *Flying Review*. During the discussion later, Ken Slater suggested coding the advertisements in order to ascertain their effectiveness. Terry Jeeves gave his report on BSFA Publications, and the *New Worlds Index* was on sale to members at the Con. *The Galaxy Checklist* (or Index) will be forthcoming soon.

Then came the Election of Officers for 1959-60. This culminated in the following: Ken Slater – Chairman. Dr. Arthur R. Weir – Secretary. Archie Mercer – Treasurer. Roberta Wild – Publications (assisted by Sandra Hall).

Bob Richardson (for the Convention Committee) stated that the profits of the convention (up until that time) stood at £8. (At the end of the Convention this was amended to £12 for the whole Con.) This would be handed over to the Con Committee for next year as a "float", but on the understanding that the TAFF Delegate's Hotel Expenses (B&B) would be paid for by that Committee (this was after a proposition by Ron Bennett to that effect). [3]

Ron Bennett:

There was little discussion on the Consite for 1960. I put forward the suggestion that as the BSFA is now holding itself responsible for

organising more formal conventions than have been held at Kettering during the past two years, there is probably a chance of obtaining a suitable hotel in Harrogate. The only objection to this seemed to be travelling distance from the south. *New Worlds* was voted the best British SF magazine, *Astounding* the best US magazine, and *Triode* the best British fanzine. *Aporrheta* tied with *Hyphen* for 2nd place. [2]

***Vector*:**

By unanimous vote ALL the past year's S-F FILMS fell into the category of "The Worst S-F Film of the Year".

After lunch there was a talk by Doc Weir. This had, for its subject, the legend of the lost continent of Atlantis, and when Terry Jeeves said at the end of the discussion that he had been changed from a sceptic to a believer, he just about summed up the feelings of the majority of Doc Weir's audience.

"Doc" Weir himself, however, began his talk with a disclaimer – he said that there was not an atom of real proof that Atlantis ever existed at all, and that it was his personal opinion that it did not – however, he continued by presenting an entertaining theory which left us all wondering whether there was, after all, something in the old legend.

Doc's talk was followed by Fantasy Free, when tapes were played of a talk given by Eric Jones on S-F to the International Friendship League in Cheltenham, and Liverpool's famed *Last and First Fen*. [3]

Brian Jordan:

About then, I helped judge the artwork competition with Eric Jones, Ella and Norman Shorrock. First place was gained by Terry Jeeves, second by Eddie Jones, an entry under the enigmatic signature of R.E.D. took third, this later turned out to be Bob Richardson hisself, Ron announced the results of his TAFF raffle for four prozine cover paintings. We were content by now to settle down and listen to a replay of the tape epic *Last and First Fen* – which hadn't lost anything for being heard a second time. [1]

Ivor Mayne:

This was a terrific laff from beginning to end, Jhim and I were killing ourselves laughing at it. It seems to me that as long as fandom can produce such terrifically inspired zaniness from its own background then that's a sufficient raison d'etre for fandom. [1]

Ron Bennett:

In the evening there was a final auction during which several cover

paintings were donated to TAFF. One of these, donated originally by its artist, Jack Wilson, was auctioned off no fewer than six times. [2]

Ivor Mayne:

This was supposed to be all the rubbish they couldn't sell at the first one. Maybe it's just me.... but all the things I wanted came up at this auction. A painting by a well known Fan fetched the most, chiefly because it was returned for resale so often. Ron who was holding a TAFF auction, was really having trouble finding new ways of describing it, he was really stuck for words....! And when Ron's stuck for words! I think he was holding it upside down when he finally sold it. [1]

Ron Bennett:

These auctions were followed by a lengthy and interesting programme of fan films which included the Liverpool groups offerings, *May We Have the Pleasure?* and films of the Brussels Exhibition, London Convention films and two films by the Cheltenham Group, one of which, *The Test*, was straight sf and will be entered in the best amateur films of the year. [2]

Ivor Mayne:

Now we were ready for the film-show. We saw Cheltenham's film "The Test", which was very well received. I don't want to sound snobbishy but because it was so acceptable to a SF oriented crowd I think it will be largely lost to the general public, just as commercial sf movies seem so.... to people who read sf. We'll see, anyhow. We also saw some fannish movies which I'd seen before at the Worldcon, they were definitely worth seeing again. Some of the cracks were fabulous. I think the one I enjoyed most was the one that described John Roles as a "student of Oriental pornography".

Jhim had to leave just before the end of the films. There was supposed to have been a party in Ella's room but I kept hearing different accounts of where it had been moved to. I decided to stay in the Conhall and talk to Norman about jazz. [1]

Brian Jordan:

A party was planned for Ella's room, but was diverted to that of Terry Jeeves, as some mundane type had moved in across from Ella. The party didn't suffer though, I enjoyed it. Alan fell under the bed and went to sleep.... Burgess called with a bottle of milk.... Jack Wilson and Ken MacIntyre fought bitterly over a seat, compromised by sharing it.... Archie was fascinated by my permanently miserable, expression.... Alan woke up

and began reading prozines.... and on, and on.

At the insistence of Ina Shorrock, we all moved down to the conhall, and drifted. I sat a while with Bobbie and Archie, helping Bobbie to try and explain the difference between the various breeds of apples to Archie. Mention of apples brought on Bobbie's illness again and Alan had to revive her with a meat pie. A while later, Alan and I took to the corridors with George Locke, On the way out of the conhall we passed a solitary policeman (Berry?) on his way in; he must have felt the need of company. [1]

Ron Bennett:

There was more pontoon and brag in the evening at the party which took place in the convention hall. This achieved the traditional honour of being raided by the police, a solitary constable coming in at three to see what was happening. [2]

Brian Jordan:

Upstairs, we found Ivor slumped in a corridor, and carted him to his room, we found later, he'd been sampling Norman Shorrock's artistry with bottle and glass. It was just after this we met Pete Taylor, searching for somewhere to kip (he had checked out the morning before). We wandered for ages, trying to find someone who would have him. We saw Sandra Hall, and after a chase Pete begged her to take him in for the night, but she wouldn't. Disheartened, we trudged off.... What was fandom coming to that no-one would even loan a destitute fan a night's floorspace? Then we heard footsteps. We cowered round a corner thinking it was the porter. George Locke peered out, and suddenly shouted: "It's Bennett!" We all dashed into the corridor after him, but Ron jabbed his spurs mercilessly into Cecil *[his imaginary pet elephant]*, they pelted into their room and slammed the door, "Ron, let me in, *please*," moaned Pete, beating his head against the door, but all we heard was the sound of a bed being dragged across the room up to the door. Bennett is a hard, hard fan. Finally, Pete kipped (slept) in George's room. Back in the conhall, nothing was happening, so, off to bed once more. [2]

Monday March 30th

Brian Jordan:

Monday, I was wakened by George, who wanted help in smuggling Pete out of the hotel. We were baffled at first, but solved the problem by simply surrounding him with Barry Hall, and walking them out en masse.

The last memorable event of the con was listening to Brian Burgess telling of his continental love-life. Mighod! [1]

Ivor Mayne:

At breakfast on Monday we must have looked more like a zombies gathering than a Science Fiction Convention. Dave Cohen said that he must look pretty fit in comparison with the rest of us, Norman Shorrock lurched in and when he sat down promptly went into an Alan Burns type-trance.

After breakfast Brian and I went out to buy shopping bags to pack some of our stuff in. Then we started on the job... of saying good-bye to everyone. I know I said good-bye to Pete Taylor at least six times... and he lives in London! We all gathered in the visitors lounge until people slowly drifted off. I got talking to Norman Shorrock again 'til the LASFAS crowd drifted off to eat. Finally. There was just Archie and the London crowd left. [1]

Ron Bennett:

Monday came round to the expected partings and goodbyes. I went off with Terry Jeeves to spend an invigorating train journey and a couple of enjoyable hours in Sheffield before travelling back up to Harrogate. Looking back I would say that I personally found the convention to be an out and out success. Financially, the affair was well on the credit side, but fannish enjoyment is not reckoned financially. Once the convention had surmounted its initial disappointment at the hotel's service the situation became better and better. There was a good spirit of fannish wellbeing and companionship and if the programme lacked polish at times, this was readily forgiven. The weekend was well balanced in sf and fannish affairs and there prevailed an informal and easy going atmosphere of such an intensity I don't remember feeling at a "sercon" gathering before. After the first night's complaint, the hotel left the convention pretty much alone to do as it liked. There was no disadvantage in holding the con in a hotel in which there was a majority of nonfannish residents, a realisation that surprises me and which tears down a theory I've held for five years. [2]

As one of the British Science Fiction Association's staunchest critics since its inception at Kettering a year ago, I think it only fair to mention that while I contested the Association's implication that British fandom needed such an organisation in order to survive, I do congratulate the BSFA on the way it has gone about achieving its aims. There were several new faces present at the BrumCon, all of whom have been brought into fandom by the BSFA. Nor were these newcomers, as might have been

expected, stuffy. They fitted in well and were most interesting to talk to. [4]

It would be interesting to hear views on the con from those who were attending for the first time. Was the newcomer left out in the cold by the old stagers who gathered together (an old fault)? Did the programme cater for the newcomer? Was the newcomer lost amongst the esoteric references? Did the newcomer expect more sf to be discussed? [2]

Brian Jordan:

The con was not exactly like I'd expected it to be. Some things were more so, some less. But, it levelled out at a wonderful time (there Archie, now you know!), likewise the memories (in spite of a few fused banks). Just one strange thing – fans came from all over the country, but, apart from Ella and Norman Wansborough, no-one seemed to have a noticeable accent... or was that the drink? [1]

Ivor Mayne:

Somehow I just don't know how to sum it all up. It was fun, of course, tremendous fun, and I wished it didn't have to end, just yet anyhow. Norman Shorrock, Bob Richardson, as con secretary and everyone else did a terrific job with it, and they even managed to make a profit too! All the same I felt there was something lacking. I've just realised what it was: where were all the BNFs? I know that fandom needs new blood, and you *could* have called this the Bloodcon since there were so many new faces there, but where were the BNFs apart from those who had to be there because of their positions on the concommittee or the BSFA? It's no good new people coming into fandom if all the old guard are going to drop out. Fen have said that what fandom needs is to get the old-time fen back into the fold. Perhaps then the new blood might feel more desire to STAY in fandom once having found it. [1]

[1] *Orion* #22 (July 1959, ed. Ella Parker)
[2] *Aporrheta* #10 (April 1959, ed. Sandy Sanderson)
[3] *Vector* #4 (Spring 1959, ed. Terry Jeeves)
Vector writers: Eric Jones, Keith Freeman, Frank Herbert
[4] *Skyrack* #1 (April 1959, ed. Ron Bennett)

5. Brumcon: Success or Failure?

So which was it? As the first national convention run under the auspices of the BSFA and part of the project to get UK fandom back on track, there were high hopes for Brumcon; so did it meet them? In his Prolapse *#4,* ***Peter Weston*** *investigated:*

I have a particular affection for the Brumcon, even though I wasn't there. Perhaps it's because it was held in my home town, in the familiar old Imperial Hotel where in a later period the Brum group met for fifteen years or more. But probably it's due to the "might-have-been" aspect, because by Easter 1959 I'd already been reading SF magazines for more than two years and on that Saturday afternoon I guarantee I would have been searching for back-issues of *Astounding* and *Galaxy* at the city's "Rag Market", no more than a quarter-mile away from the convention. If only I'd known! I would have been in there like a shot and would have discovered fandom nearly four years before I did. In that parallel universe other newcomers like Jim Linwood, Alan Rispin and George Locke would have been my contemporaries, and I would have found Ken Slater's table and been able to binge on science fiction! Of course, I was only sixteen, so I wonder what I would have made of it all....

This was the first convention that claimed to be run by the BSFA, and those in charge seem to have been aware that they needed to pull something a bit special out of the bag. However, they had a problem. Back in the early fifties it was all so simple – conventions seem to have been fairly earnest affairs for men in suits who sat and listened to speeches from other men in suits. But the emphasis had gradually changed over the years, particularly with the four Kettering events from 1955-58 which were much more "fannish" – in other words, they were largely unprogrammed social gatherings where everyone concentrated on having a good time and never mind the science fictional stuff. Great fun – but it had made things very difficult for anyone new to enter fandom, with the result that attendances had crept steadily downwards from 150 in 1955 to less than 50 by 1958.

So the BSFA was formed to try to reverse this trend by advertising and promoting itself to a wider universe of science fiction readers, and the annual convention was potentially the Association's biggest attraction. So now, the organisers of Brumcon found they needed to try and turn back the clock to make their convention more accessible, more "about science

fiction". But that proved to be easier said than done!

Let's take a look at the four-man con-committee. Terry Jeeves was chairman, and he readily admitted that he had stepped in because they couldn't find anyone else! However, I suspect this was in any case a fairly nominal position since after Ted Tubb's early resignation from editorship of *Vector*, Terry was already heavily involved as one-man editor and production team.

So Terry Jeeves already had more than enough on his hands and as far as I can tell his involvement was limited to giving the Chairman's welcome and running the quiz event at the start of the convention. The majority of the work seems to have been done by two people, these being Bob Richardson of the Cheltenham group, and Norman Shorrock of LiG. Bob is listed as being con Secretary but he also appears to have acted as Treasurer, since he prepared the accounts after the whole thing was over, and at one stage Eric Bentcliffe refers to him (incorrectly) as "Chairman, Auctioneer, and Chief Worrier". Norman Shorrock had already been in fandom for ten years and was one of the founders of the Liverpool group. With Ina he was in the forefront of activity with LiG, making tape-recordings, films, and opening their house for frequent fannish get-togethers, but he seems to have had no previous part in running conventions. This year, though, Norman did both programme and programme book. And finally, Ron Bennett is listed as being responsible for publicity, perhaps slightly surprising since Ron was down on record as having opposed the creation of the BSFA and the entire school of thought which had suggested that without it fandom would die. Doubtless Ron did his best, though it's hard to see how he could have promoted the convention except through the fanzines. There was just one advertisement for the con in the March issue of *New Worlds*, probably too late to be of any real use.

But everything had been left very late, since the first tentative reference to the convention didn't appear until the second (autumn) issue of *Vector*, circulated in October 1958, at which time no hotel had been found. Not until the third, winter issue does Terry Jeeves mention that Bob Richardson "had returned to base with a pair of shoes with soles as thin as paper, bearing news of what may be a new fannish Mecca, the Imperial Hotel in Birmingham, with 80 bedrooms." And after it was all over, Terry noted that "the arrangements had been made in a hurry", and "Bob and Norman had to start from scratch, find a new hotel in a strange city... and then lay on a programme... all this in a very short time."

Just why things had been left so late is unclear, but I can visualise

what might have happened. After Kettering I'm sure fans went away feeling pleased and happy that they now had an organisation to take charge of little details like running their conventions, something no-one had particularly wanted to do. The committee was kept busy with signing-up members, writing a constitution and producing *Vector* and it was probably well into the second half of the year when the realisation dawned in high places that the chairman, Dave Newman, had disappeared off the face of the Earth (or at least re-located to Bournemouth), but the BSFA had promised everyone that it would make the convention happen. So they had to do something!

By this time the executive committee was effectively down to two people, Eric Bentcliffe and Terry Jeeves, and their dialogue probably went rather like this:

"Terry, at this rate we're not going to *have* a convention next year! What will we tell them!"

"I know, Eric, but who can we possibly get to do it?"

"What about Norman Shorrock? He's run some good parties and he could get LiG to help."

"Great idea, Eric. Let's ask him to do the programme. And maybe we can get someone from Cheltenham, they're friendly with the Liverpool group. What about Bob Richardson?"

And so it was decided, and later, Eric refers to Norman and Bob as having been "co-opted", whatever that may mean. But who exactly was going to come to the convention? Naturally, the BSFA hoped its recruiting efforts would pay off and that there would be a lot of new faces in Birmingham. How many? Well, the Association had nearly one hundred members, so surely it wouldn't be unreasonable to expect to see twenty, maybe thirty newcomers, perhaps? With this in mind they must have asked Norman to make sure he did a decent Programme Book, one which would present the event in the best possible light. Most previous con-committees hadn't bothered, sometimes producing only a folded single sheet, and it's doubtful whether the Kettering cons had issued any publications at all apart from "combozines", which were a fairly tatty sort of "sampler" package from fanzine editors of the day. The only previous programme book of any consequence had been the superb Supermancon book, created by long-time fan Harry Turner, who was a commercial artist.

Fortunately, Norman Shorrock could match that by drafting in Eddie Jones, at the time starting to make a name for himself with his SF cover-paintings, and he was clearly able to call on the resources of a professional studio. The result was impressive, quarto-size with a dramatic cover and

34 inside pages which appear to have been electro-stencilled throughout (a very expensive option if you had to pay for it), which allowed use of plentiful display headings and cartoons. It was run-off by the Shorrock family – Ina told me at Novacon that she still remembers turning that handle! – and reproduction was absolutely perfect.

The contents included a guide to the programme, a report from Eric Bentcliffe on the first year of the BSFA's existence, a "welcome to newcomers" from Vince Clarke, and a six-page address from the Guest of Honour, Ken Slater. Oh, didn't I mention that Ken was the GoH? Well, not surprising, since the committee almost forgot to mention it as well, only crediting Ken on the title page and not giving him a spot on the programme. And of course there was no biographical information about Ken in the book, because they all knew him anyway, didn't they?

This is the first example of some slightly confused thinking about Brumcon. It was supposedly making an effort to cater for newcomers, but in practice the committee was continuing along the old track in which everyone knew everyone else. And why choose Ken Slater as the GoH in this year of all years? It's not that Ken didn't richly deserve the honour for all his work over the years, but if you really wanted to appeal to SF readers from outside fandom, wouldn't it have been better to have chosen a science fiction writer as the Guest? What about Ted Tubb, already a well-known author and until recently editor of Authentic? Or Ken Bulmer? John Brunner? Ted Carnell? Perhaps they were asked, begged maybe, but they didn't turn up. All these professionals went to cons except – strangely – this year, and Ken Slater remarked afterwards that "the convention was notable for its total lack of 'pros' connected with the publishing/writing world." This made it very difficult for Norman Shorrock to arrange his "serious" programme and represented probably the first failure of the Brumcon to achieve its objectives.

Another odd thing is Ken Slater's long article in the programme book. Titled "Your Laundry Sir", Ken used this opportunity to set out his views on the last ten years of British fandom. All through this period it is possible to see the existence of a well-mannered conflict between two rival attitudes, what we would today call the "fannish" versus the "sercon". For most of that decade Ken had been on the losing side, running *Operation Fantast* almost as a one-man band, writing his review columns in *Nebula*, valiantly calling for a national organisation but gradually seeing the anarchic "fannish" tendency take the ascendancy.

Now, with the establishment of the BSFA (in which he was to take a leading role) and with the perceived need to re-connect with the SF-

reading public, Ken must have felt fully vindicated. It shows in his article, which says things like “You can’t live in your own waste products” and “You can’t coast uphill indefinitely”, and he castigates “the esoteric mysteries... like Proxyboo Services, The Goon Defective Agency, St Fantony, and so on,” which Ken felt “were excellent ideas... but were apt to leave the newcomer cold – he wouldn’t see the connection between these and science fiction, and no-one would bother to explain it to him.”

Many of Ken’s points are entirely valid but I can’t help feeling this was an unsuitable place in which to publish them. The majority of people at the convention still dated from the fannish era and probably wouldn’t have agreed, even if they had bothered to read such a long piece. If I’d gone along as a sixteen-year-old I might have been totally baffled; I would have expected to see someone writing and talking about science fiction – which in fact was something Ken would have been perfectly capable of doing, if anyone had asked him!

So what about the programme itself? Here, the old attitudes had prevailed. In *Vector* #2 Bob Richardson had issued a little questionnaire, asking BSFA members to rank five different programme items in order of preference. The options he listed were:

- Fancy Dress/Masque Ball
- Film Show (including films made by SF groups)
- Hypnotism demonstration
- Auction of books, magazines and artwork
- Science fiction quiz or Brains Trust

If I had received this questionnaire I might have written back and asked, “Why not just talk about science fiction, then?” But this was something that early cons just couldn’t seem to get right, not even at the 1957 London Worldcon which was full of big name writers who weren’t asked to do anything. It’s rather like the proverbial elephant in a crowded room which everyone knows is there, but no-one wants to mention. British fandom was like that so far as science fiction was concerned, totally aware of it, but totally inarticulate. And yet the opportunities were there for the Brumcon, even allowing for the absence of the professionals. They could have put Jeeves, Slater and Bentcliffe on a panel and talked about the British magazines and their problems, or about the possible Hugo contenders for 1959 and so on. But they don’t seem to have thought of panel discussions, the fall-back option of modern conventions! And a lot of people were happy with things as they were; even first-timer Ivor Mayne delightedly

exclaimed at the “practically all-fannish programme”.

Many people had arrived for a get-together on the Friday evening, and as new-boy Brian Jordan recalls, “We got quite a shock, when we found the bar was to close early, in spite of promises it would open most of the night. Pete Taylor smuggled in nine pounds’ worth of drink under his coat and we went to his room for a party, way up at the top of the hotel, surrounded by mundane types. The hotel was large and rambling, and the manager had naively spread us all through it. We were joined by Dave Cohen, Ron Bennett, and Arthur (Doc) Weir, who saved the night by producing a corkscrew in a moment of great need.”

The official opening was on the Saturday afternoon at 2:30 p.m., followed by a quiz. But the main event was supposed to be a “tea dance” with the “International tea-drinking contest”. There’s no evidence the “dance” ever took place – it’s not in any pictures or reports, and with a maximum of eight women present (and the men couldn’t dance anyway) it was always going to be a non-starter! However, the tea-drinking contest was well supported and was won by the absurdly young Peter Davies who downed eleven cups, with an unknown effect upon his body-chemistry!

The convention adjourned until 7:30 for a TAFF resume from Ron Bennett, and a “playlet” from the “femme-fans of the London Circle”, in which Brian Burgess took part with green face and pipe-cleaner antennae as the pilot of a flying saucer who wanted to be refuelled with – you guessed it... a cup of tea!

Brian Jordan again: “The play was hopeless, but it was redeemed in part by the wonderful sight of Brian Burgess wearing tin-foil boots and green makeup on his face. Afterwards he made a tour of the public bar, much to the consternation of the customers.”

At 9:00 Bob Richardson began the auction, helped by Ron Bennett. Brian was attracted by a complete set of *Authentic*:

“They were Ted Tubb’s office copies, going right back to the first issue,” he said, “I bid ten bob for them but Bob refused to let them go for that. Later, Ina Shorrock came to tell me that she’d talked him round. More probably, he didn’t want to drag them back home with him. Lugging them back to Burnley in my suitcase nearly killed me. I slumped at the top of the station steps and wondered if I’d ever get up again. They must have added an extra stone to drag from Brum to Burnley in my (fortunately) expanding suitcase.”

At this point “Doc” Hammett of Stafford appeared with his incredibly pretty wife Joan (fans still fondly recalled her St Trinian’s outfit at the Worldcon, 18 months earlier), en-route to their usual CND Easter march at

Aldermaston. According to *Vector* #4, the "Doc" bought a telescope (!) at the auction, and then they proceeded on their way, but pictures from several room parties tell a different story.

The final event of the evening was the Fancy Dress Party, though with such a small crowd there were few costumes. Keith Freeman turned up in fancy top and flowered skirt (!) and claimed this was

"A carry-over from my previous RAF posting. Near to Christmas Island was another, even smaller – Fanning Island. So Eric Jones and I entered as Fanning Islanders, in the costume of the locals on 'Fanning Island'. Not, of course, to be confused with Fannish Islanders!"

Ina Shorrock and her friend Nancy Pooley came in even cheekier outfits as "To Serve Man", with their midriffs marked "For the Use of LASFAS men only." The winner was Sandra Hall with long green gown, and green hair and face-paint as "The Girl from Altair". Rumour has it that Ken Slater's moustache mysteriously also turned green, but just then, according to Rob Hansen's account in *Then*, "someone started to yell abuse at the female contestants, but he was eventually identified as a religious fanatic rather than a fan, and was ejected." That was it, officially, but parties continued until 4:00 a.m.

Sunday events began at 11:30 a.m. with the BSFA's Annual General Meeting, at which secretary Eric Bentcliffe reported that membership now stood at 112, and then went on to say that "Between 500 and 1000 members would be needed before the association became an effective force in Science Fiction *[capitalisation from* Vector*]*." No-one questioned this remarkable statement, asked Eric what this "effective force" was expected to achieve, and exactly what did he mean in this context by "Science Fiction". It comes across to me as the same voice of the person who had drafted that slightly pretentious Constitution only a few months earlier, setting the BSFA onto a delusional path in which it imagined it had some influence over writers and publishers, which was never going to be the case.

He was also being unrealistic from a strictly practical point of view; in his valedictory column in *Vector* #4 he talks about the need for a large amount of free time and about his "pile of unanswered letters", so how he expected to cope with those sorts of numbers is problematical to say the least. In fact, the retirement of Bentcliffe and Jeeves was to plunge the BSFA into the first of its perennial crises when new secretary (Doc Weir) and editor (Roberta Wild) both proved not to be up to their jobs.

Following that, it was swiftly agreed that Ron Bennett would run a convention at Harrogate, (which he eventually did – three years later). A

deal was done at Whitsun which would take the 1960 convention to London, thus inadvertently creating another time-bomb which would tick quietly away in the background – but that's another story!

After lunch, "Doc" Weir from the Cheltenham club explained his theory about Atlantis, and that was it for the afternoon. Things resumed with another auction at 7:30 p.m., followed by a programme of 8mm amateur films, with Norman Shorrock as projectionist. These included the Liverpool Group's *May We Have the Pleasure?*, Cheltenham's *Kingdom of St Fantony* and Ted Carnell's film of the 1957 London Worldcon, all, alas, now lost to us. As Greg Pickersgill recently commented:

"There's absolutely no SF content, hardly any program content there at all. There's less going on than you'd get in a single afternoon at a Novacon! We have more program than that at our mini-cons down at the pub. Incredible! Clearly not the Golden Age we sometimes think we're looking back on."

And yes, he is correct from one point of view. If the objective really was to run a convention about science fiction with the aim of attracting SF readers into fandom, then Brumcon has to be regarded as a failure. I'm reminded of an instance only six years later when an elderly Scots gentleman, Mr David Marwick, turned up at the second Brumcon – which had a good deal more "SF content" – and kept demanding; "Why should this interest me?" and he obviously considered that it was the convention's job to keep him entertained for the weekend. If twenty or thirty like him had turned up, then Bob and Norman really would have been in trouble!

And yet... if I'd been there I don't think it would have mattered, I would have loved every minute of it anyway. Yes, I wouldn't have understood everything that was going on, would have been disappointed not to have seen more about science fiction on the programme, but I would have recognised that at last I was in the company of like-minded people and that would have been enough. This is exactly what happened to those fortunate few who stepped through this particular doorway into fandom, as Jim Linwood recollects:

> "It was my first convention and I already assumed that *programme items* were a front for wild parties and orgies. I was disappointed but it was the socialising aspect that I remember quite well. The first attendees I bumped into were Kens Slater and MacIntyre and I dumbly asked them 'Are you errr... fans?' I was then whisked-off to Ella Parker's room where she was welcoming the youngsters who'd come to the con via the BSFA; Ivor Mayne, who I already knew from the Globe and midnight

tours of the Soho jazz clubs; Alan Rispin and Brian Jordan I'd corresponded with, but not met before, while George Locke (although no newcomer) made up the Gang of Five. There was something of a generation gap but Ella, Ron Bennett and the Shorrocks went out of their way to make us 'BSFA Zoom-Zoom Boys'* welcome. The only programme items I remember are LiG's *March of Slime* tape play, the Cheltenham Group's SF film and the Sunday night auction when Brian bought a set of *Authentic* because he wanted the one with Harness's 'The Rose'. I know I had a hangover on Monday morning. Mike Moorcock wasn't there but Pete Taylor was. I also met Ken Cheslin for the first time – he was there with his Stourbridge chums Mike Kilvert and Peter Davies."

** A term coined by Arthur "Atom" Thomson.*

Jim was hooked, obviously, and so were the rest of the "Gang of Five". So was Ken Cheslin, who rushed back home and started SADO – the Stourbridge and District Circle, which soon recruited Dave Hale and Darroll Pardoe. In all, the Brumcon had attracted about a dozen newcomers, almost all of whom came back for further doses of conventioneering. Sounding surprised, Ron Bennett commented in the first issue of *Skyrack*: "Several new faces were present, all of whom have been brought into fandom by the BSFA. Nor were these newcomers 'stuffy', as might have been expected. They were most interesting to talk to and fitted in well." They certainly did! Here's Brian Jordan's account of his Saturday night adventures: "The clearest memory I have is wandering round the corridors with Jim and Alan. After a while, everyone went down into the con-hall. People there were spread too thinly for much to be going on, so Jim, Alan, Ivor, Archie (Mercer) and I went up to the top floor, and down the fire-escape onto the roof. We wandered round drinking brandy and gin, but couldn't find any skylights to drop the bottles through. We found an open door which led to the second floor. Back inside, we stood in an empty room for about an hour discussing religion and like that, and the night ended with Alan and me sitting in Ken Slater's room, sleepily sipping whisky and listening to Ken and the Shorrocks discussing cyclic changes in dance music... and so to bed." In the car going back to Cheltenham Keith Freeman said: "The party last night was great.... I could have carried on all night for another 30 minutes or so." To the amusement of the others he then slept the rest of the way home.

But Brumcon was a big disappointment to the organisers. Eric

Bentcliffe reported, “Total membership was 60, and 56 people actually attended the con. These were not the sort of numbers we were hoping for, but were comparable with recent British cons.”

Well yes, Eric, but this first BSFA convention had expected to do a lot better than that. The influx of new recruits had been almost exactly balanced by an equal number of defections – the Londoners in particular, perhaps not liking the sound of “Birmingham” and the fannish types put off by the prospect of a potentially sercon weekend.

So there we have it, three operational failures but total success in the only area that really mattered; being able to welcome new fans into the community. Brumcon was the first of the modern conventions and it set the scene for everything that would follow. It even made a profit; a surplus of £14.8s.4d on a total income of £41.18s.8d. [1]

*Further thoughts from **Peter Weston** in his next issue:*

After writing so much about the 1959 Brumcon in the previous issue I was rather hoping to be challenged – after all, I wasn’t there and a lot of what I said was pure conjecture. Alas, nobody did, but as soon as Steve Green’s LoC arrived I realised that I’d inadvertently been guilty of some slightly sloppy thinking, so I shall now proceed to challenge myself. If you remember, I described the somewhat sparse programme then said, “And yet, if I’d been there I don’t think it would have mattered, I would have loved every minute of it anyway.” To which Steve commented, very perceptively, “In contrast to the sixteen year-old Peter Weston, I suspect I'd have felt much more of an outsider – an intruder, even – at an event as under-programmed as Brumcon.”

Steve, you’re right! I realise now this is exactly how I would have felt, and thinking about it, I remember a very similar situation about a year earlier. In those days I was still in the process of discovering SF but my main interest was Astronomy, and thanks to the school Physics teacher I was introduced to the Birmingham Astronomy Group who met in a basement in the city-centre premises of the Josiah Mason College (next-door to a pub called, coincidentally, “The White Horse”). I went along dutifully to their meetings but as a 14-year-old I was a bit out of place, which was brought painfully home to me when in the Spring of 1958 I attended their one-day Saturday afternoon conference on the Solar System.

The subject matter was fine – being a little swot I knew most of that stuff already – but at half-time the audience went out for refreshments and I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know anyone to talk to, didn’t have any money anyway, so I ended up sitting by myself in an empty hall for a half-

hour or more, lonely and feeling a complete idiot. It was all so unwelcoming that even though I was still desperately interested in Astronomy I never went back to the BAG.

The point of this sad little story is that I'm wondering whether the same thing might have happened if I'd turned up by myself at Brumcon. It would have been an even more difficult experience; not only a young stranger again, but this time I would have also found the programme incomprehensible. Instead of hearing about science fiction I would have seen people I didn't know (but who clearly all knew each other) clowning around and taking part in tea-drinking contests, and might indeed have felt an "outsider, an intruder". Maybe I would have grabbed a catalogue from Ken Slater's stall and bolted, never to return. Which leads me onto the next question – how many others did exactly that?

When you study those 1959 pictures you notice tantalising glimpses of people you can't identify and who were never seen again. Look at the membership list for that convention, short as it is, and you'll notice a few unfamiliar names. What happened to D.K. Fawcett of Showell Green Lane, Birmingham? He was BSFA member number 64; did he see the publicity, come along for a day and leave, disappointed? How many unrecorded walk-in members gave it a try and decided this fandom thing wasn't for them? [2]

[1] *Prolapse* #4 (December 2006, ed. Peter Weston)
[2] *Prolapse* #5 (February 2007, ed. Peter Weston)

6. The London Symposium

Ron Bennett:

The London Circle is holding a one day convention, the Symposium at 65 South Audley Street London W.l. (this parallels Park Lane) from 4 p.m. on October 3rd, and through the night. The all-in cost is one guinea. This should be sent to Charlie Duncombe. There will be a programme but exact details are not yet known. There will also be food and drink. World Convention films, covering London (1957), South Gate (1958) and Detroit (1959) will be shown. The Detention films, incidentally, will be given their "World Premiere" at the Symposium. It is hoped that Norman Shorrock will be on hand with his projector, though failing his attendance Ted Carnell has promised to step into the breach. The Detention films are being brought over by Belle and Frank Dietz who expect to land at London airport for a fortnight's holiday on September 26th. After having had their holidays pushed back further and further they decided that it would be as easy to come to England as holiday in the States. They will be staying at Inchmery *[home of Joy and Vin¢ Clarke and Sandy Sanderson]* whilst in London and are hoping to renew acquaintances made two years ago at the London Worldcon. The Symposium should provide the opportunity. [1]

Archie Mercer:

When the rejuvenated London Circle of 1959 started looking for suitable activities to sustain their interest, one of the ideas was to have a sort of one-night convention, styled a Conversazione, some time in the autumn. The idea met with general enthusiasm, and many were the meetings and sub-meetings and such at which it was thrashed over. Comparatively early on, two vitally important decisions were taken: a) to change the name from Conversazione to Symposium (apparently on the grounds that the latter looked as if it OUGHT to be easier to spell), and b) that the "last-across" rule was to be strictly observed, ie, the first person to actually organise anything would be chicken.

In the event, the first person to have actually organised anything seems to have been LC secretary Sandra Hall. At any rate, shortly after she started organising, she had to practically swear in public that whatever sort of a chicken she might be, she was no moorcock*.

** At the time she was Mike Moorcock's girlfriend. [Ed.]*

Just two weeks before the event was due to take place, the location of

the goings-on was known, but nothing else. Then, at the monthly business meeting of the LC, Frank Arnold was appointed chairman of the programme sub-committee, and started – amid a rain of helpful and/or unhelpful suggestions but not much else – to compile a programme. At the Globe the following week the programme actually began to take shape, and one week later – two nights before the thing was due to take place – the whole thing was more or less sewn up. The place had been booked, food and drink were laid on, leaflets printed (Inchmery's contribution), and the programme whipped into shape. All was set for a fabulous fannish night's entertainment.

Came the day – and the scene shifts to Ella Parker's well-known palatial penthouse suite in Kilburn, the authorised assembly-point for auction material and out of town fen. There were eight of us assembled there for the mid-day meal. Les Childs of Cheltenham, Alan Rispin of the Manchester suburbs, and myself had arrived there at various times under our own steam. Jim Groves, one of the LC's newest recruits, had brought along the Stourbridge trio (Peter Davies, Ken Cheslin and Mike Kilvert) as extra baggage-porters, with Ella herself making the eighth, Due to sundry factors, the description of the feast as a "mid-day" meal was strictly nominal, and we were not ready to leave until after 4 o'clock, when the doors of the chosen location were due to open. Then we gathered up all the auctionables plus my record-player and some records, and gaily set forth.

Some time later, having staggered on foot from Marble Arch along in turn Oxford Street, North Audley Street and Grosvenor Square, we spied a small shower standing on the pavement. They proved to be fen, headed by Vin¢ Clarke as chairman of the impromptu Welcoming Committee. We were duly welcomed in the approved impromptu fashion, and staggered within bearing our loads. These were off-loaded around, upon and under a table in the toilet vestibule, and the party then dispersed around the place to natter with those already assembled until such time as somebody decided to officially start Things Happening. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Harrogate fandom fought sickness in the form of a throat virus to travel down to London on Saturday 3rd October for the overnight convention and party, the Symposium, held at the Mayfair Restaurant, 65 South Audley Street, W.l. Attendees included Stateside Guests of Honour Belle and Frank Dietz and fans from London and all parts of the country in Mike Moorcock, Ted Tubb, Sandra Hall, Frank Arnold, Pamela and Ken Bulmer, Ethel Lindsay, surprise visitor Walter Gillings, Joy and Vince Clarke, Harry Clements, Charlie Duncombe, Jim Groves, Pete Taylor,

Derek Oldham, Mike Kilvert, Peter Tea Davies, Ken Cheslin, Ella Parker, George Locke, Bob Richardson, Alan Rispin, Eric Jones, Audrey Eversfield, Norman Shorrock, Brian Burgess, Les Childs, Archie Mercer, Peter West, Keith Freeman, Daphne and Ron Buckmaster, Sandy Sanderson, Tikwis Hall, Tony Klein, and newly-weds Bobbie and Bill Gray, [who] were married in London on Saturday 26th September. The Best Man was Les Childs. Following the reception at the home of Sandra Hall – Ella Parker writes of Bobbie in radiant terms – the happy couple honeymooned in Glastonbury, Somerset and returned to London for the Symposium the following weekend. [3][1]

Archie Mercer:

The site of the proceedings was a restaurant, the basement floor of which had been given over to fandom for the occasion. The lighting was subdued – not unduly so though, I think. The heating, however, was most utterly unsubdued. This was mainly on account of the weather. Outside in the open air, after dark, the atmosphere was bearable. The Symposium basement, though, was a veritable sweat-box. There were no electric fans, and only one half-hearted apparatus in one corner that tried ineffectually to maintain some sort of control over the establishment's breathing arrangements. I am given to understand that the premises were provided free, the firm making its profit on food and drink. Which only goes to prove that the free things in life are not necessarily best.

However, sweat-box or no, there were fans there aplenty – OUR sort of fans – and one started in to say hello to them. Besides virtually the whole of London fandom including Ethel Lindsay, there were Peter West up on one of his frequent trips from Wales, Norman Shorrock (by himself, alas) down for the occasion from Merseyside, and Keith Freeman in from goodness knew where, plus the Parker-premises contingent already enumerated, and probably one or two more I've forgotten. There was much coming and going between the basement and the pavement upstairs as fans ascended for a breather or plunged back into the fray. We were supposed to be waiting for a couple of carloads of Cheltenham fans to arrive. Then somebody appeared with a drink, and there was a stampede for the bar, presided over by non-drinker Brian Burgess. This arrangement was definitely a good idea, even though Brian has no more idea of to how to pour out brown ale than I have. (Mercer brown ales have the biggest heads in captivity.) I think the missing car loads must have arrived around then, for not long afterwards the meeting – now pretty crowded – was called to order and proceedings officially began.

Frank Arnold, as programme chairman, opened things by welcoming

the various out-of-towners. This of course began with *[US fans]* the Dietzes, whom I forgot to mention up there but both of whom were very much in evidence. Contingents from Cheltenham and Stourbridge and other places were being singled out to make their collective bows, when there was a disturbance on the step like unto a small elephant *[a reference to Cecil, Ron Bennet's fictional pet pachyderm]*, and everybody looked up to see Ron Bennett and Liz make an impressive entrance. Frank hastily included the Harrogate contingent in his itinerary, and then passed on to Wally Gillings without having made any mention of the presence there of any North Hykeham fan. Frank was perfectly well aware of my existence at the time, so on the whole I think I can feel more flattered than slighted. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Frank Arnold and Ted Tubb greeted the gathering with introductory speeches and Wally Gillings compared the Symposium with the first British convention held in Leeds in 1937. Films brought from the US and made by Belle and Frank Dietz, covering the London, South Gate and Detroit Worldcons were shown (each with an excellent covering commentary by Belle) as were Alan E. Nourse's film adaptation, *Born of Man and Woman*; and the Los Angeles film, *The Genie*. [3]

Archie Mercer:

Certainly the convention films were for me the high spot of the film shows. There were two separate film shows, one projected from either end of the hall, and one convention (at least) was shown at each, with a fluent running commentary from Belle Dietz. A schoolmaster's marker or billiard-cue or something would have made identification of the swiftly passing personages a bit more sure-footed possibly, but even without such aid to navigation Belle put on a notable performance. (The camera with which Frank had shot the various Convention films, mounted behind a battery of blinding floodlights, was considerably in evidence at various stages of the Symposium, so no doubt future fannish gatherings will be enlightened by yet another convention feature film.)

After the first film show (or possibly even before – I'm like that) we had supper, comprising a sort of buffet-salad of ham, potato cubes, hard-boiled eggs, raw tomatoes and the like. It was most welcome and tasty, but disappeared all too quickly. After that was gone, there was nothing left to eat but drink. Upon this fact I lay the blame for my ultimate downfall – but that was a good time later. In the meantime, I was given the tip-off to be ready to participate in the Fan-editor's Panel any time now. Obligingly I

remained ready – however, the audience seemed to be entirely content with whatever they happened to be engaged in at the time – mainly nattering to each other and the like – so nobody seemed at all inclined to do anything further about the panel. Then people started asking for music to jive to. It so happened that I didn't have any jiveable records with me (I'd left them all at home in North Hykeham), but Mike Moorcock produced a couple of Dixieland ep's – apparently they were supposed to be for Tikki Hall, whose birthday it was – and before long the music was flowing loud and strong from my record player, set up behind the bar. Some time later, I came across Frank Arnold in the middle of a conversation somewhere – and leaned over him to intone solemnly: "Thus perish all programmes," in which sentiment he appeared heartily to concur.

In fact, the only part of the scheduled programme apart from the films and the auction that actually materialised was the Moorcock-Taylor interlude (Mike Moorcock, gtr & voc; Pete Taylor, voc). They did three numbers, to the best of my recollection. The first was a fake folk-song full of fannish allusions that they'd only composed that evening, which was followed by the parody "Home in Siberia", this second number suffering from Mike's admitted ignorance of the tune for "Home on the Range". They climaxed their turn with a wild rendering of their specialty "We Met on the Steps of a Moscow Latrine", which really deserves to be recorded.

Thus perished the programme for the Symposium, never to be resurrected.

Eventually I joined a fairly large party that was sallying forth in search of something to eat.

A few minutes' stroll through the sedate Mayfair streets brought us to Park Lane. At Park Lane, the party split up, and I found myself part of a sextet following some knowledgeable type – Bennett, I think – to an all-night espresso-bar. This was the first time I'd ever considered the conceivability of there being such a thing as an all-night espresso-bar in Park Lane – but such there indubitably proved to be. Attempting to take the place by storm, we found ourselves peremptorily ordered out again, with the added information that if we cared to wait about ten minutes there'd be room. Thus proving not only that there was an all-night espresso-bar in Park Lane, but that there was a frantically busy all-night espresso-bar in Park Lane, to boot. So, we stood in a huddle outside on the pavement while Ron got into an argument with a stray Australian about home rule for Yorkshire – Ron taking the "pro" attitude while the Aussie declared himself to be "anti" on principle.

Let's skip details of the hideous overcrowding in the espresso

bar, the fan diversions like "a game of fairy chess with the cruets and sugarbasin", and the eventual serving of a hamburger comprising "a small, hard rissole between two slices of toast"....

When our various orders had been consumed, we were presented with the bill. The system of charging was somewhat complicated, being based on a minimum per person plus excess, and when [each] of us had contributed what seemed to be his share, the pile of coinage on the table came to more than the bill. So Bennett was allowed to abscond with the difference on behalf of TAFF, and we trooped out and started back for the Symposium.

A little way up Park Lane, we ran into Ella Parker and Arthur Thomson, who'd been to some other neighbourhood joint.

Arthur was in magnificent form – the best form I've ever seen him in. The spirit of fannish conviviality had settled firmly upon his forehead for the night – it suited him, too. By sheer force of personality he assumed command of the squad and began to troop us slowly along to our destination. Arriving at the Dorchester Hotel, he stopped us and announced to the listening world that people were paying enormous sums – I forget how much exactly – for rooms there. Think of them, we were directed. We thought, as per schedule. Contrast them, he further exhorted us, with ourselves, to whom such luxury accommodation was out of the question. All we could do was to go out and have a booze-up. And yet, he continued, surely it was us who were the happier of the two categories. And do you know, I think he has something there.

We got back to the Symposium in the end OK, and back to the party.

Downstairs, in the stifling heat, I began to feel the effects of the occasion. Before long the auction started, Ted Tubb in his traditional pose of honour offering up the usual collection of assorted literature. I sat down and tried to stay upright, in the pursuit of which noble aim I actually started bidding for something in order that I might have something to fan myself with. This, however, proved but a temporary expedient, and I was suffering, so somebody suggested that I'd be better off upstairs where a number of them were sitting around. The population by this time was considerably depleted – some had had to go home for mundane reasons, others were still probably out scouring the countryside for food and/or coffee. Still, the place was by no means empty, let alone dead. Anyway, upstairs I went – it *was* cooler up there – and sprawled over an empty table. This proved uncomfortable – I'm no Harry Clements – so I chose a moment when the manager was out of the way to turn a chair on its back and lie down on the floor with the chair-back for a pillow. Even this was

not the acme of comfort, but at least I was able to get to sleep. Every now and again I woke up to hear Ted Tubb still hard at it auctioning off the grisly remains of the pile, then after many moons it gave place to the sound of music – my music, on my machine. They seemed to be treating it pretty rough, for I kept hearing the needle jump whole snatches of tune – unless indeed it was simply that I slept through the parts I missed. It certainly conveyed the impression of needle-jumping, though. However, they could have publicly smashed the machine and auctioned off the records for all I was in a fit state to do about it right then.

After waking up for the twentieth time – or perhaps the two hundred thousandth – I actually felt refreshed enough to arise from my hard but indubitably virtuous couch, restore my borrowed pillow to its normal upright position, and stagger downstairs again. There was still punch going for those who wanted it, but at that moment I wanted anything that contained no alcohol, so that was out. In fact, everything was out, for, of course, there was nothing non-alcoholic to be had. I found a seat and sat on it. Arthur Thomson was next to me, and somehow the aware survivors (there were quite a number out cold, in the heat and all) seemed to gravitate to the vicinity, forming a big circle around a convenient table with Arthur as the circumferential focal point. Arthur, who was still in fine form (what an auctioneer *he'd* have made!) started quizzing each of us in turn, punctuating his remarks by striking out wildly at the nearest person – who happened to be me. After a bit of this I had to pull my chair out of range, because I was in no condition to take any further punishment. I forget what he asked me, but I don't think I was capable of answering in particular, so he passed on to the next chair, occupied by Bob Richardson, and started quizzing him about the antecedents of the St. Fantony ceremonial. The result, if I remember aright, was a very useful clearing away of cumulative misconceptions on the part of Cheltenhammers and non-Cheltenhammers alike. The Stourbridge trio – happily reunited – were asked about their fanzine *Les Spinge*. This session went on until a quarter to six, fifteen minutes before we were due to evacuate the premises by prior arrangement, at which point Arthur turned us loose to gather up the bottles and glasses and ash trays etc. So at six a.m. prompt, leaving only a small female rear-party as washing-up detail, fandom evacuated the main scene of its night out and started to scatter to the four winds.

The detail for Kilburn was now reduced to five – Stourbridge, Les Childs, and myself – Ella being on washing-up detail. Even so, she got a lift in somebody's car and was home before us. Laden with record-player (which I was still unfortunately fit to carry), records and auction booty, we

staggered along to Marble Arch to find the underground shut and not a bus in sight, so we compromised by hailing the nearest taxi. I snatched a bit more sleep at Ella's, then another bit or two on the train, and finished up by sleeping the evening away on my own bed here in North Hykeham. I still felt shaky the next morning, when I reported for work, but who cares about *work* for crying out loud? When's the next Symposium, anyone? [2]

Ron Bennett:

An auction was held. A fanzine editors panel was announced but didn't take place. An announced critics panel on the film *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* also did not take place. Ella Parker and Vince Clarke resigned from the London Circle Committee. [3]

Although it had been hoped that the overnight Symposium held at the beginning of October would strengthen internal relationships, the London Circle was disbanded at its business meeting of Friday, 16th October, following the resignation of Chairman Ted Tubb. It was agreed to revert to the system of seven months ago, social meetings at the Globe and no business meetings at the White Horse. The Globe meetings will continue to take place on the first Thursday of each month. It is still intended to hold the 1960 convention in London and the provisional date has now been changed from Whitsun to Easter.

Some London fans held a meeting in a room made available at Inchmery on Friday, 23rd October, when a new Club – the Science-Fiction Club of London – was formed. Ella Parker was elected Chairwoman and Jim Groves, 29 Lathom Road, East Ham, London E6, is Hon. Secretary. Meetings will be held twice a month. [4]

This group would go on to organise a Worldcon – see 1965: The Second UK Worldcon.

[1] *Skyrack* #7 (September 1959, ed. Ron Bennett)
[2] *Smoke* #2 (November 1959, ed. George Locke)
[3] *Skyrack* #8 (October 1959, ed. Ron Bennett)
[4] *Skyrack* #9 (November 1959, ed. Ron Bennett)

1960

7. The Lost Hotels

The 1960 UK national convention experienced more difficulty securing a venue than is usually the case. Here's how that saga unfolded:

Ron Bennett:

July 1, 1959:

Ken Bulmer tells me by phone that at the last London Circle business meeting at the White Horse the decision was reached to accept the offer of the British Science Fiction Association and that London will hold the Convention in conjunction with the BSFA. No hotel has as yet been booked, nor has a Convention Committee been elected. It is expected that the Committee will be formed shortly, while a search for a suitable hotel is already in progress. The Convention will take place at Whitsun. [1]

January 5, 1960:

Good Friday 15th April to Easter Monday 18th April. Event – The London Convention organised by the BSFA. The Place – The Dominion Hotel, Lancaster Gate, London W.2. Bed and Breakfast is 35/-, with reductions for juniors who are willing to share rooms. Bookings should be made directly to the hotel manager, and not to BSFA Secretary, Sandra Hall. The Convention fee will be inclusive for the weekend and has been set at 15/- (10/- for BSFA members, with reductions for juniors). Deposits on Convention fees may be paid to Archie Mercer, 434/4 Newark Rd., North Hykeham, Lincoln. Guests of honour at the Convention will be Nova Editor, Ted Carnell and TAFF delegate, Don Ford. Suggested programme outline is as follows: Friday – general renewal of fannish acquaintances. Saturday – "light" items, such as twenty questions, cover guessing competitions, etc., with the possibility of an informal banquet in the evening, followed by a dance. Sunday – BSFA AGM late morning, with the afternoon devoted to more serious items (in contrast to the light items of Saturday, and NOT to the AGM!), with films in the evening. Suggestions from groups willing to fill in the blanks of this outline should be sent to Sandra (41 North End House, Fitz-James Avenue, London W14). How about you, hmmm? [2]

February 22, 1960:

Because of the dissatisfaction expressed at the high prices of the Dominion hotel, the site of the BSFA Easter Convention has been

switched. Take note, therefore, of the following:

TIME: Remains Good Friday 15th April to Easter Monday 18th Apr.

PLACE: The Sandringham Hotel, 25 Lancaster Gate, London W.2.

BOOKINGS: Bed & Breakfast 30/3d. Double rooms 58/-. Some four bedded rooms 22/6d per. Priority for cheaper accommodation to be given to younger fans travelling the greatest distances. All bookings (no deposits) to be made by letter through Ella Parker, 151 Canterbury Road, West Kilburn, London NW6.

The Sandringham is not a licensed hotel but the Manager is agreeable to our bringing in alcohol provided we keep it to our rooms and the lounge provided for us. A night porter will provide tea or coffee. Breakfast is normally from 8 – 9:30, but as a concession this has been extended to 10:30. If anyone would like to insure articles of value, John Newman, Hounslow, Middx., will take care of any inquiry. Auction material to Ella Parker. Convention fees to Archie Mercer, North Hykeham, Lincoln. These have now been reduced to: BSFA Members 7/6, junior members 5/-; Non BSFA members 10/-, junior non-members 7/6d – for the entire convention.

This is a BSFA Convention and is not being organised in conjunction with the London Circle. [3]

Ella Parker:

March 5, 1960:

Dear [MEMBER];

I'm not much taken with this method of writing letters but, if I'm to get round to all of you I see no alternative.

Primarily this is meant to be confirmation of your hotel booking for the Easter Convention. In a lot of cases you have neglected to mention for how many nights the room/s will be wanted. Where this has happened I've made the booking for three (3) nights Friday/Saturday/Sunday. If this is wrong please drop me a card as soon as possible giving details of the correct booking.

Gentlemen: There were only seven (7) single rooms made available to us for the Convention. Femmes have been given priority on these which means that most of you will be asked to share a double room (twin beds), where possible friend will be bunked with friend. I'm sorry about this but, under the circumstances I had no choice.

Convention registrations will be handled by Ethel Lindsay and will be done in the Con Lounge. Lapel buttons will be given as receipt for your fee. You should fill these in with your name and WEAR THEM ALL THROUGH THE CON. I'm warning you, Ethel is a Scot and anyone seen

without one of these buttons is liable to be asked to pay again.

For those of you coming by car or small vans there is ample parking space and two (2) garages immediately adjacent to the hotel. Area maps of the district will be issued by Bobbie probably through *Vector* due to appear prior to the Con.

I don't think there's anything else I have to tell you. If you have any queries not covered by this or the circular sent out earlier, please, drop me a line and I'll find the answers for you. The nearest underground station is Lancaster Gate.

See you all at Easter. [4]

Friday April 8, 1960:

I had arranged with the hotel manager at which the Convention was to be held, that I would take the bookings from the fen and give them to him in a block. I'd told him to expect around 50 to sleep (!) with about the same number visiting the lounge we would be using for a Con hall. The hotel didn't have a licence for selling drinks but I was assured there were no objections to our bringing our own in provided they were kept to the bedrooms and our lounge; the hotel would even provide us with glasses! I figured it was best to be honest and told him that in all probability there would be very little actual sleep done over the weekend as we only had this one chance, annually, to meet up and exchange talk and the like. To this he was also agreeable. I suppose I should have been suspicious, because every demand I made on behalf of the Convention was met with the bland promise: "If we haven't got it we'll get for you." Things looked fine from where I was sitting.

I phoned the hotel on Friday to let them know I'd be down that day with the bookings I had. A woman's voice said: "I'm the owner, the man you saw was my brother who was standing in for me for a couple of days." I thought little more about it than that the least the brother could have done was to tell me it wasn't his hotel. He had assured me he'd be there himself over the holiday in order to help things run smoothly. As it turned out, he'd lied in his teeth.

When I arrived and had a cigarette well alight we got down to business. How many would we be? When was it for? For how long would we be there? What exactly were we? (alright chum, you try and answer that one!). It transpired that the hotel owner hadn't been advised on any of the detailed arrangements made on her and the hotel's behalf by her brother. This meant that every time I told her about something else her brother had promised would be done or obtained for us she dashed over to the phone and called him to query it. From the expostulations at our end I

gathered the brother was unrepentantly telling her: “Yes, that’s right, I did say that.” When the girl – she wasn’t really much more than that – realised how far he’d gone in her name she did the honourable thing and agreed to accept the bookings. We had to make certain adjustments, such as some things she knew or couldn’t afford to get in for us. She was anxious for the good name of her hotel to do her best for us and I was only too willing to compromise with her on what I thought the gang would stand for; reminding myself all the time that there was only a week to go before the Convention and we had to have this hotel, there just wasn’t time to find another. My pride took an awful beating that day. [5]

Bobbie Gray:

This newsletter is a little later than I promised. Now it is here it contains the final and definite arrangements that have been made, on your behalf, for the 1960 BSFA Easter Convention.

First, I would like to say that any BSFA members who have not received their copy of *Vector* #6 should write and let me know immediately. Some were returned to me with the address labels ripped off: Thank you.

CONVENTION NEWS: The fee for attending the Convention has been lowered. It now stands at; non-BSFA members 10/-, members and JNR non-members (up to and including 18) 7/6, JNR members 5/-. This covers the three days of the Convention.

A different hotel has been chosen with lower rates. Prices quoted are inclusive of the 10% hotel charge and are; singles; 30/3, doubles, 58/-, four rooms are available each holding four beds and will be charged at the rate of 22/6 per person. This is of course, B&B. We have tried to evolve a fair system for the lower priced beds, and the fairest idea that comes to mind is as follows. First chance to BSFA members: those living 300 miles from London. Next in line come those who live under the 300 but over 100 miles away. If we still have some left then come those who live from 100-50 miles out. Last, come those BSFA members who live in or near London. (In every case JNRs get priority). Any cheaper beds still left will then be offered to non BSFA members following the same scale. I hope this proves fair to all.

You will appreciate that this means getting your bookings in as soon as possible. *All* reservations to be made through Ella Parker, whose address will be found at the foot of this circular. *No verbal bookings accepted.* All to be sent in writing, and please indicate whether you are willing to share a room for either 2 or 4. No deposits, please. Any member who books then finds he can’t come must endeavour to get his cancellation

in *one clear week* before the convention. If you fail in this the manager is legally entitled to charge you for the whole amount.

The hotel is in two parts, one of which will be given over entirely to us. There will, inevitably, be some overflow into the other half. I would like to make it quite clear that the manager – who has worked hard to fit ys all in under the one roof, and is no spoil-sport – has no objections to room parties PROVIDED they are confined to the part of the hotel filled entirely by Convention members. This shouldn't be difficult to arrange. There is one stipulation; no high jinks. This includes zap-guns, throwing bottles out of windows and route marching along the corridors at dead of night. The hotel doesn't have a licence but, there's no objection to you bringing your own in. We are requested to keep our liquor quaffing to the lounge – of which we have exclusive use – or our bedrooms. If you are doubtful about the lack of a bar, remember that being allowed to bring in your own drinks will be far cheaper than buying it at a hotel bar.

Meals will range from approx 5/- to 8/6 in price, according to the kind of meal required. The manager is prepared to stagger the breakfast hour until 10 or 10:30 in the morning. Please, don't all of you decide to come down to the last sitting or the scheme will collapse. A night porter will be on duty to provide tea/coffee to those who desire it. A fancy dress parade will be held on the Saturday night with prizes for the best male and female costumes. Will any clubs or groups who have items they would like included in the programme please get in touch with Sandra Hall, address below. For preference these should be about 15-30 minutes long. I haven't forgotten the hotel address, that is down below with all the others, including Archie Mercer, to whom you should send your Convention fees.

If you are bringing anything of value e.g. tapers, typers, cine-cameras etc. and you'd like them insured please send the relevant information (make, serial number and value), to John Newman... yes, that's right, his address is below. All donations for auctions and raffles will be accepted at Ella's address. Please mark clearly on the parcel which fund it is to benefit... TAFF or the BSFA, so she can hand them over to the people concerned when the time comes.

This notice cancels all previous information published anywhere regarding the 1960 BSFA Easter Convention. All fmz appearing before April, please copy. Thank you. [6]

Ella Parker:

Tuesday April 12, 1960

I had an appointment with the hotel that day to give them the last of the bookings and to make sure all was as it should be.

When I got to the hotel the owner introduced me to her mother who looked as if she was on the point of leaving, she was putting on her hat. Instead of going out she pinned me with a hard look and remarked: “Miss Parker, I don’t like the sound of this party you have arranged for Easter. I don’t like it at all. If my daughter takes my advice she’ll cancel the whole thing.” To say I was dismayed would be to understate the case. I was aghast. I’d already done diplomatic battle with the daughter and we’d reached some sort of working agreement but I could see this old battle-axe wasn’t going to be easily persuaded, indeed, she wasn’t going to be persuaded in any way if she could help it. I don’t know if my face showed that I recognised defeat even before I’d begun fighting, but in spite of all my pleas she stuck to her guns. I must be fair and say that the daughter was on the verge of a right battle royal with her mother, in order to honour her word that she would have us there. The old woman over-rode her on every point. I wondered if perhaps Bobbie Gray could effect some sort of compromise with the old haybag so I asked permission to use the phone and called her. As I wasn’t on the BSFA committee I had to let her know what had happened anyway.

It was no go. We were out!

48 hours to the Convention and nowhere to go! [5]

This is a job I didn’t think I’d have to do again, but here I am announcing a hotel change. I went to the Sandringham today (Tuesday 12th) to give them a last minute booking and to straighten out any last details. They were the ones to do the straightening out: they cancelled our booking!

It seems they’ve had second thots on allowing us to bring drink into the hotel – there was even some talk of having a couple of plain-clothes coppers there to make sure we didn’t smuggle it in. I’d be interested in hearing what our legal position is with regards to the cancellation of what amounts to a contract.

The fact remains we still had a Convention coming up and nowhere to hold it. After tramping the streets for some hours we contacted the Paddington Chamber of Commerce and they sent us to the KINGSLEY HOTEL, BLOOMSBURY WAY. W.C.1. They have accepted the booking and though there are more advantages to it than drawbacks there is one snag. Hotel rooms will not be as cheap as those promised at the other place. We are now going to have to pay: 4 bedded rooms: 27/6d per person, 3 bedded: 29/9d per, double or twin bedded: *per person*, and single rooms 35/9d. All these prices are inclusive of hotel charges. To those of you who booked at the lower priced beds; I’ve made the bookings just the same but told Mr. Edgar (the manager) that as the cost was more than you

were expecting to pay some of you might decide on receiving this not to take up the booking, he has agreed to this and no-one will be charged for a room if they don't arrive. I hope all of you who have booked will decide to come anyway.

The advantages to this place are numerous. They have a bar and a night porter. The hall in which the programme items will be held is plenty large enough for anything we might want to put on. Ken Slater: there is now all the display space you could possibly want for art-work, magazine covers, the lot. And there's no objection to them being *stuck* on the wall with *sellotape*. Tables and chairs galore are available to us for the asking. I hope this notice won't reach you too late for you to revert to your original plans.

Meals are a bit expensive but local cafés abound. Lunch is 12/6d, dinner 13/6d. The breakfast hour is from 7-9 a.m.

Nearest Underground is *Tottenham Ct. Road* from one direction and from the other, *Kingsway*. Buses running right past the door are as follows: 7, 8, 8b, 23, 25, 32, 73 and 289. Sunday service operates on Easter Monday and Good Friday.

I have some good news – or that should read GOOD NEWS – for the committee of the BSFA. The ConHall is going to cost us 3gns. a day. The money for this is being donated to the Association by our own Ted Forsyth who is as angry about the upset to our plans as I am, and he figures this will make things easier for us, which it will.

I've had so much to do today I've slipped up on one thing. I haven't made any inquiries about parking space for cars/vans and the like.

I'm very sorry for this last minute upheaval. I know it's no use saying don't blame me, because you will anyway. I hope you will show how forgiving you can be by turning up at the Kingsley and having a good time. At least this time, we don't have to hide our drinks. All other details on the previous newsletter regarding con fees, insurance and the like are still in operation, and with the same people. I apologise for the strikeover in places but I haven't the time to wait while corflu dries. I think I've covered everything. I certainly hope so. [7]

The former Sandringham Hotel at 25 Lancaster Gate and adjacent properties are now some sort of corporate offices, while the Kingsley is still a hotel. Coincidence? Probably, but satisfying nonetheless.

[1] *Skyrack* #4 (July 1959, ed. Ron Bennett)
[2] *Skyrack* #12 (January 1960, ed. Ron

Bennett)
[3] *Skyrack* #14 (February 1960, ed. Ron Bennett)
[4] circulated letter, as dated
[5] *Orion* #25 (June 1960, ed. Ella Parker)
[6] *BSFA Newsletter* (April 1960, ed. Bobbie Gray)
[7] *BSFA Newsletter* (April 1960, ed. Ella Parker)

8. Kingcon Programme

The Eastercon 1960 Programme Book was a mere 18 pages long (including covers) and produced by Gerry Mosdell.

Saturday 16th April

Speeches

2:00 p.m. Opening Speech by A. Weir (Dr Sc.)
2:15 p.m. Guest of Honour Ted Carnell introducing Don Ford.
2:25 p.m. TAFF Candidates Speeches.

General Programme

3:00 p.m.: TAFF Candidates Quiz.
3:45 p.m.: Guest of Honour Ted Carnell – Speech.

Tea (no sympathy)

6:30 p.m.: The Fantastic – Sensational – World Renowned Spectacular – Banned by the Lord Chamberlain – Years in the Making – Don Ford slide show in Super Splendorama with 10 Dimensional 150 Track Non sound unit.

7:30 p.m.: It's your money we're after – Auction.

Dine?

9:30 p.m.: Fancy yourself?

Fall in Space men, Rocket men, rank and file (and femme).
Fancy Dress Party.
Guests will be carried out when incapable.

Sunday 17th April 1960

11:30 a.m.: A.G.M. B.S.F.A.

Bridge that Gap.

2:30 p.m.: This is Your Fan Life (?)
3:00 p.m.: Karel Čapek – Master of the Robots – by Dr A Weir.
3:45 p.m.: Films – Amateur!

T.

6:15 p.m.: Another Auction – and if you've no money left for this

may the sun rot your socks forever.

8:00 p.m.: Film – Pro! (Not Blue) *The Day the Earth Stood Still* ***ing Michael Rennie.

10:00 p.m.: Farewell

We regret the inconvenience caused to Convention attendees by the last minute change in Hotels.

The reason, briefly, is because the management of the hotel we had previously negotiated with suddenly decided – two days before the Con was due to be held – to refuse our bookings! No constructive reason was given for this sudden change of mind and, frankly, we can think of none. They told us, in so many words, to go find another hotel.

We did.

Thanks to the combined efforts of Bobbie Gray, Sandra Hall and Ella Parker, the Kingsley – within three hours of learning the worst. Thanks to a very co-operative management we were able to make new arrangements speedily. We think that the three ladies should be heartily congratulated upon their quick thinking and fast work.

9. The Con That Nearly Wasn't

Kingcon – the 1960 UK National Science Fiction Convention – the second to be run under the auspices of the BSFA – took place over the weekend of Friday 15th – Monday 18th April, 1960. It was held at the Kingsley Hotel in Bloomsbury, London, a venue that had only been found after the previous hotel cancelled the booking two days earlier (see "The Lost Hotels"). Co-Guests of Honour were Ted Carnell and TAFF-winner Don Ford. The committee consisted of Ella Parker, Bobbie Gray, Sandra Hall and Archie Mercer. Attendance was around 100.

In photos from the con people can be seen wearing round badges. Unfortunately, as with the 1959 Brumcon, there isn't a clear enough photo of one of the badges to be able to determine whether it had a design on it or was merely a card blank on which a name could be scrawled, as per those issued at the 1957 Worldcon.

Prologue

Archie Mercer:

I understand that the 1960 BSFA Convention came nearer than most fans ever realised to being held in Harrogate. Harrogate was indeed mentioned at the 1959 Con (held in Birmingham), but shortly afterwards a group of London and Cheltenham fans met in Cheltenham and persuaded the BSFA Committee (who were all present, if only because most of them WERE London or Cheltenham fans anyway) to agree to the 1960 Con being held in London.

The Cheltenham Plan was for a Con at Whitsun. However, public feeling soon moved it back to Easter again, and from then on things just went haywire. A hotel was selected – announced – and provincial fandom staged a mass howl of protest at the prices charged, The Committee in London, at their wits end, tried to switch to Kettering – which we remember kindly from previous years. Alas, 'twas too late – some blasted football team (may their balls rot) had just got in and booked the hotel ahead of us. So back to London went the Con, Sandra Hall and Bobbie Gray, who together with me comprised the BSFA Committee, were running the London end of things, and calling in Ella Parker to help, the three of them started tramping the streets of London and the telephone directory to come up with a wonderful hotel – so wonderful that they were

all wondering what the hidden snag would be.... [1]

Tuesday April 12

Bobbie Gray:

The Tuesday before the Convention, I was wondering whether there would be a Convention. The hotel we had booked decided not to have us at the last minute. I am not likely to forget that particular Tuesday.

It started just before midday when Ella rang me and said in a rather strained voice that a crisis had arisen re the hotel. Sandra and I went round to the hotel and discovered what it was and thereafter the three of us spent the afternoon walking around looking for another hotel and wondering if we would end up booking a bed for the TAFF candidate in the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Ella Parker and Bobbie Gray who were in charge of booking arrangements were told that the management would not after all allow alcohol on the premises and that frankly we were considered a bunch of rowdies. A state of emergency existed as Ella contacted the local Chamber of Commerce and thence the Kingsley Hotel, Bloomsbury Way, Holborn. As the standard of the Kingsley is automatically taken to be higher than the majority of the hotels in the district in which the Sandringham is situated, it may be that we were done a favour. BSFA members and those non-members who had made bookings at the Sandringham were hurriedly contacted where possible and word was left with a friendly spy at the Sandringham to direct any would-be con goers to the Kingsley. [3]

Bobbie Gray:

The London Chamber of Commerce (Paddington) came to our rescue and got us fixed up at the Kingsley Hotel at special rates for the Con members.

It was that day that my right foot suddenly decided to play me up again and I was wondering how on earth I was going to keep my promise to Don to walk him round the interesting parts of London. Anyway, I went back to the flat and hoped that keeping off my feet for a while would help, but it turned out that I need not have worried when I called at Ted Carnell's office the following morning.

I was late, of course, a bad habit I seem to have acquired over the past few months. When I arrived at Ted's office a tall, dark chap got up – and up – and up. My first thought on seeing Don Ford was "My God! How am

I going to keep up with him? He's a foot taller than I am." But, Don it seemed, had also been having trouble with his feet and what actually happened was that he had a job to keep up with me at times. When my feet aren't bothering me I am a quick walker, though, and anyone I'm with usually ends up asking "Where's the fire?" Don didn't feel like a lot of walking (neither did I) so after taking him up to Piccadilly and Kingsway – and discovering to my astonishment that he did not drink coffee – we returned to Ted's office to collect Ron Bennett and Brian Jordan and moved on to the Tower of London.

Inside the Tower there was such a queue for the Crown Jewels that we decided to give it a miss. In any case, no cameras were allowed in there at all, whereas permission could be obtained to take photographs in the White Tower. Now it was the first time that I had been in the armoury section of the tower and all the boys got from me was "But where's the fifteenth century plate armour?" We reached it eventually, but just beforehand Ron came up to me and said "Have you seen the obscene suit of armour in the glass case?" I hadn't, but I got over to see it with indecent haste. The armour had belonged to Henry VIII for use in foot combats and it had been made so that there was not a crack or crevice where a weapon could enter. But egad! The steel codpiece. Henry was a hefty character, but I still think he was bragging. Don of course, took a photograph of it, helped by Ron, accompanied by scandalised looks from several of the visitors who were probably wishing they had the nerve to ask Don to send them a copy of the photo when developed.

The Yeoman of the Guard eventually persuaded us they were closing down for the night and back we went to Ted's office to pick up some gear. From there we went on to Ella's place where a number of fen were waiting to say hello to Don. I had to leave fairly early. [2]

Don Ford:

We arrived at Ella's and when we were introduced she said, "Christ, they told me you were tall, but you're a giant!" Present that evening were: Bobbie Gray, Brian Jordan, Bill Temple, Sture Sedolin, Ted Forsyth, Ron Bennett, Alan Dodd and Alan Rispin, and Ella's brother, Fred.

Big topic of discussion was the fact that the convention hotel had cancelled out only two days ago. Bobbie had told me about this early that morning and I was now hearing Ella's version. Between the two of them they had managed to secure another hotel on such short notice and things were now booked into the Kingsley Hotel on Bloomsbury Way. Notices were being mailed out of the change of hotel.

Chief reason for the change was the fact that the owner balked at the

idea of us bringing liquor into the hotel and had then nullified the agreement made by the manager. The owner was a woman active in politics and on the council. I gathered from the lucid descriptions of her that she thought the sun rose and set on her ass.

We went out to find a telephone booth for me to call Ted Carnell. I also called the Kingsley Hotel and told them that I was now at a party and for them to hold a room for my arrival later in the evening and one that I wouldn't have to change from when the convention came up two days later. I explained that I was from America to attend this convention and that had the effect of clarifying to them my "impossible" demands.

Ted Carnell, then, told me to relay on to the gang the news that the original con hotel was not informing people that the convention had moved. Ken Bulmer had called them to make a reservation and was told the convention had been cancelled. He'd been somewhat upset when he telephoned Ted.

Bill Temple and I rejoined the party and things began to hum with conversation. There were tables loaded with drinks and mixers and anyone who couldn't have quenched his thirst that evening wasn't human.

Ella looked to be about 30 to me and this'll no doubt get me shot next time we meet. She wears glasses and from the cartoons Atom had drawn of her, I was prepared to see a woman of 160-180lbs in weight. Far from it. She is a person very much alive with energy, drive and personality. Her voice reminds me a bit of Tallulah Bankhead's and her hearty booming laugh can over-ride the din of such gatherings. She is blunt in her talk and one always knows where one stands with Ella... a trait I much admire in people as I hate mealy mouthed individuals. In short, I liked Ella Parker very much from our first meeting. [2]

Ella Parker:

I've heard it said that anticipation is the best part of any treat. Looking forward one is apt to over-emphasise the pleasures to come so that when the Big Day arrives, events fall flat on their face and turn out something of an anti-climax.

When I heard that Don Ford had won TAFF I'll admit to having lost some sleep through excitement. I'd plugged Don in my fnz but this was a public expression of a personal wish. I wanted to meet Don Ford. Now I knew I was to have my wish granted I began wondering what he'd be like. The best place to make an assessment of anybody is in your own home and among your friends. Also, too often one hears the complaint after a convention attended by a BNF that he – the BNF – had been monopolised by his friends and the newcomers didn't get a chance to meet him. This

seemed a good opportunity to introduce some newcomers in fandom to Don before the con as well as meeting him for myself and judging whether I'd voted right or not.

I planned a party for him with this in mind and so he wouldn't feel overwhelmed by a lot of strangers I invited Ron Bennett whom Don had already met. Some of the other guests arrived before Don and his escort – Bobbie Gray, née Wild, Ron Bennett and Brian Jordan put in an appearance. I was in the middle of brewing tea and making coffee for them when the door opened and what seemed like a horde of people streamed into the room. Actually there were only four but to those of you that know him, when Don is one of the four it is apt to look like a crowd. I'd heard he was tall (he had to duck his head as he came into the door) but, somewhere along the line someone had neglected to mention he was LARGE with it! Don is the only person I know who can vacate a room holding 50 other people and leave it looking half empty.

What to say about him. I don't honestly know what I expected him to be like. I surveyed the roomful of fen discarding outer clothing and Don stood out among them. Privately I thought: if he has a voice to match his build then I'll have met my match at last! He strode over to where I stood mid a welter of tea cups and all he said was "Ella". In that one word he managed to convey his pleasure at the meeting and at being where he was. I particularly liked his handshake. One of my pet hates is the person who extends a limp hand leaving it up to you whether you take it or not. Don made no pretence. He really took hold of my hand and shook it.... I'm still wearing the plaster as proof!

As more people arrived and the talk grew in volume you could hear Don's voice easily only because of the accent. He speaks very quietly but his opinions are expressed in such a way you know he's saying what he thinks and not what he thinks you want to hear. There was no anticlimax to my meeting with Don. He was every bit as nice as I'd hoped he'd be and if he stood for TAFF tomorrow I'd vote for him again. [2]

Don Ford:

Alan Dodd and Sture Sedolin sat off in the corner of the room from the rest of us and I was introduced to Ella's brother, Fred. He said he wasn't a fan and was going to leave, but I asked him to stay and found myself talking about farming with him. He had been in Canada on a farm for quite a few years. He eventually went to his room to watch the dog races on TV.

Alan Dodd was rather quiet and left a bit early. He never took off his overcoat and always seemed poised on his chair ready to leave instantly.

Sture Sedolin is a fan from Sweden who has been active in fanzine publishing, but I never could get much conversation out of him. In fact, after Alan Dodd left, Sture sat off by himself, apart from the group. I thought he was simply shy, but was told a few days later that he seemed to get that way when the group he was with didn't do just whatever he wanted to do. On those occasions he played the part of a "dumb Swede". Not having much conversation with him or seeing him too much, I didn't have much impression of him one way or the other. He seemed to blend into the walls and since there was life and activity going on elsewhere, I didn't make the supreme effort of dragging conversation or replies out of him.

Bennett, Jordan and Rispin were playing Brag in the centre of the room and Ted Forsyth and I got active with our respective cameras. The evening seemed to pass quickly and I got ready to leave for my hotel. Bill Temple made sure I got on the right train and we said goodbye until convention time. The party was quite a blast and it made a pleasant thing to attend as a pre-convention warmup. [2]

Thursday April 14

Don Ford:

Ron Bennett met me at six. After a bite to eat we arrived at the Globe, where I met: Mike Moorcock, Sandra Hall, Ella Parker, Brian Jordan, Ken Cheslin, Mal and Sheila Ashworth, Ken and Irene Potter and Lawrence Sandfield, Brian Burgess, and some others I've forgotten. One, I know, worked for a Book Club.

They all kept buying me drinks throughout the evening. I don't like beer, scotch, wine or ale. I chose gin and orange with ice and found it a good standard drink to stay with. The orange is a concentrate and can be diluted down a bit with water to make a highball. The ice usually presented a problem. Two half cubes of ice was thought to be sufficient for any man, but I demanded more. I like a drink so cold you can hardly hold it in your hand so drink it instead.

Sandfield related his romantic adventures, which were brought on by his guitar and irresistible charm with women. Mike and Sandra seemed interested only in each other and exchanged soulful looks all evening long. Later on, it was announced that they were engaged to be married. Ken Cheslin is one of the new crop of budding British fans. I'd been getting copies of *Les Spinge* and it was a pleasure to meet him. He's quiet, smokes a pipe, and strikes me as being a fun loving chap.

The Ashworths and the Potters related that they were not staying at the convention hotel and wherever they were staying there wasn't enough beds for all, so it was their turn (Ashworth's) to sleep on the floor that night. Mal is sort of quiet and as a TAFF candidate for the Pittsburgh run, I was anxious to meet him. He's taller than average and somewhat on the serious side, as compared to his effervescent companion. Ken Potter. I rate Mal as a nice guy. His wife, Sheila, has that rare facial quality which made me wish for time to do some portraits of her. There's a look of wide eyed innocence about her which is reflected in her eyes. Those eyes could make a lot of men forget many things. I'm not kidding when I say she would make an extremely good portrait model.

The Potters are a lively couple. Ken has written some articles about his selling jobs in London and his stories in person were even funnier. Each one is so true to life, and if you've ever done any selling at all, you get an even greater kick out of them. He's a bit short and shall we say chunky? Not fat.

So with fourteen conversations going on and with drinks flowing freely, the evening passed all too quickly. I was just unzipping my gadget bag, in preparation to getting out my flash unit and cameras when a loud buzzer scared the hell out of me. "What's that?", I asked. The five minute warning I was told. Warning for what? Closing time. So, at the ridiculous hour of 11 p.m. we were kicked out of the Globe. That's just when things start to liven up back home.

Where to go, now? Finally they suggested a party at Ella's. I was all set to go until I found out that the bus and subway transportation dies at Midnight. Nothing runs until 6 a.m. except taxis. Medieval times must have been more gay. Deciding that an all night party wouldn't be particularly wise to start out the convention with, I chose to return to my hotel. I'd figured that perhaps I'd go to the party until 2:30 or 3, but with no way of getting back, I couldn't see it. Besides I was a bit tired from all the walking I'd done that day. Brian Burgess saw me back to my hotel room and by the time he left it was about 2 a.m. I made a few notes of my daily events and hit the sack. [2]

Friday April 15

Don Ford:

I slept until 11 a.m. and then went down in the lobby to meet the incoming fans. There weren't too many about, so I strolled about the hotel area for some photographing. Then, the fans seemed to come alive. I have

a sheet of paper with some of their names signed: Ethel Lindsay, J. Fairley, Ken Cheslin, Peter "Tea" Davies, Mike Kilvert, Jim Groves, Jim Cawthorn, J. McGovern, Archie Mercer, and one I can't read. Also got to meet Inchmery Fandom, Joy Clarke and Sandy Sanderson. They said Vin¢ was baby sitting and would be here tomorrow.

By now I was using both cameras and some shots came out good and others crud. I never seem to have too much luck with hurried shots, which is frequently what you have to do at conventions.

Here were lots of familiar names. Names from OMPA, fanzines, con reports, letters, etc. I had a fine time placing faces with the names. Met Ted Tubb again, and his wife Iris; also Arthur Thomson and his wife, Olive. [2]

Archie Mercer:

As Treasurer both of the BSFA in general and of the Convention in particular; I managed to get a word in with Sandra and (when she arrived) Ella, and after a bit of dickering with the manager over a revised price for the hire of the hall when he realised that we needed it all the time, not just for a couple of hours per day, Ethel got hold of me and we moved in and set up office. The office was originally the dais, where I sat collecting money and booking it down while Ethel issued name-tags and programmes. The hall was in the usual pre-Con shambles. Ken Slater was setting up his bookstall in one corner, groups of fans were sticking things on the walls, or standing around looking at things stuck up on the walls, or just standing nattering as fans will. More and more familiar and unfamiliar faces swam briefly into my field of vision as they came to register – young Harry Gilbert from Manchester – another BSFA member who had hitherto been faceless to me – showed up, and was I'm pretty safe in saying the youngest paid attendee, (Nikki Clarke and Deborah Bulmer were allowed in free). There was Sture Sedolin from Sweden – at least he SAYS he's from Sweden, though he speaks with what sounds suspiciously like a Hoddesdon accent. I asked him how he pronounced his name, and he gave me the highly interesting information that it's pronounced Sture Sedolin. In Swedish, anyway, in English phonetic rendering would probably be nearer to Stoora Sedda Leen actually. Ildiko Hayes, one of the editorial staff of the British SF book club and a particularly pretty girl. (I wish I knew where she got that first name from.) These and more that I'll try to remember later on, plus the old regulars such as Norman and Ina Shorrock, Norman Weedall and John Roles (these four representing what must have been the smallest Liverpudlian attendance at a British con for many a year), Cheltenhamites such as Keith Freeman, Eric and Margaret Jones,

and Doc Weir, Londoners such as Joy Clarke and Sandy Sanderson, and plenty more. [1]

Bobbie Gray:

Friday was the day the fans started moving in to the Kingsley Hotel and discovering where the cafés and restaurants were in the district. I had gone to meet Bill, but the coach was early and I finally rang the hotel to discover that he was already there. When I arrived myself Ella had already done stalwart work introducing people around. As the Convention proper did not start until Saturday the evening was spent in meeting and reunions and getting the geography of the place. [2]

Sandy Sanderson:

Ron and Daphne drove Joy and I to the Con hotel on Friday evening. Vince was staying with Nicki. There weren't a great many people present when we arrived so I booked in – the other three were returning to Inchmery – and we went to register and pick up copies of the Programme (rather poor on layout and duplication) and the SFCoL *[SF Club of London]* Combozine. This 52 page collection of material from some of England's best known faneds, artists, and writers represents the first zine to be turned out by Ella on her new Gestetner – while she was searching for a new Con hotel, and throwing two parties! [4]

Don Ford:

Ted and Iris took me out to supper at a Chinese Restaurant. The menu is a bit different from what's available (in the US). About the only things that seem to be the same are sweet and sour pork and egg rolls. I had fun experimenting with different and new dishes. Then Ted and Iris were full and I played Ellis Mills* by cleaning up what was left. I thought Christmas came early this year! They seemed fascinated by my capacity. I don't know why. Afterwards I was in the hotel bar until quite late that evening. [2]

** US fan active in the 1950s and 1960s, apparently noted for his hearty appetite. [Ed.]*

Archie Mercer:

Fans were drifting away for the evening meal, so Ina volunteered to hold the fort while I went to eat. My table-companions on this occasion, if I remember aright, were Doc Weir and Jim Groves, and we went to the place just across the road that made the 15 per cent service charge. I heard this place strongly criticised for grabbing this "extra 15%" off us – although, as I pointed out, it's no different from any other place that has no

percentage but puts another penny or two on the price of each item. We still ate cheaply and all down there, and with Doc around the conversation usually reckons to be fabulous, too.

There was no official programme that first Friday, of course, so eventually I packed up the office for the night and adjourned to the bar lounge where most of the rest of the survivors were. The place was crowded, mainly with fans, though a few mundanes huddled in corners looked a bit bewildered by it all. Service tended to be slow, so eventually I joined an expedition to get in stocks. Norman Shorrock in the lead like an alcoholic divining-rod, wandered down the upper reaches of Shaftesbury Avenue and into the fringes of Soho before finding a suitable off-licence. There we made sundry purchases, I myself investing in some Drambuie (mainly because I'd heard so much about it that I was wondering what it was like – I like it) and some rum.

There was, of course, a vague idea that all this stuff would come in useful for room parties. However, a fair number of the attendees were not staying at the Kingsley, and as they remained talking downstairs long after the bar had officially closed, the incentive to room-partying was not forthcoming. These non-residents included, besides many native London fans, such traditional Convention stalwarts as Jill Adams, who had thought she was being clever by booking in at a cheaper place just round the corner from the hotel we were SUPPOSED to be going to – before it cancelled on us.

When it came to the point, and the last non-resident had gone his or her way, the usual time for room parties to get going was long past and the night suffered as a consequence. I was one of the last to leave the lounge – I always am when there are fans around, unless there are fans somewhere else at the time. When I DID leave it just about everybody else had gone to bed. Reluctantly, I did likewise. [1]

Sandy Sanderson:

About 2:00 a.m. on Saturday morning, after Ron, Joy and I had spent a couple of hours with Brian Aldiss, Don Ford and Ted Carnell, talking over old prozines (and getting on to "Flying Aces" and the like) the party broke up and we each went our different ways – me, to bed. [4]

Saturday, April 16

Don Ford:

Up at eight. Met Ted Carnell and we walked down to the American

Express office, where I got my tickets to Paris. Then, we went to see about renting a projector. I got a projector, magazines, screen and spare bulb. Had to put up a £26 deposit, plus the rental of another £3, I think it was. Since they would not be open Monday and I'd probably be gone by then, the problem was how to get my deposit back. I suggested they call the hotel, where I'd previously told the manager I wanted to rent a projector and had inquired as to the current available. The camera shop proprietor hemmed and hawed. Finally, I said, "Do you have a telephone?" as I walked behind the counter and into his office with him behind me. Sensing his still further indecision, I picked up the phone and handed it to him and said, "Call the Kingsley Hotel and ask for the manager, Mr. Edgar." He did and everything was worked out smoothly. During the conversation I flipped out my passport to him so he could double check my identity with the hotel. He sort of gave a half-sigh and half-wince when he saw the U.S. passport.

Parking the projector temporarily at Les Flood's shop, I had lunch with Ted, Les, Brian Aldiss and Ildiko Hayes, along with a stop at their favourite pub. Miss Hayes used to work for Ted, but now worked for a record company, I believe. Quite attractive and charming and intelligent to talk to. I can't recall what all we talked about, but the group reminded me of when we get Marty Greenberg, Phyllis Economou, Lou (Tabakow), etc. together for lunch at a Midwestcon.

We got back to the hotel and were ready when the con opened at 2 p.m. I got to meet Vin¢ Clarke today, having met his better half yesterday. Doc Weir opened with a general hell raising speech about fans taking unwarranted quantities of Hotel Notepaper from the lobby, etc. Since I had about eight in my coat pocket, I tried to slump down in my chair and pass unnoticed. [2]

Ron Bennett:

The convention hall was reached by trailing through the hotel restaurant. Doctor Arthur R. Weir, who retired from the Secretaryship of the BSFA because of ill-health, chided those present who had helped themselves to large quantities of hotel notepaper and introduced Guest of Honour, E.J. Carnell, the Editor of the Nova magazines. Ted, in turn, introduced TAFF Delegate, Don Ford, who said that he was indebted to TAFF, that he was not really a "convention fan" and that he deplored the labelling of fans. Don continued by saying that it was a good ploy on the part of the con committee to change hotels when they knew he was in town. He mentioned meeting two of Britain's leading teddy boys, Ted Carnell and Ted Tubb, and went on to speak of his part in American

fandom, mentioning that he has the names of 6000 fans arranged geographically. Whenever Doc Barrett travels the States he looks up names listed. Don went on to talk about the formation of the First Fandom organisation and concluded by presenting Ted Carnell with a bellybutton brush "For the man who has everything." [3]

Bobbie Gray:

By this time I had found that Don could keep an extremely straight face when he was kidding one along and I was prepared, but the audience had found out, too, and his speech went down very well.

I may add at this point that the British fen were wondering if Don were an American. He didn't drink coffee, he didn't smoke, he didn't drink whisky and he didn't hustle. Nevertheless, I noticed that what Don had planned to do during his visit did get done. [2]

Don Ford:

Later on, after circulating about and trying to meet everyone I could, I ate supper with Ron and Daphne Buckmaster, Lawrence Sandfield, Norman Ashfield, and Brian Burgess. I had a gag item I'd stolen from Doc Barrett when he used it on me at our birthday party (Lou and I) in January. It's a piece of rubber that looks like someone vomited. Pretty gruesome when you lay it on a chair or table. Daphne wouldn't sit in a certain chair. Back at the convention hall it created quite a stir when I'd toss it into the lap of Ella or Ethel, etc. Pamela didn't appreciate it when I put in the bassinet with Debra. I got a frown over this from a lady, who was later identified as being Dorothy Rattigan, fellow OMPAn. So, I guess I'm now on her "list". [2]

Sandy Sanderson:

The first general item (TAFF Candidates Quiz) had to be postponed because, due to work commitments, Eric Bentcliffe wasn't able to turn up until the evening. Since Eric usually finds himself in this position every year I didn't quite see why the Quiz had been scheduled so early but, for a change, at this London Convention it was a case of "Ours not to reason why..." Actually, not being involved in the programme or anything like that did make a change, and a pleasant one at that. The first item proper, then, was a talk by Ted Carnell on the current state of sf. This turned out to be one of those things that could have gone on for ever – everyone had something to say. [4]

Ron Bennett:

Following Saturday's auction by Ken Slater, Ted Carnell took the

platform to speak on the present position of SF and the writer's part in this situation. First, however, he called the attention of the gathering to the doors at the back of the hall, and announced "Dave Kyle." And Dave walked in! Amid gasps and applause he walked to the front of the hall and said that he was pleased to be in London once again but that he had already made a speech. "I've said everything I have to say, and no-one applauded." Having drawn blank looks from the audience, he added, "At the Sandringham."

Science Fiction as a name is becoming less known, said Carnell, adding that he felt *Astounding*'s change of title to be a bad move, *ASF* having been a household word for over 25 years. Ted said that he was looking for new writers, a second string to be groomed for stardom in two or three years time. This discussion sidetracked to whether fact has caught up with SF prophecy and questions and discussion from the floor in the shape of Dave Kyle, Arthur Thomson and Ted Tubb followed. Kyle said that similar points had been raised in Detroit and at a recent Los Angeles meeting.

Meals at the hotel were somewhat highly priced and at mealtimes most fans could be found at the Moulin Rouge Restaurant on Holborn, practically opposite the restaurant where the original forerunner of the London Circle would meet and people like Bill Temple and Arthur Clarke would discuss SF. The blonde Irish waitress at the Moulin Rouge was run off her feet and was invited to the evening parties by several fans. She declined. [3]

Sandy Sanderson:

The best item of the programme, and the thing that really saved the day, was Don Ford's slide show. Don turned out to be a very nice person who went over well with his audience, and his photography was brilliant – none of us could think of a UK professional that could match his night scenes. [4]

Don Ford:

With the aid of Ron Buckmaster, Norman Shorrock and the expert assistance of Peter West we got ready to get the show on the road. During the necessary confusion of getting the screen up, projector set up and focus slide put in, etc., Charlie Duncombe came up and introduced himself. I tried to talk to him while I was working, but it wasn't too successful. I never saw him afterward and hated that I didn't get to talk to him in a more lengthy conversation. I've thought a hundred times since the convention, "I wonder if Charlie thinks I'm a no good s.o.b.?"

I'd prepared a slide show of previous Worldcons and Midwestcons, trying to avoid showing too many of the fans who'd been over to London in '57, and concentrating on some of the lesser known or shall we say lesser travelled fans than they'd previously seen. Also, I'd been warned to cut to the bone; that fans were a bit tired of convention slides, etc. In addition, I'd included photos of the CFG, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and the start of my TAFF Trip from Loveland to London, which was why I had to get the roll of films processed earlier in the week.

I stood near the screen to point out and identify fans, while the other three worked the projector and changed the magazines for me. This particular ARGUS model wasn't working so good and the magazine kept sticking or else would advance. However, despite these obstacles we managed it fairly well. I'd included a number of night scenes of Cincinnati into the show, remembering these had drawn favourable comment at the Midwestcons. They also look pretty to the average person who is not particularly a camera fan. After the show was over, they commented more on these than they did the fannish slides. [2]

Sandy Sanderson:

The TAFF Candidates Quiz went on in the evening but unfortunately it started with a set of questions set by Doc Weir on sf and it wasn't until the audience had been bored for 10-15 minutes that Quizmaster Eric Jones switched to fan stuff. (It was afterwards suggested that Doc should be put on the stage and asked questions like "Who sawed Courtney's boat?") [4]

Ron Bennett:

This developed into questions set the candidates by the floor on such topics as "Should fanzines accept anonymous contributions?" and "What does each candidate think is the most outstanding achievement of the other candidates in fandom?" [3]

Archie Mercer:

We hastily sorted ourselves out whilst the three candidates for the Pittsburgh trip this autumn – Mal Ashworth, Eric Bentcliffe and Sandy Sanderson – took the stage, Quiz-master was Eric Jones. When I later asked Ron Bennett why he, as the current TAFF administrator, hadn't been doing it he shrugged one of his shoulders and said it had simply been planned that way, and that was that. Which does at least go to prove that something HAD been planned, if nothing else. The three victims were first of all given a sort of SF test paper to answer verbally – who said so-and-so in what story by whom? sort of thing – after which they were asked to state their views on various topics of interest to fandom and themselves. It

was generally conceded that the three candidates deserved the attention of the audience, and there was no microphone, so absolute hush was the order of the day, and I stared in frustration at what seemed like a small sea of unpaid faces that kept coming in. With this coming-in and other things there was enough noise round the back of the hall to make me miss most of the programme anyway, so I might just as well have been boozing in the lounge. Ethel kept going "Sssssh" as loud as she could hiss, and Alan Bale, who was sitting in front of me, started making a deliberate noise in return. As the programme cannot have been of much interest to fringe-fans I can't really blame him. And he DID pay his subscription. Didn't collect his programme, either.

Among the incoming fans was one about seven feet tall. Actually I think he'd come in before, but this is as good a point as any to bring him up. His name was Peter Hitchin, he'd just blown in on spec, and said he rather liked what he found. I hope he investigates further. Actually he says he's six foot six, as against Don Ford's six foot three. So next time I saw Don, I greeted him "Hi-ya, Shorty".

It was now pretty late, so by the time the TAFF quiz was over there were suggestions that it might be best to postpone the fancy-dress party till the next night. This proved impractical, however, so the parade was dismissed to go and put on its fancy dress if it had any. Having suffered enough from the slow bar service, I slung my haversack and set forth in search of bottled bheer, returning triumphant to find Sandra Hall, arrayed in a sort of exotically regal costume, frantically asking everybody she met if they could somehow, anyhow, conjure up some dance-music suitable for the occasion. It seemed that in this one specific department, nothing was available. There were tapes, and there was a tape-recorder – but they were four-track tapes with only a twin-track machine or something. I had gramophone records – but nobody had a gramophone. (I could've brought my record-player, too – instead I'd lugged down a spare lantern that turned out not to be required.) The hotel had a loudspeaker in every room – but there was no dance-music on the air at that particular time, There WAS Sandy (or Laurence) Sandfield with his guitar – but it seemed that that was not quite the kind of music Sandra had in mind.

Let's see – over in one corner there was a gathering of the younger element, such as the three Stourbridge stalwarts (Peter Tea Davies, Ken Cheslin and Mike Kilvert) who first learned about fanning at Birmingham last year. And Jhim Linwood, from Nottingham, who is my nearest effective trufannish neighbour. And Rispin and Jordan, or possibly Rispin OR Jordan in case I was seeing double. John Newman was there, with his

wife Joan – a jolly redhead whom I was very pleased to meet after all these years – she was once cover-girl on *Science-Fantasy*. Her daughter Penny Chandler was along too, who denies knowing anything whatsoever about her Fandergaste namesake. Tikki Hall, Sandra's sister, was there – well, she was there SOME time during the week-end and this is as good an occasion as any to mention her. Likewise Peter McIntyre, who acted as her escort – he's a cousin or something of the Halls. In fact, I take the credit for having introduced Peter to Ken McIntyre – they were sitting a few feet apart, and I asked them if they'd met each other yet. They moved up to look at each other's nametag... Charlie Duncombe and his wife were there, or had only just left, having shown up during the afternoon, Unfortunately Charlie's talents as orator with built-in megaphone were never called upon to be put to constructive use. There was a young Austrian fan called Gunther Loth, whom I would have liked to have seen a bit more of, if only to get the lowdown on the German speaking fannish situation these days. And a lot of the people I've mentioned already or haven't mentioned yet besides.

Eventually the call went for the fancy dresses to be judged. There were maybe ten or a dozen fancily-dressed people there, who dutifully trooped along to the front. Ethel and Ina were twinning it as witches – Ethel was the more witchily dressed of the two, Ina was just sort of sitting in with "neutral" fancy dress and the spare witch's hat. On the other hand, though Ethel was readily recognisable as Ethel through the exaggerated makeup, Ina was so cunningly disguised that at first I couldn't tell WHO it was. Even when I got up close to her I was by no means sure. Then Bob Parkinson was a werewolf – an interplanetary werewolf what's more, or at least a werewolf in a space helmet. Laurence (or Sandy) Sandfield was a futuristic minstrel, complete with the inevitable guitar. When I protested that he'd worn the same costume at the Cheltenham party last Whitsun, he indicated a mask over the top part of his face and said that this time he was Rhysling. Gerry Mosdell and his mate Susan Ellam wear ultra-bohemian layabout-type clothing at the best of times, and they had converted theirs to fancy dress by (in his case) putting on a hat, and (in hers) draping some filmy fabric over the top of what she'd been wearing to start with. And a few more I can't recollect – and Sandra of course, dressed as listed a few paragraphs back.

These were all now lined up along the front of the stage; where they were photographed from all conceivable angles. Bobbie had buttonholed me about the prizes to be awarded, which we agreed would consist of certificates redeemable in literature from Ken Slater's stall at BSFA

expense. Bobbie thought that a first prize worth £1 and a second prize worth ten shillings should serve, and I agreed, and that (I fondly thought) was that. So when at long last the contestants come down off the stage on to the floor again with no announcement being made, I got hold of Don Ford (who was one of the judges) and asked him who'd won.

Nobody, he told me. The judging hadn't started yet.

It happened in due course, of course. I wandered into the Con hall after having left it for some long-forgotten purpose to be blandly informed that the first prize had been awarded jointly to the witches, with the futuristic werewolf as second.

I had to round up Bobbie for another hasty consultation. If we awarded TWO first prizes, that would be an extra £1, On the other hand, if we split the first price in half, that would mean that a first prize-winner would get no more than the second. It was agreed to compromise with joint first prices of fifteen shillings each, and ten for the second as before. Now came another hitch – the werewolf had left the hall to disrobe, and I hadn't a clue who'd been inside the thing, nor it seemed had anybody else. That's why Bob's Certificate, when he eventually got it, was inscribed in the name of "Mr. W. Wolf". [1]

Ron Bennett:

Following the Fancy Dress Party...Don Ford was presented with an orange box by Norman Shorrock on behalf of the Liverpool Group. Don said that being a completist he would now have to try to collect orange boxes from all over the world. [3]

Sandy Sanderson:

The Fancy Dress Party in the evening was small but there were some good costumes and first prize was deservedly won by Ethel Lindsay and Ina Shorrock as two of the Witches of Karres. Vince had put in an appearance during the day, and Ron had run him back home – this time the Buckmasters and Joy had booked in. Once again we ended the day with a party – this time a small one in Ken Slater's bedroom. [4]

Archie Mercer:

After a short session in the Shorrock bedroom with about half a dozen of us at the outside, we moved up to Dave Kyle's, where it seemed there was a genuine smoke-filled room party. There was – the difference between this and other fannish smoke-filled room parties being that here Dave Kyle was in bed, apparently stark naked. The original wave of immigrants had caught him on the hop, and he'd been marooned in bed ever since as a consequence. As Daphne Buckmaster was one of the

immigrants, there wasn't much Dave could do about it.

The situation didn't last, though. Everybody was sorely afraid that if anybody spoke above a whisper the mice would complain to the management. Soon after Ron Buckmaster had turned up to participate in the proceedings, we agreed to break it up. And so, as the saying says, to bed. [1]

Bobbie Gray:

Room parties were going full swing, of course, but on Saturday night I gave them a miss. Don wanted to do some night photography and Bill and I took him up to Piccadilly, but after midnight the lights were going out on the signs fairly rapidly. We went through Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square and thence back to the hotel, but Don did get some shots of London side streets that had not caught up with the mid-twentieth century including a little street that was sheer Regency. [2]

Don Ford:

Bill and Roberta Gray suggested that I really should get some night shots of London while I was there. That suited me fine! We went to Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square. I got some good ones that night. Things were a bit quiet in the hotel when we got back. Bill and Bobbie retired, so I collected a couple of fans or so and we went to Dave Kyle's room and got him out of bed. I tried to talk him into going over to Paris with me and he was quite tempted. It was about 5 a.m by the time I got to sleep. [2]

Sunday April 17

Ron Bennett:

On the Sunday morning Keith Freeman demonstrated to anyone interested that his "Brandy For Breakfast" slogan is more than an empty one.

At the Annual General Meeting of the British SF Association, the legal position re. the Sandringham cancellation was discussed. It transpired that the BSFA has no written record of the transaction but that there is enough evidence to constitute a verbal contract which lays down that neither party could have cancelled the booking within a week of the convention. Accordingly, it was agreed that a solicitor's letter should be sent to the management of the Sandringham, explaining the position.

A scheme introducing postal ballots was discussed and the meeting moved on to the election of new officers for the coming year. Mike

Moorcock, ex-editor of the *Tarzan Adventures* comic magazine, and friend Gerry Mosdell (who had produced the Convention programme booklet) put forward their manifesto towards producing the BSFA's official organ, *Vector**, and Jim Groves, a member of the Science Fiction Club of London, did the same. On the ballot taken, Jim Groves narrowly defeated his rival duo and immediately announced that he was inaugurating a newsletter scheme for members, the first newsletter being scheduled for within a fortnight.

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* *With the aid of various other London fans Moorcock had edited the previous three issues and the one-off* Vector Explanation. *[Ed.]*

Ella A. Parker, editor of Orion, was elected as BSFA Secretary, and after appreciation had been expressed for the magnificent job done by Treasurer Archie Mercer, an appreciation echoed even by a non-member present, Archie was voted into office for the third year in succession. He stated that while he was honoured, he wished to make it clear that this would be his last year as Treasurer.

The election of BSFA Chairman caused some little discussion. Eric Jones and Arthur Thomson both declined nomination and finally Ina Shorrock beat Doc Weir on a straight vote.

Brian Aldiss, who received a plaque from the Detention *[1959 Detroit Worldcon]* Committee as Best New Writer of the Year, narrowly defeated veteran H. Ken Bulmer in the ballot for Association President. [3]

Bobbie Gray:

Room parties.... on Saturday night I gave them a miss. Had a feeling that I should be as wide-awake as possible for the BSFA meeting the following morning, which was just as well because soon after it started I found I was more or less chairing it, much to my surprise. Meanwhile, Bill had taken Don to see one of the traditional sights of London – Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park. [2]

Don Ford:

We got back to the hotel in time to hear Kettering voted as the site for next year's con. Ina Shorrock was voted in as BSFA Chairman, Brian Aldiss as Assoc. Pres, Archie Mercer as Treas., and definitely for the last year he says, and Jim Groves as publisher.

A goodly mob of us went out for lunch at the Moulin Rouge. We went downstairs and somehow or other I got into a conversation with the owner who looked to be Italian, He said he used to live in the U.S. until he got deported following his sentence. Been in England ever since. I asked

him what gang he used to be with and what he got sent up for. It was for bootlegging and he used to be with Capone's mob, he said.

I kept telling him what a nice set up he had for a casino down in this cellar, and asking him if he knew the Detroit Purple Gang and mentioned names of some of the gangsters who'd been in an article in *Life* some time back. When we left the restaurant, Carnell looked at me with awe and asked me how I knew so much about the gangsters in the U.S. "Next time you're in Cincinnati, Ted, let us take you to the hot spots in Northern Kentucky." I said.

Meanwhile back at the con, they were ready to go on with "This Is Your Fan Life" and planned to pick the victim by surprise. The word was leaked out that since Dave Kyle was now in London, Sandy Sanderson would be the victim. Eric Jones was to handle the taped effects and Eric Bentcliffe was the m.c. Norman Shorrock, it was told to Ted and I, was who the real victim was going to be. Ted was asked to work Norman's movie camera. So, he asked Norman to move next to him, on the ruse that the angle was better. Eric Jones asked Norman to come up and adjust the mike for the tape recorder and then Eric Bentcliffe had him on stage and a more surprised person than Norman couldn't be found.

Ted had some little difficulties with two cameras, so Peter West took over Norman's camera and bobbed out and in the first two rows of seats with camera in hand. He decided he needed a plug and reached for the one Eric Jones had on his tape recorder and narrowly missed getting backhanded. The show of Jones beating off West was almost as good as the one on stage. Eric had to alternately change speed and synchronize with Bentcliffe's script, while beating off Peter West. All in all, it was a wonderful production of a spoof of Norman Shorrock's life, which of course, the Liverpool and Cheltenham group conspired to do without Norman finding out. Even Ina kept her mouth shut, and who says women can't keep secrets? [2]

Sandy Sanderson:

Nickie – who had been brought by Vince – decided she needed changing during the next item (a talk on Karel Čapek by Doc Weir) so we all missed it. And anyone who doesn't believe it can sometimes take three people to change a baby, when said baby is determined to parade her nakedness round a con hotel, doesn't have any children! In the evening there was a TAFF auction conducted efficiently by Ron Bennett, during the course of which the audience was treated to the spectacle of an Atom monster parading in their midst. The costume by Don Geldart was worn by Innocent-Sex-Kitten Irene Potter. The programme ended with the showing

of a 16mm version of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* which provoked one or two quiet chuckles in the back rows... such as the time some character on the screen ran screaming down a street “The Flying Saucers have landed!!!” and Vince quietly remarked that he’d obviously recovered his Sense of Wonder. And the time somebody on the screen said “Goodbye” and Nickie spent the next five minutes waving her hand and saying “Ta-ta, ta-ta”. After that Ron took Vince and Nickie home again while Joy and I organised a short OMPA meeting in Ethel Lindsay’s room. [4]

Don Ford:

Out to supper with a group, again, we passed an outside telephone booth. I heard the phone ring and suggested to Ron Buckmaster that we answer it. He strung someone along at the other end with phrases like, “I’m sorry, the Duke is out.” etc. It was all we could do to keep from laughing and giving the joke away.

We got some drinks and set-ups *[mixers]* and went to Ella Parker’s room for a chat... Ted Carnell, Ella, Brian Jordan, Arthur Thomson and myself. Told a few jokes, talked about the state of British Fandom, etc. Arthur reminds me a lot of Frank Robinson... they both have a voice which is very similar in tone, they think alike and have the same sense of humour. I suggested that we could have a party in my room that night, but I didn’t have the capacity to hold the entire convention, I’d also brought along some B.S.S. cards that the CFG has used ever since 1953 and gave these to Arthur. He took charge of passing them out and figuring who to invite. The whole thing to come off later in the evening after we’d all visited about.

Ted had planned to go on home and left. A few minutes later I was down in the lobby when he called me over to where he and Dave Kyle were talking to a Miss Bellamy, a newspaper woman from New Hampshire somewhere. She was hipped on flying saucers and had noted the s-f con on the lobby bulletin board. It just so happened that she was on an European tour and was staying at the Kingsley. She related some of the sightings she’d written about in her newspaper work. The movie, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was now being shown in the con hall and after her taking a few notes for a possible column in her hometown newspaper, she adjourned to the con hall and Ted got his chance to dart out the door and head for home, now considerably later than he’d anticipated on leaving. [2]

Bobbie Gray:

The professional film stood the test of time fairly well and it was

during this film – just beforehand rather that we met an American girl, Ernestine Hope Bellamy, who had actually seen U.F.O.s. I had always kept an open mind about the things myself, but I was curious and we talked to her afterwards about it. And I should like to say right now that Miss Hope Bellamy was no crank, but a very intelligent young lady. [2]

Don Ford:

I watched the end of the movie and then circulated around a bit. A number of fans were leaving the con, now. Next stop was Ethel Lindsay's room where an OMPA gathering was in progress. [2]

Archie Mercer:

In spite of the absence of members who weren't staying at the hotel that night, the room was packed – there must have been about half the OMPA membership there, which is a pretty good proportion, and we had an interesting session. Eventually President Joy wound up the official proceedings of OMPA and we were told to go and fetch any bottles we had in order to convert the meeting into a room party. I went to fetch my Drambuie, then realised that there was still something missing.

"Hold on", I said as I slipped through the door again, "I've forgotten my glass."

Mike Moorcock was in the corridor outside, Did I want a glass? He had one right there. He knocked on a door, and Sandra Hall let us in. Mike shoved two bar-glasses into my hands, I thanked him and prepared to depart.

"While you're here," said Mike (or words to that effect) – and started talking. I answered. Two or three or five minutes later I picked up the glasses again and prepared to depart. Mike kept on talking, Sandra helping out occasionally. Eventually I gave in, produced the Drambuie, and we settled down for a session. An hour or two later, when THAT room party broke up, I returned to Ethel's and Audrey's room to find that it was still fairly lively – but with hardly any of those originally present. That's fandom for you – never any shortage of sidetracks, Dave Kyle was there showing binocular slides of his home – "Viewmaster" or something – 3D style. Looking at these, I discovered that I have something unsuspected in common with Dave – we both live in caravans. I told him that Phil Rogers was another. Dave said he'd met him over the week-end but hadn't suspected it either. [1]

Don Ford:

Ron Bennett, Sandy Sanderson, Eric Bentcliffe and myself adjourned to my room for a brief TAFF discussion. Mal Ashworth had left. We

discussed whether there should be any changes in the TAFF setup for the immediate future and after some discussion decided that only minor changes were necessary; that TAFF had worked in the past and should be able to do so in the future.

Next fans started drifting in and before long only standing room was available. Bob Parkinson auctioned off half his beard for TAFF and raised well over a pound I believe. I was chosen as the one to do the job and started hacking away with my razor, saying: “This reminds me of my old job...I used to be an orderly in a maternity ward.”

The hotel rang a couple of times asking to keep it quiet and finally the Bell Captain came up about 3 a.m. and asked me to break it up. It was late and since it was primarily a sedate hotel, I didn’t feel they were unreasonable about it. They were nice about it and I was getting a bit weary anyhow. So, with a flash of inspiration I turned to the crowd and in a confidential hoarse whisper said, “Quick everybody! Grab the booze and head for Dave Kyle’s room... room 524!” There was that fatal split second of indecision. I opened my room door and gave the nearest person a strong shove and propelled him out the door. Same to the next person and then like sheep following a judas goat they all ran pell mell up to Dave’s room.

I’d nearly completed the operation “scram” and was talking in muted tones to 3 or 4 fans still left when the phone rang. I didn’t answer it. Later a knock at the door. I didn’t answer that either. Finally a wrathful voice outside the door said, “MISTER FORD! This is the night manager. Please open your door immediately!” I opened and saw this cat in a silken robe, with a hair net on, rising up on his tippy toes looking indignant. I said, “I thought you were someone wanting to get in and I’ve nearly gotten them all out now.” He spluttered a bit, but when the others left, cooled off a bit. I then waited for him to tip toe back and slyly knock, himself, later on when the coast was clear, but I guess he figured I wasn’t his type. [2]

Bobbie Gray:

I did not count the number of people who were there, but every inch of space seemed to be filled up with fans. The party broke up about 3 a.m., I think, and the Con proper was over. [2]

Monday April 18

Don Ford:

Was up at nine and at Breakfast, Archie Mercer asked to see my receipt from the photo shop for the projector. I showed him and suddenly

he pays me the rental charges I'd paid. I was a bit hung over right then and by the time I'd collected my wits about me, he wouldn't take the money back. [2]

Archie Mercer:

The newly elected BSFA Committee had a hurried meeting in the bar-lounge, where among other things we agreed to let the Cheltenham circle organise the 1961 Con in good old Kettering. We also agreed that it would be a good idea for as many fans as possible to meet at Kettering this coming Whitsun in any case, to recover from the London Con. Came mid-day, and the fans dwindled and dwindled and then it was my turn and I dwindled too. Dave Kyle was standing outside the hotel with a cine-camera, catching the fans as they left. [1]

Don Ford:

The fans now seemed to be deserting the hotel in droves. It began to get lonesome. Eric Jones left, saying they'd see me in Cheltenham on Tuesday. The Liverpool mob left with a reminder that they'd see me the next week-end. I reached in my coat pocket and found a letter Dave Kyle had given me the night before, saying he'd gotten it at the Sandringham Hotel when he was there. It was from Walt Willis inviting me to come to Belfast. With the scheduling I now had, such a trip was impossible.

The Clarkes had wanted me to see the Aldermaston March on Easter Monday. I really didn't have too much desire to see this event when I came over, but now with fans gone and time on my hands, I decided I might as well go and photograph the crowd anyway. The Clarkes said they'd be on the steps at St. Martin's. I told Bill and Bobbie Gray I'd be in the square somewhere and to look for me in a spot where I'd get a straight on view at the column.

They found me, later, on the wall at the National Gallery. After I was there about an hour, a bobby told me I'd have to get off. I did, feeling no use creating an International incident. The natives protested. I searched about for another vantage point and could find none. By now, there were over 50,000 people in the square. I drifted back to my original area and watched the arguing. An elderly couple, their faces red with rage were protesting loudly. Two more bobbies came up for reinforcements and they were apologetic but insistent. It finally boiled down to the fact that the curator of the gallery had requested the people get off. This woman said that if he'd come out, personally and tell them to move, she'd get down; otherwise no. The Bobbies shrugged their shoulders and left. I told this woman that I now felt badly...I was the only one who'd moved and now

I'd lost my place. In fact there was someone in it now. The crowd made this person give me my place back, while they boosted me back up on the wall.

Next, a man alongside of me asked me who I thought our next President would be. I told him I really couldn't say, but that to me the indications were strong that Kennedy would win the Democratic nomination and Nixon the Republican nomination. In a contest between these two men I felt that Nixon would win, but it could only be a guess on my part. This seemed to anger him and he said that his choice was Adlai Stevenson. I didn't pay much attention to him and kept taking photos of the crowd and of the marchers who were now coming into the square. He then proceeded to tell me what was wrong with the U.S. and what all should be done. [2]

Bobbie Gray:

Before the Con started we had suggested to Don that he might find it interesting to take his camera up to Trafalgar square on Easter Monday as the anti-nuclear people would be arriving from Aldermaston. It seems that a number of people suggested it to Don during the Con, too. Anyway Don went to the Square ahead of us and Bill and I said we'd meet him by the statue of George Washington. When we arrived there about fifty thousand people already there waiting to see the marchers arrive and Bill said we would never find Don in that lot. I spotted him half a minute later on the steps of the National Gallery, to Bill's surprise. We went over to him and found he had got himself comfortably ensconced on the railings at the top of the steps where he had a good view of the whole square.

More and more people arrived so that by the time the actual marchers reached Trafalgar Square there were already fifty thousand onlookers, including some who climbed on to the roof of St. Martins-in-the-Field. As there were forty-five thousand marchers (Whitehall was a mass of people from wall to wall and end to end) it meant that at one point there were one hundred thousand people in the square.. Mind you, a good many thousands of the marchers had not come all the way from Aldermaston – the exhibitionists and the jerks had joined the column in Whitehall and just beforehand (and looked a damned sight dirtier and scruffier than the genuine people who had done the full march). Although I think the whole thing is pointless, I did feel it a shame that the really sincere people should have these slobs tacking themselves on and probably getting judged by the unwashed beatniks in their midst. My views were the same as Don on the march – that it would not do any good, but if people wanted to go ahead and demonstrate why shouldn't they. I have heard that there will not be a

march next year as it had served its purpose, but perhaps the organisers took a jaundiced look at what had attached themselves to the march and decided that next year the beatniks and exhibitionists could damn well stage their own show. But I must say here that the march was extremely well organised and although an enormous number of people had turned up to have a look at the marchers there were, as far as I know, no brawls of any kind.

The three of us were making our way out of the Square when there on the steps of St. Martins-in-the-Fields were all the fans from the Convention who had not yet had to think about catching trains or coaches. [2]

Sandy Sanderson:

On the Monday we organised a mini-con on the steps of St Martin's. This was originally planned to get Don Ford along to see the end of the Aldermaston March – Ron Bennett was bringing him from the hotel and Ron and Daphne were driving us up from Inchmery. Word got passed around, and in the end we had twenty fans there, tho' not all at the same time. Don got a number of photos and was moved on by the police... and after watching the crowds and the marchers for some time (there were 30,000 in Trafalgar Square when we left) a dozen of us – Inchmery, Buckmasters, Bennett, Ford, Forsyth, Jordan, Ethel Lindsay, Frances and Ella Parker – ended up at Inchmery again. It was a quiet evening – we had enough drink in to go round and in an "after the con" atmosphere I showed a film of the 1957 Worldcon taken by Ted Carnell, and a film of several US cons taken by Les Croutch during which Don identified the faces for us. Conversation was slow, easy and relaxed – tho' there was plenty of it – and when the party broke up Ron Buckmaster acted as chauffeur for most of the people present. [4]

Don Ford:

At Inchmery that night people were passing around cards to be signed which they were going to mail to their friends. Remembering I hadn't written Madle a card as yet, I wrote on mine "Dear Bob: Your address book working out swell. Having wonderful time. Don." Then, I had all the women sign it and they added brief comments like: "Come back Bob, I miss you." "Do you remember? I do." I'm sure Bob appreciated me thinking of him while I was on my trip. [2]

Tuesday, April 19

Don Ford:

At breakfast this morning I saw Miss Bellamy of the flying saucers and we talked about the Aldermaston March of the previous day. She thought they made quite a collection of oddballs. I gave her my address, asking her to send me a copy of any columns she may have had published about the con or the March. Said she would but I'll wait and see.

I packed up my gear and reluctantly had to abandon the British apple box Liverpool had presented to me at the con, complete with nails and a rubber hammer to assemble it with. The hotel housekeeper was delighted when I told her that she could keep the rubber hammer. What she'll do with it, I don't know. I turned in the projector and screen and got my deposit back and settled up my hotel bill. Got some film and the camera shop owner examined my camera and lenses. German and Japanese imports are restricted except in certain cases. I saw Les Flood to say goodbye to him and then settled down in the lobby to await Roberta Gray. [2]

Ron Bennett:

The 1960 National Convention will take its place in fannish history as a gathering of surprises. Already nicknamed by some as "The Quiet-Con" this convention was a fight against the odds from start to finish, and in so far as the convention was held and an enjoyable time was had by all, it may be safely assumed that fandom won through. [3]

[1] *Cactus* #5 (May 1960, ed. Sture Sedolin)
[2] *TAFF Baedeker* (TAFF Report) by Don Ford (with contributions by Ella Parker & Bobbie Gray)
[3] *Skyrack* #17 (April 1960, ed. Ron Bennett)
[4] *Aporrheta* #17 (May/June 1960, ed. Sandy Sanderson)

10. Kettering 5

The fifth convention to be held at the George Hotel in Kettering took place over the Whitsun weekend in 1960. So far as I'm aware it was never given an official name. It was – deliberately – a minicon and only a dozen people attended: Ella Parker, Archie Mercer, Jim Groves, Jim Linwood, Alan Rispin, Ted Forsyth, Bob Parkinson, Keith Freeman, Ken & Joyce Slater, Dave Eggleton and George Locke. The following report is by **George Locke:**

Friday 3rd June

The difficulty with the army, more than corporals bawling at you, getting boots to shine like mirrors and getting into the habit of saluting anything that moves and painting anything that doesn't, is of course the complete lack of certainty. Thus, when I was called into the Medical Corps a shade over a week before Easter, I hadn't a clue as to whether they'd let me home or not over the holiday. They didn't, after keeping us on tenterhooks for a few days. So I was doubly dubious at the prospect of getting Whitsun off and of attending the mini-con which was to be held at Kettering.

About three weeks before Whitsun, hopes were not too high. The week before, we'd first been promised a 48 hour pass, then had it turned down for no apparent reason. According to the book of rules, we should not be kept at camp for two consecutive public holidays. But what the rules say and what the army does are two completely different things. My big chance for finding out came one Friday when our squad was on fatigues. It had been my lot to report to the dreaded guard room. The Regimental Police are not like the civilian police – these are killers. But I was lucky, and they sent me off to report to the Chief Clerk's office a couple of huts along. Here, I started making discreet inquiries as to which company would be on duty over the holiday. A corporal informed me that he thought it was our company which would be staying. I dropped the envelope I was steaming an unused stamp off of. I was indignant.

"Hey, what's the big idea? We were landed with it over Easter, and all."

The Corporal shrugged. "Ask the CO. But I'm not sure; I'll check for you later."

It was then that I began to hate the Army. I knew there'd be no point

checking – it was just our luck. C company was the one fated to be hauled off in a flying saucer that wanted some specimens, to be sent to Christmas Island en bloc, and to be given an official leave the day war breaks out. First Easter, then our 48....

It came as an anticlimax when it turned out to be E company which would stay, not ours.

After all the uncertainty, we were released with no more than the occasional threat of a leave stoppage. I arrived at Kilburn around five in the afternoon, which immediately earned me a dressing down from Ella; she'd been expecting me nearer three. I was going to say how I'd spent that part of the afternoon visiting some of my mates at the hospital where I used to work, but decided it would be unwise under the circumstances. Ella did her best to replace some of the food I'd been missing for the past eight weeks. Then, with Ted Forsyth, we trooped off in the middle of the rush hour to catch the 6:30 from St. Pancras to Kettering. We also hoped to meet Jimmy Groves, but he was nowhere to be seen. So as the train was rapidly filling with people, Ted and myself were ordered to find a smoker and bag four seats.

A smoker?

Among the very last compartments, we found one capable of holding four of us. It wasn't a smoker. Ted, who is cautious when it comes to bending Ella's orders, was very worried. Thinking at least I did have the British army behind me, I said: "You go back and tell her we're fixed up, and that it's my responsibility. And, while you're about it, try and swipe her cigarettes off her, so she won't mind what compartment we're in." And I sat down, surveying the only other passenger in the compartment. He was a heavily built man of about thirty with the general physique and expression of a gorilla with neuralgia and wore a blazer with a badge on it. The badge said that he belonged to the Royal Army Military Police....

I made myself small in a corner, and tried to think up a way to let the others know that they were not to mention my Army life.

A couple of minutes before the train was due to depart, Ella, Ted and Jimmy came along, Jimmy clutching to his breast a large bag which contained, presumably, the official documents of the BSFA....

The next few moments are not very clear – I remember a certain amount of shouting and screaming. When I awoke, I saw Ella glaring at me, with a fitting look on her face. After a while she calmed down and became almost plaintive, as she asked: "What am I going to do for a smoke?"

Jimmy Groves, possessed of a wonderful knack for the practical,

suggested that Ella stick the cigarette through the keyhole of the compartment door and smoke it with the business end outside.

"Jimmy dear," said Ella, "I've just thought of something that needs making when we get back home."

"Yes?"

"A piece of wood about seven feet long, stood vertically, with a horizontal bar fixed to it. A piece of rope with a noose at the end of the bar. And I'd like you to carve your name somewhere on it.... "

We arrived at Kettering, which turned out to be a fair sized town. In the walk to the long-suffering George Hotel, we paused to observe a notice on a garden gate saying: "David Kyle, MRCVS, Veterinary Surgeon." Nobody had arrived when we booked in, so we wandered off in search of something to eat.

There was one café open. I was quite eager to go in – there's very little about egg and chips which can go wrong – but the others were more dubious. However, in we went, and were attended by a young girl of about thirteen. She took our orders, then, always after the extra few shillings, asked us if we wanted anything to drink. Jimmy and Ella asked for teas, and Ted and myself plumped for orange juice. I added – "with lots of ice." The weather was hot. The girl vanished for a minute, then came back.

"I'm sorry. The ice machine has gone bust. The defroster won't work."

"What matter," Ella – kind, considerate Ella Parker – said. "Give him a chopper and he'll chop some out for himself." "Him" being, unfortunately, me.

I groaned, but as this was the only way of getting some ice, I followed the girl to the fridge. Faced with a solid block of ice, I was given a puny little knife and told by the girl (who had decided that we were amiable company) to get on with it; her mother, three other customers, and the cat wanted some as well. I was also told not to break the knife. I started hacking away, to the massed band of the other *Cry* letterhacks chortling away in the background.

Eventually, with the help of another man, and after chipping a small piece off the knife, I obtained some ice. The girl very kindly put it into a little glass dish, and carried it to our table. She then said, "We haven't any orange."

I began to feel as though the fates were not working for us, or, at least, were fast asleep. "We'll have some coke, then," I sighed. I was determined to get that ice.

During the main course – yes, egg and chips – the girl hovered around

us. It was obvious from the changing expressions on her face that she was going through some tumultuous process of thought. Eventually, as we were busy eating, she came out with it. “Which one of you’s her husband?”

I swallowed three chips, Jimmy choked on a piece of egg, and Ted dropped his peas on the floor. I won’t say what Ella did. We vigorously denied everything, the most vociferous of us being Ella, who chose this moment to add a few comments on what she really thought of us. The girl digested this with the placidity of a cow who’s just decided it’s finished its quota of milk for the day, and looked at me. She looked at me for a long time. Then she said, “You must be her son.”

I decided it wouldn’t be worthy trying to explain – I’d end up as her blasted mother, next – and suggested that while she – the girl, that is, not Ella – was still floating round, she might as well fetch us our sweet. We all plumped for fruit salad. Especially, I noted, Ella, who placed hers on another table, a considerable distance from me. I finished mine quickly, and looked at Ella, then at her fruit salad. Ella looked at me. She shook her head. I sat with my spoon poised. I knew she’d have to bring the bowl of fruit back onto our table to eat it, not being blessed with a trunk like Cecil’s. Then she did, she slapped a plate over it, and, every now and again, when I wasn’t looking, she sneaked a mouthful.

I am of the opinion – and I record it quite freely – that Ella Parker is a Glutton, and was ashamed of the fact that day....

Saturday 4th June

Saturday morning dawned bright and cheerful and hangover free. We were expecting various others to come, but as there were several meetings of an official nature – BSFA, Convention Committee, and the like – and as we were not involved in any of them, Ted and I decided to wander off and return when they were over. I’ve always had a passion for nosing around old second-hand bookshops, and dragged Ted along with me.

Then we decided to go to Leicester. Ted had no objections to hitching it, and so we set off for the outskirts. Outside the town, we reached a suitable crossroads, and waited there. And then Ted...

Ted is a fairly young Scotsman with a face very much like that of a kindly gnome. But when he put on his sunglasses.... “Take ’em off, Ted!”

He looked at me bemused. I explained, as delicately as I could, that sunglasses transformed him into a picture of a simpering psychopathic killer after the style of Rod Steiger, and that we wouldn’t stand a chance of

picking up a lift. He took them off, and very soon a car picked us up and dropped us five miles up the road, from where a very talkative travelling salesman took us the rest of the 22 miles.

Leicester was a much bigger town than I thought, almost the size of Belfast; one incident pretty well convinced me that somehow we'd crossed the Irish sea. We'd spent quite a while in this shop when I noticed one of the Pogo books. I expressed a mild curiosity in it, asking if he had any more. He had one other volume – priced somewhere about 30/- – a ridiculous price – and launched into a voluntary tirade on how he'd ordered a complete set from America for a customer. Could this customer have been a fan?

"Can you remember his name?" I asked, "You see, quite a number of our friends read these books, and you never know...."

The man thought. "I can't remember offhand. He was a policeman...."

"A policeman! What did he look like?"

"Rather tall. With a whacking big handlebar.... "

"Was his name Berry?"

He shook his head. "I'm not sure. It might have been."

John, were you ever in Leicester, or have a twin brother serving in the constabulary there?

Back at Kettering, we met Archie Mercer, Alan Rispin, Jhim Linwood and Keith Freeman; the rest of the evening, and a good bit of the night, was spent in drinking, fannish natter, and, later, in wandering around the now deserted Kettering.

Sunday 5th June

Sunday morning there were several official-type meetings to be held – the sum total, in actual fact. The four of us who were not involved departed for Wicksteed Park and its boating lake. Ted Forsyth and myself were the only *Cry* letterhacks, being opposed, in a way, by Alan Rispin and Jhim Linwood. However, we were not even mildly hostile until we decided to hire two canoes. Alan and Jhim clambered aboard one, and Ted and myself struggled to keep the other stable.

The Rispin/Linwood craft left the shore first, and we followed. When we felt that they were in range, and with Ted keeping us stable, I lifted the paddle and slapped the water with it. The salvo of displaced water shot towards the enemy. There was panic; Rispin and Linwood tried to avoid the deadly fire, and the canoe capsized and sank. For a moment, two figures floundered helplessly amid the pieces of broken timber, paddles

and oil, then they were gone....

The lake was only a couple of feet deep, and the defeated fans crawled out onto the bank. We retrieved the sunken canoe, but found we weren't going to get any prize money for salvaging the thing.

We found Rispin and Linwood sitting disconsolately on a very low seat listening to a grey-haired, motherly old woman lecture on the dangers of paddling too freely in the children's pond. Ah, victory was sweet....

When we returned to the hotel, we found Ken Slater and his wife had come up for the day; the party moved out to Wicksteed Park once more, returned just in time to beat a thunderstorm, and eased off into a party in Ella's room. Next morning, on the way to town, I noticed that the David Kyle sign was no longer on the gate. And now as I type these last few lines, I can hear Jimmy in Kilburn hammering at a wall. The Parker Penitentiary has another souvenir.

– *Cry* #142 (August 1960, ed. Buz and Elinor Busby)

1961

11. LXIcon Newsletters and Programme

The LXIcon Newsletters – what we would call Progress Reports today – were printed on a single foolscap sheet. The first was single-sided, the other two double sided. They were undated. The first – which was sent out with Ron Bennett's newszine Skyrack, *the* BSFA Newsletter, *and Ken Slater's Fantast (Medway) Catalogue – carried news of a change of venue:*

1961 British Science Fiction Association Convention Newsletter No.1

The vote at the 1960 Convention indicated that Kettering should be the venue for the 1961 Con, and consequently the Con Committee for 1961 went ahead with preparations. As with all Cons, things didn't go smoothly. This newsletter was ready to be sent out in July, except that the George hadn't confirmed the booking – later the manager wrote and said that as structural alterations were being made to the George he could not accept our booking – so we had to start looking round for another Hotel....

As most of the Con Committee live in or around Cheltenham and as this part of the country hasn't suffered a SF Con, plus the fact that we are served by both mainline train AND coach services, investigation went ahead locally. Finally we found the Hotel which matches the George in almost every way. It is just a little larger than the George (52 beds), it has a night porter, it does not object to noisy room parties and it has a *[unreadable]* Hall which will be equipped with a bar! There are also hotels in the vicinity which can act as overflow hotels, but we know that YOU will want to stay in the main one, won't you?

Where is it? Oh, yes... THE NEW COUNTY HOTEL, SOUTHGATE STREET, GLOS and, just like the George, its charges are 25/- Bed & Breakfast.

Already, the Con Committee, plus the BSFA Committee, will fill a fifth of the Hotel, so get your application form in early for the New County – send it in NOW – and if you want more forms then write to Keith Freeman.

The overflow Hotels are the BELL HOTEL (charges 27/6 B&B) the

WELLINGTON (charges 22/- B&B) and THE LAMPHREY (charges 18/6 B&B); all close to the New County.

By the time the third and final Newsletter appeared the main con hotel was full. This is also where Kingsley Amis was announced as the Guest of Honour. Archie Mercer was the Fan Guest of Honour, but this doesn't appear to have been announced until the Programme Book appeared.

Programme

All programme items are liable to rearrangement or change without notice, and the times are intended as a guide. In order to assist members, the item number posted on the blackboard outside the con hall relates to the number on the left of all programme items in the event of any change.

Note. Off Trails Magazine Publishers Association. Young S-F Readers Group. Please watch the notice board for location and times of these meetings.

Friday March 31st.

In order to put on a fuller programme this year, the convention will be starting on the Friday night instead of Saturday. For your pleasure, and with your co-operation, the convention committee wishes to present the following items for your entertainment:

8:00 p.m. WELCOME from the chairman, who will introduce *some* of the more notable personalities present, and tell the rest of you the scheme of things to come. This will be followed as soon as possible by the

8:30 p.m. (at the latest) FILMS A programme of professional and amateur (non-fan) science fiction films for your enjoyment including:

Doomsday
Target Luna
Five to Five

After the film show, this will be your opportunity to circulate... to renew old friendships and make new friends... go and find out who's hiding behind that con badge!

Saturday April 1st.

All right! Everybody up for the first item at:

1) 10:30 a.m. TYPO! being the magnum opus of the Cheltenham Science Fiction group. This must not be missed. For the sake of the producer, nobody, but nobody will be allowed to leave the hall after the commencement of this item (Except the Producer)

2) 11:00 a.m. AN ALIEN IN THE ACADEMY (OR IS S.F. ENGLISH LITERATURE?) a talk by Mr. G.D. Doherty (editor of *Aspects of S.F.* – Murray 1960)

3) 12:00 noon LUNCH See elsewhere in this booklet for the official list of suitable Eating Houses in Gloucester.

4) 2:00 p.m. Everybody back for the supercolossal, fabulous, DON FORD SLIDE-SHOW specially imported from the USA for the occasion

5) 3:00 p.m. Brian Aldiss introduces KINGSLEY AMIS who will address the assembly, this will inevitably be followed by a discussion or questions....

6) 4:00 p.m. TWENTY FANNISH QUESTIONS Question master Bob Parkinson – assisted by – Ethel Lindsay – panel members will be levered from the audience. This should be good for a laugh!

Tea and biscuits will be available at the back of the hall at the end of this item.... to put you in good voice for –

7) 4:30 p.m. GOING... GOING... Auction of books, magazines, artwork, plus any other bric-a-brac like tape recorders which happen to be left in the vicinity. Bring your own money

INTERLUDE, until...:

7:00 p.m. Fancy dress will be worn for the...
TRANSGALACTIC TOURISTS PARTY.
Prizes*******Music*******Fannish Games*******SF Novelties
This will be the greatest fannish party of the year!

Sunday April 2nd.

1) 11:00 a.m. AGM OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

Agenda:

1. Minutes of the last A.G.M.

2. To receive the Hon.Secretary’s report.
3. To receive the Hon.Treasurer’s report.
4. To receive the Hon. Librarian’s report.
5. Committee for 1961/62 will take office.
6. Any other business.

2) 12:30 p.m. LUNCH

3) 1:50 p.m LONDON PRODUCTION the Science Fiction Club of London will present.... well, come along and see.

4) 2:00 p.m. THIS IS YOUR (FAN) LIFE which, this year, will be concerned with the innermost secrets of xxxx xxxxx and will be compered by Eric Bentcliffe.

5) 3:00 p.m. ...GONE! the TAFF auction conducted by Ron Bennett. Everything must be sold. Bring anyone’s money

6) 4:00 p.m. THE INITIAL QUIZ devised by Ken Slater... come and win a prize for using your grey matter. Alternatively competitors will be selected bodily! Peter Mabey will consult the reference books....

7) 4:30 p.m. Taping of interviews, goodwill messages etc.... Prize-givings... everything else we’ve forgotten. Come along and see what’s going on....

8) 5:00 p.m. BREAK FOR TEA

9) 6:30 p.m. Eric Bentcliffe gives a... TAFF TALK

10) 7:00 p.m. Some voted it the best.... *Forbidden Planet* starring Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis... and full supporting programme.

This will be followed by closing addresses which, undoubtedly, will be followed by room parties and like that....

12. From the Kingsley to Kingsley Amis

LXICON (pronounced “Lexicon”) the 1961 UK National Science Fiction Convention – the third to be run under the auspices of the BSFA – took place over the weekend of Friday 31st March – Monday 3rd April, 1961. It was held at the New County Hotel in Gloucester. Guest of Honour was Kingsley Amis and fan Guest of Honour was Archie Mercer. The committee was Eric Jones, Keith Freeman, Tony Walsh, Bob Parkinson, and Ethel Lindsay. The number of fans who attended was in the 80-100 range.

The formal programme was extended to include Friday for the first time, with a number of films being shown then.

LXICON saw the first appearance of the Eddie Jones-designed con badge that would also be used for the next three Eastercons, with only the colour changing. The con committee also wore badges identifying them as “CON COM” but these look to have been hand-written on cardboard blanks.

Friday 31st March

Joe Patrizio:

At 6:30 on Friday morning, Ted Forsyth, Bruce Burn and myself set out for the Lexicon. Bruce had managed to hire a nine seater van for the trip, and as it turned out it was just as well that we managed to get one as big as that. Apart from personal stuff the three of us took along a load of synthetic armour for use at the fancy dress party. This took up quite a bit of room, and as we still had to pick up the rest of the London crew, a fervent prayer went up from the Ferndale trinity. All to no avail. We did collect Pat Kearney, with only a minor difficulty; Bruce had to drag him out of the bath, ignoring the screams of protest that we were not due for another hour yet. The Parker Pen was the next stop and, of course, Ella had only just got up, and was busy ramming breakfast down her guests’ throats. While loading operations commenced, any casual observer would have thought that we were going to relieve Gloucester not just attend a convention there. The final blow was struck when Ella, after seeing us load three large hold-alls, said, “Well, now that you’ve got the food on, you can

help me put my own stuff away". Luckily Roy Sheppard, a BSFA member, turned up and offered to help. Thanking him very profusely, we hastily threw some cases into his car, pushed Ella in after them, and roared away into the west before Ella could regain her sense to complain about the set-up.

In the van, in addition to those already mentioned were, Ethel Lindsay (SFCoL *[SF Club of London]* Chairman), Jim Groves (SFCoL Hon. Sec.) and Don Geldart, the club's tame army sergeant, who put in a power of work on the SFCoL display table. It would be a waste of time to say much about the journey as it was uneventful, although surprisingly speedy and pleasant in spite of the cramped conditions. One ironical note though... after travelling the 105 miles with little in the way of traffic problems, and remember this was Good Friday notorious for hold-ups, we got stuck just two hundred yards from the hotel door, and were held up for half an hour.

We finally booked into the New County Hotel. Being the first to arrive we proceeded to give the staff a taste of what was to come by hauling in a great quantity of odds and ends, and dragging them into one room, out again, along the corridor, into another room, with a quick dash down to the bar every now and-then. Everything stowed, Ted and I went to find Bruce. Room 18 was where we had tucked him away, so that is where we headed for. Arriving I banged loudly on the door. What looked suspiciously like a half dressed female stuck head and shoulders round the door. In a heartfelt screech she said, "Am I not to have any peace today?" I stood there with my mouth open, about the only time at the con I was to be speechless. This wasn't the hirsute New Zealander we all knew so well. No! by God it wasn't. I recovered enough to mumble an apology, and hastily dispersed from the scene, dragging Ted, still in state of shock, behind me.

Meandering aimlessly we ran into Jim Groves, who it seemed had been given one room only to have it snatched away from him. Another room had been assigned, and he had just got all his luggage in when Brian Aldiss arrived. It seems that the hotel had fouled up the bookings and there was no room for Brian. Jim's services were immediately offered (by Ethel Lindsay) and Jim found himself homeless again. Ted and I helped Jim remove his cases. Brian was very apologetic about all this, and kept saying how sorry he was as he joyfully threw Jim's luggage out into the corridor. They did find Jim a room in the end... it was Audrey Eversfield's. However Jim was bitterly disappointed when he found out that they wouldn't let him stay after Audrey arrived the following day.

Down at the bar we found almost all London fandom trying to explain fandom to Geoff Doherty, a new BSFA member. He seemed pretty impressed and surprised. That such a group existed, and was asking a lot of pertinent questions, the answers to which he was to put to a good use later. We all adjourned to a Chinese restaurant for food, very good it was too. Much refreshed we made our way back to start our hardworking part of the convention. This was the setting up of the SFCoL table. Don Geldart had done most of the hard work already by making posters, models and planning a suitable layout. Ted and I helped with actually putting it together, while Bruce was busy at the OMPA table, and Jim at the BSFA table. The main items on our table were models of a rocket, with launching rig, personnel and transport. The smaller ship and space station were suspended in a frame against a black background, which was very effective. Whilst Don was busy setting these up, I was stringing together letters, which Don had cut out, to form the name of our club. These spanned across about ten feet and when they were up we were all satisfied that anybody who came into the hall would at least know who we were.

It was now time to start our advertising campaign. This year the club made an all out drive to sell the Combozine, which had been specially produced for the occasion. We had adverts which were parodies of current mundane ads such as “Top people read the Combozine”, “Unzip a Combozine” and “You’re never alone with the SFCoL Combozine”. Don had printed over a hundred cards with the inscription “Get the SFCoL Combozine Now” and these were liberally sprinkled round the hall, into people’s pockets, and many other likely and unlikely places. Anyone looking at someone else’s display was likely to be confronted with one of the cards. Our greatest success was with Norman Shorrock who after removing cards from the Liverpool stand about a dozen times without ever seeing anybody put one there, came and begged to be allowed to buy a copy, whereupon we presented him with a free copy as he was an honorary member. Ted proved just how unbiased we were by writing on Norman’s little card “We also recommend *Bastion*”; a little gesture that left Norman obviously unmoved.

We set off with Ron Bennett to find something to eat, and just when we were about to order, in walked Dave Kyle. [1]

Ron Bennett:

Dave and Ruth Kyle were welcome visitors to the convention and are based in this country until the end of May. They will probably be taking a side trip over to the Continent. Dave was last at a convention in this country only last year but we haven’t seen Ruth since the London

WorldCon in 1957. Ruth searched diligently for matzoball soup and Dave showed, at a room party, the cine shots he took at last year's London Convention, shots which had improved several thousand percent over the films he showed at last year's con and which are now only 100% perfect. [2]

Joe Patrizio:

Those who have met Dave will know what sort of a sense of humour he has. I think "sharp" is the word. Bennett is no slouch in the art of wise-cracking either. By unvoiced mutual consent Dave and Ron started a bait-the-waitress campaign, as a substitute, I suppose, for the lack of a floor show. Unfortunately they had picked on the wrong person, and soon they were hard put to it to keep up with her, much less get the better of her in high-powered cross-talk. I was all for hurrying back to catch the official opening, but Ron kept on saying that never in the history of the world had a con started on time. Nevertheless I made my way to the con hall, where in spite of Ron's assurances that no con had ever started on time, this one had.

When I got into the con hotel, Eric Jones was introducing interesting con attendees. He then said as there was nobody else to introduce he would get on with the programme. Dead on cue the door opened and Eric added "Except for our Guest of Honour, Kingsley Amis". A really wonderful entrance, which couldn't have been improved upon even with rehearsal, Originally the programme was to start with three films, which the committee thought would help non-fans get into the mood of things quicker. Unfortunately the projectionist went somewhat berserk and kept on showing an almost unending stream of pretty poor films, except for a good one, which no-one understood. Hours later, or so it seemed, the lights went up and everyone heaved a sigh of relief, and made preparations to enjoy themselves.

Things started quietly for me, in the lounge talking with Ron and Norman Shorrock, we were joined by Ian McAulay, carrying the inevitable glass of lager. Norman and Ron had a duel with stamp tweezers, but other than this everybody seemed content to gather their energies in readiness for the long night ahead. We went to a party in Peter Mabey's room, about ten others were already there. All pretty quiet, as they were listening to Paddy Roberts on tape. Dave Hale was on the bed with about six others, trying to seduce Alan Rispin's girl, Diane, who was dropping hints (like kicking him in the ribs) that she wasn't too keen on the idea. Alan was lying there with a silly grin on his face, and a hat of the type worn by men who want to get ahead, on the back of his head. [1]

Ella Parker:

The series of parties began in the room of Alan Rispin. We were having the whale of a time when someone knocked for admission – or so we thought. Our first impulse was to shout: “drop dead”, it’s as well we didn’t because on being told to enter, the countenance of an irate tenant was disclosed demanding that we allow his 2 yrs old child to get some sleep that night. No sense of the fitness of things, some people. Being our first night in the hotel it was obvious that if we didn’t want the party atmosphere to dissipate entirely we would have to move to another room. Among the assembled crowd I can’t remember who it was called out the number of the next room we should grace with our company, but the room turned out to belong to Eddie Jones.

Eddie was lodged in a single, single room, if you know what I mean. It was already quite crowded when I arrived but still plenty of room for more as we gauge these things. Ian McAulay had seated himself on a piece of the furniture which ensured him of space to breathe if not of comfort and as I was standing next to him it meant that each time the door opened to admit even more fen I had to lean far over him to allow them in. A little of this was too much for Ian and he gave up his seat in favour of standing and taking his chance in the melee. I didn’t waste any time. Before he’d had the chance to decide the best place to stand I had occupied his vacated place on the furniture. It was now Bob Parkinson’s turn to do the leaning act every time the door opened which was frequently.

I am bound to miss someone out as it was difficult to see exactly who was there, but from where I was sitting I could see Tony Walsh and Audrey Eversfield standing as near to the window as they could get without actually going out of it. The crush later became so bad that Audrey passed out, more from the crush of people than from anything she’d had to drink. Going round the room from the right-hand side and sitting on the floor next to the wash basin there was Peter Mabey. Peter was next to the foot of the bed sitting on which we had: Ina Shorrock, Ted Tubb, Sandra Hall, and the room on the bed immediately in front of them was occupied at different times by various people. At the head of the bed and immediately in front of the door was standing: Ian McAulay, Joe Patrizio and Bob Parkinson. On the floor just in front of me was a higgledy-piggledy of bodies inextricably mixed. The heads I saw belonged to Don Geldart, Ethel Lindsay, who had been pushed into the room with such force that she’d landed among the crowd on the floor without a hope of getting up again without a major operation being performed on her and some of the others holding her down, and Brian Jordan. This little lot were

sitting on the legs of Jhim Linwood, Alan Rispin and his girl friend Diane – I never did discover her surname.

So far I have only mentioned a few of those who were at that particular party as the crowd kept ebbing and flowing. I do know that at one point in the evening someone counted noses and discovered there were 40 fen in the room! Through it all Eddie sat on part of the bed looking so forlorn; all he wanted was the chance to go to bed and sleep. I gave up fairly early in the proceedings going to my room about 2:30 a.m. I know there were parties on the go for much longer than that, but there was the rest of the weekend to go. [3]

Joe Patrizio:

I sat next to Brian Jordan, who offered an almost empty bottle of Brandy. I, of course, refused and delivered my speech on the evils of alcohol...I don't like Brandy. I was then shown a glass with a ¼ inch of liquid, and told "That's all the Drambuie there is". Not liking this either, I poured it on Dave Hale's head. I got the impression he was not too keen on the stuff either. Things seemed to go with a swing after this, everybody indulging in high quality fan-talk. I then took an intense dislike to Alan's hat. I grabbed it, dropped it on the floor and stood on it. Soon there was a queue of people waiting to stand on Alan's hat, much to his complete disinterest. The idea grew that it would be a good thing to auction it for TAFF. Ron immediately took this up and called for bids. These were a bit slow in coming, and 1/- was the highest anybody was prepared to go for the monstrosity. Ron was trying everything in the book to get the bidding up, he turned to me and said, "I will even accept postal bids". Reaching for the nearest typewriter I hurriedly typed a note to say I had no intention of bidding. Ron was a bit peeved at the wasted time. Then came his most brilliant idea – group bids. The hat was passed round and everybody contributed to the total, even Alan, we found that TAFF was richer by 12/- ! Now came the tricky part, who was to get the hat? Dianne made some silly suggestion about giving it back to Alan, but was shouted down, when I made the obvious suggestion that we each have a piece. Scissors appeared from nowhere, and Ron divided it up. I managed to snatch the hat band which hangs proudly on the wall before me as I write. Even Alan got a bit...

It was rather noisy by now, and made noisier by a banging on the door. It was the harbinger of our first complaint. One of the permanent guests had seemingly had enough of the racket, and started laying down the law about the right to get some sleep etc. Mumbling curses quietly under our breath, we departed for more sociable parts. Ella decided to get

some sleep, as did Ted and some others, even though it was only 1:30 a.m., but the rest of us did not go for that. As we wandered down the corridor, we bumped into Norman Shorrock, who waved a bottle of something at us and said there was a party in his room.

There were quite a few people there, most of the Liverpool Group, Ruth and Dave Kyle, and lots more too blurred to be seen properly. Dave was preparing to show the film he had taken of the London con of the year before. Dave and Norman did a great job of showing it under conditions far from ideal, the room was small and there was no screen. Everyone enjoyed it and were disappointed when it finished. Then Ina decided that she wasn't as comfortable as she might be, and that she would feel better in slacks. The assembled male faction could see no reason for her not changing into them, and made their findings clear to Ina. Accepting the roars as a challenge, Ina said "Oh, so you think I can't!", and jumping up on the bed which was holding about ten of us, proceeded to do so, by the simple expedient of pulling them up under her skirt. Eddie Jones and Phil Rogers led the howls of protest.

The room was pretty crowded by now, Ina must have thought the air needed freshening or something, because she started to spray people with scent. I did a stupid thing by indicating that this sort of thing did not appeal to me. Of course I ended up being held down while Ina sprayed scent down my neck, up my nose and in my mouth when I opened it to protest. It's just as well that I knew everybody there, or it could have been very embarrassing for me. I cannot remember much after that, except that Norman kept handing round glasses of coffee, which turned out to be coffee flavoured wine, with drastic after effects. About 4:30 I decided I'd had enough and bidding farewell to all and sundry, wandered happily down the corridor to room, bed and four hours sleep. [1]

Saturday

Joe Patrizio:

After breakfast next morning Ted and I went up to see if Ella was still alive, and found that she had discovered she could have breakfast in bed and was taking full advantage of this. The start of the programme was TYPO, a tape play by the Cheltenham Group. It wasn't bad but not as good as I had expected. This was followed by a talk from Geoff Doherty on the desirability or otherwise of plugging SF in schools. Last year Geoff had edited an SF anthology for use in schools called *An Alien in the Academy*. What with the stories he told of the trouble he has had to get

other teachers to read SF (we all felt for him here) and the questions from the audience, and the very interesting and competent way he handled his subject, Geoff gave us one of the best items in what was to be a really fine con programme. Next came, lunch which gave everybody the opportunity to talk about what they had just listened to, and from what I could hear they all did. [1]

Ella Parker:

Without knowing that he wrote for the newspapers a crowd of us on Friday evening had been talking to Geoff telling him, at his own request, about fandom. He was fascinated by it and wrote a very fair report of the Convention and its members for the Saturday's Manchester Guardian. He sparked off some very interesting comments and argument and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying his place on the hot-seat.

After lunch we gathered to watch the slide show which had been prepared for us and sent over by Don Ford. Don, who attended last year's Convention as TAFF Delegate had been so pleased with our reception for the show he put on for us then, that he thought we might like to see more. I have only one complaint to make about its presentation and that is that Don put his commentary on tape this year instead of coming over to give it in person. A Ford slide show is something not to be missed! [3]

Joe Patrizio:

The previous year's show had got rave notices, and we were all looking forward to it very much. The slides were shown with a commentary on tape given by Don. This made things a bit difficult for Norman who was projecting, as there was no margin for error – if he goofed once, it was probable the whole show would go up the creek. It says a great deal for his nerves that only one slide went in upside down, and he still managed to keep things running smoothly. There was slight disappointment that there were no shots of last year's con. I had been particularly looking forward to this as I was unable to attend. Nevertheless a good show.

As you all know, the Guest of Honour was Kingsley Amis, author of *New Maps of Hell*. He was next on the programme to give a talk, and be available to answer questions. It was this last bit that everyone was waiting for, and you could see that at the earliest opportunity there was going to be a mad scramble to get questions in – it seemed everyone had read *New Maps of Hell*. Amis came in with Brian Aldiss. Brian gave an amusing introduction to Amis, who rose to really tumultuous applause, which subsided to dead silence. We weren't going to miss a word of his talk. His

address gloried in the title “SF Anti-science, Anti-fiction”. Right at the start Amis set about stirring up the natives, and he proved that he was a most accomplished hand at the job. He started laying about SF, letting us know just what he thought was wrong with it, but at the same time telling us just how it could be improved. The unfortunate bit was, most of what he said was quite right. I am afraid he overdid it in places, such as when he gave us a list of concepts that formed the basis of a good many SF stories, and said that they were impossible. These were time travel, telepathy, the universal translating machine – there may have been others, these were the main ones. He went on in much the same vein, dealing in the literary side of SF, and here Arthur C Clarke got his. Amis read from one of the stories in Clarke’s new anthology, and made Clarke’s handling of a love scene sound even worse than it actually was, although this was just barely possible. As he continued, people started shifting in their seats, like cats getting ready to pounce, but other than a few gurgles and splutters, no one said a word till he had finished. [1]

Ella Parker:

I must place on record our delight with his gift of repartee especially when answering Ted Tubb. Amis had made some remark about pornography in S-F. Relative to a comment made by Amis, Ted said he had been disgusted to find S-F being used as a vehicle for pornography. Not knowing Ted’s reputation, Amis retorted: “...I must be more sophisticated and blasé than you, but...” This brought roars of laughter and left Ted without a retort of his own. [3]

Joe Patrizio:

Once he’d stopped the questions came rolling at him and it was wonderful to watch him take them all and come out on top. Even Ted Tubb couldn’t get the better of him, although Ted had some good points, which might have caught Amis had Ted followed them up instead of arguing round in circles. By now everybody was having a great time, and if they weren’t arguing with Amis they were arguing among themselves; the hall wasn’t quite in an uproar, but it was getting well on the way. But it had to stop sometime, and Eric Jones called a halt half an hour over the allotted time. Afterwards most people agreed that in general Amis was right, and individuals could only disagree with him in particular points, like the impossibility of telepathy, for instance.

A long queue formed before Amis, most with shining new copies of “New Maps of Hell” to be autographed. He had quite a job writing, while still answering questions. I got my programme signed, and managed to get

an indignant “Why don’t you like Sturgeon?” in, I got an answer that boiled down to “’Cos he makes me sick.” I went away shattered at this confession.

Eric Jones was in charge of the next item, an auction in aid of the BSFA. I need say no more than he managed to keep dividing people from their money at regular intervals. Ted bought 5 *F&SF* covers. Everyone now disappeared to get ready for the Transgalactic Tourist’s Party. Some of the London mob were going in armour made by Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer. This was a little away from the central theme, but we thought it would be OK if we said we were from something like *The High Crusade*.

All were donning costumes in Bruce’s room. When I entered I was greeted by a great deal of frenzied activity, interspersed with grunts, groans, and the occasional full blooded scream as a pin didn’t go where it should. Ken and Ted were in charge of proceedings. Bruce and Jimmie were dressed, while Don was putting the finishing touches to his. It had been originally mine, but he was doing a better job of wearing it than I ever could. Pat Kearney was being bound up in authentic type mediaeval leggings. Ted was trying to put Brian Burgess in a suit of armour. Ken was going around with a hefty wooden sword cutting and slashing at people and asking them if they could feel anything. This was funny, as he was hitting so hard, had they not been properly protected, the blow could have killed far less hurt! This was no place for a person of my sensitivity, so I rapidly faded from the scene.

In order to combat the ever present lack of females at fan gatherings, the committee had the bright idea to invite some nurses. They were gratified when all tickets were taken and more asked for. The sad news that confronted me in the hall, was that they had used the tickets to bring their boyfriends also! Thus there was a distinct impression given of two separate dances being held... a mundane one where people were dancing... and a fannish one where people were talking and drinking. It’s very difficult to get across the atmosphere that pervaded. All through everybody was giving the impression, without actually saying anything, that there was nowhere else they would rather be, and this was the only way to enjoy yourself. [1]

Ella Parker:

Costumes ranged from the grotesque to the attractive with many in-betweens. Outstanding were the mask worn by Dave Kyle, the bird costume worn by Ina Shorrock (which won first prize in the parade) and that horrible eye in the middle of her forehead worn by Ruth Kyle. Worth a very special mention in my opinion, was the witches outfit, complete

with besom worn by Diane (Alan Rispin's friend), both for its simplicity and impressiveness; she really looked the part... if that isn't being rude. Ted Tubb, Bruce Burn, Bob Hawkins, Brian Burgess, Bob Richardson, Pat Kearney and Don Geldart had brought out once more the armour, swords etc. that had been worn and used with such good effect when the London crowd visited Cheltenham at Whitsun two years ago.

Dancing – or what I saw of it – was patchy, many of them preferring to stand at the bar drinking and forming discussion groups. I was off in a corner of the hall with Ken Slater, Dave Barber, Ian McAulay, Jim Groves and a couple of others talking about S-F. That was one thing about this Convention which caused much comment. No matter where you went or at what time of day or night you would come across a small group tucked away somewhere discussing S-F. Whether, as has been argued, this was due to the influence of the BSFA members present, or not, I wouldn't like to say. I have noticed that even at our SFCL club meetings it is talked about a lot more than it was in the past. Maybe it's coming back into fashion or favour? [3]

Joe Patrizio:

The highlight of the party was the fight staged by the London group. From the onset this had been Ken Bulmer's idea. He had been talking for weeks before in a way that suggested the whole purpose of the con was so that London could stage a carnival of blood – the more blood the better. Ken would organise it all, but no thanks he was too old for that sort of thing. Those wearing the armour were none too keen on the idea, but Ken, with masterly verbiage, convinced them all that this was the only gentlemanly thing to do: they got up and fought. Ted Tubb try as he might to hold back, got stuck in too. It was quite funny beforehand to listen to Ted trying to talk himself out of taking part, while everyone knew, including Ted, that where it was thickest was where we would find Mr Tubb.

Bobbie Grey announced the bout. She told us that one faction from some star cluster had suffered a slight at the hands of another and had challenged them to back down or prove themselves with cold wood. The supposed slighters had no hesitation, they agreed unanimously to back down, but unfortunately for them the audience realised that there was a good chance that somebody might get hurt, and so wouldn't let them out of it. The two groups consisted of Ted Tubb, Brian Burgess, Bob Richardson and Bob Hawkins on one side. The other side was made up of Bruce Burn, Don Geldart, Jim Groves and Pat Kearney. How they fixed the sides I just don't know, because Bruce, Don, Jim and Pat were outweighed

considerably, and it must have taken real nerve to stay in the same hall as the others.

Arthur Thomson called them to order and got them started, a most fearsome sight that struck awe into the bystanders. Tubb, not having a shield, made do with two swords. Had I not known he was quite friendly with his opponents, I would have sworn that he had his heart set on killing the lot of them. He would beat about one of them, whilst making frantic back handed swipes at any other opponent who passed within reach. Amis, who had managed to get a seat at the front, was cowering against the back of it. Bob Richardson, dressed in a sort of Mongol outfit, and Don made frenzied efforts to decapitate each other, right in front of Amis, and they didn't seem particularly worried about the possible loss of one of our leading writers.

Brian Burgess just stood there. With the armour on he looked impossibly tall and most impressive. Bruce kept on coming at him, but made no impression whatsoever, and every now and again Brian would take a tremendous swing before which Bruce respectfully retreated. Pat, the SFCoL's youngest member, only 17 and looking more like 15, was achieving one of his ambitions, the undivided attention of a professional author. Yet he was not very happy about this, nor could you blame him. Mr Tubb was acting as if Pat had said he was only Britain's second best author, and poor Pat looked set for the hospital at any minute. He was pretty lucky to get away with skinned knuckles, and quite badly bruised ribs. He got consolation later from Ted in a long talk and permission to reprint one of Ted's stories in *Goudy*, Pat's zine. The battle went on for some time, but gradually subsided as people admitted they had had enough, or they ran out of swords, broken ones now littered the floor. Arthur called a halt, and declared a draw, they were all too tired to hear him.

The climax came with the Fancy Dress judging. Judges were Ruth and Dave Kyle with Ted Carnell. Eddie Jones got first prize with his intricate Spaceman costume. Ina Shorrock second with a Firebird costume, which had also been designed by Eddie. [1]

Eric Bentcliffe:

Arriving at a convention, a s-f fan convention, with Masquerade Ball in full swing, is rather like stepping into a surrealist picture. One moment you are travelling through dark, wet-shiny streets; at an hour when the streets are dead – the next you are surrounded by Green-faced Ghouls, Spacemen of varying hue, and Fine Feathered Females. One moment you are registering at the desk of a discreetly lit hotel lobby, the next you are in

a gay hall hung with esoteric slogans and embellished with alien phrases – and filled with a fine welcoming crowd of people. Someone pushes a glass into your hand... another convention has started.

I regretted, as usual, that I hadn't been able to get to the convention on its first day, but as you've probably gathered from the opening paragraph, arriving at a convention in full swing has an impact all its own. Memories of the rather tedious journey soon faded once I got my bags parked in a room, and found out where the parties were being held that night.

I'd met Ron Bennett in the con-hall and he came up with me to my room to hand over some cash he'd collected for TAFF, and to acquaint me with some of the happenings so far. He brought me a glass of Brown Ale, too, which helped nicely to start my re-orientation.

I didn't waste any time on unpacking, the only items to be dug out of my bag were Camera and Pyjamas (in case I went to bed that night, you know!) My room was way out – so far out that it was probably the only room in the hotel in the Borough of Cheltenham! – but it didn't take me long to find a party. I'm not quite sure whose room it was in, but it was quite a Kettering-style affair with every inch of space, on, besides, and under the bed fully occupied. Using my flash as a weapon, and the camera as a ruse – "just move over to the left a little" – I managed to make my way from one side of it to the other. It was a single room and it took me about ten minutes to get across it, that will give you a good idea how many fans were in there.

Many of them were still in fancy dress, and there were some very fine and exotic costumes in evidence. I'd arrived a little too late to see all the ones displayed at the convention, but I've since seen colour shots of most, and it seems that everyone excelled themselves this year. Ina Shorrock in a Bird-woman costume designed by Eddie Jones (Thank You, Eddie!) was rather stunning; Moulto Bono as the Italians would say (a literal translation means "Moult Soon"). Ethel Lindsay looked devilishly dour in a sequined sporran. And some of the men had costumes, too. Eddie Jones had a fine spaceman garb, and Bob Richardson looked eminently alien. I'd liked to have been at the con in time for the grand parade. [4]

Ella Parker:

Much later on Saturday night Ethel and I went upstairs to get ready for the company we were expecting to visit our little suite we had to ourselves tucked away in a nice little corner of the hotel. We even had a door which could be shut closing us off entirely from the rest of the hotel any time we felt downright unsociable. Need I say it was never used? The

party was held in high good spirits and was an interesting mixture of the faanish and sercon. Here too S-F came in for its share of attention during the jollity. Ethel remarked to me next day of two intriguing conversations, snippets of which she had overheard. To one side they were talking about S-F and on the other there was Phil Rogers and I talking about the fascinating way in which Dave Barber wiggled his ears. This must prove summat, but I don't know what. We were keeping pretty well open house between the two rooms and as there wasn't room for all of them in Ethel's place the overflow was passing through into mine. This makes it difficult to know who was at ours and who had gone off looking for another party elsewhere. I do remember seeing Phil Rogers, Dave Barber, Don Geldart, Ted Carnell (who had turned up unexpectedly and most welcome he was too), Jimmy Rattigan, Ted Tubb, Ted Forsyth, Joe Patrizio, Alan Rispin and Diane (that name again!), Brian Aldiss, Brian Jordan, Jhim Linwood, Jeff Doherty, Ian McAulay (you could have guessed he'd be there!), two Shorrockses, Kingsley Amis, Ken Slater, Bobbie and Bill Gray, Ron Bennett, Bruce Burn, Daphne Buckmaster, Keith Freeman, Margaret and Eric Jones, and last but not least Arthur Thomson, who had come down for one day and was acting barman very capably. It was a good party. [3]

Eric Bentcliffe:

I had a fine time at the parties on the Saturday night to Sunday morning shift; Dave and Ruth Kyle had made it and we reminisced a little about Potsdam and Pittsburgh, and said "My God, is it that long since!" I met Ian McCauley for the first time, and thought this latest ambassador from IF to be an excellent one – he said he'd recognised me immediately, and I wondered if it was from the punched-out silhouette in the Willis attic-wall, the time I played Ghoodminton with John Berry.... From the photos I took I seem to have been to several room parties that night, and I recall snatches of many amusing conversations. And I wonder what Kingsley Amis was saying in the shot I have of Harry Harrison brandishing a bottle over he and Ted Tubb...

And then there was the Mini-Bathcon. It wasn't called that at the time, but it seems to be as suitable a soubriquet as I can think of for it. The mini-bathcon had already started when I arrived on the scene with flash-bulbs flaring, it was a small select affair with a membership of three. Norman Shorrock, Bruce Burn, and Keith Freeman. I gather that it all started when Norman (or Bruce, or Keith) got a little tired of the crowded atmosphere of one room party, and decided to seek solitude in a nearby bathroom. He was shortly joined (in the typical lemming-flow of fan movement at conventions) by the other two. Since there was nowhere else

to sit, they sat in the bath. Since all three of the gentlemen concerned have a distinct aversion to “dry” parties, the taps were turned on. At the time I arrived the bath was about a quarter full and Bruce, Norman, and Keith (fully dressed to shoes and socks!), with a contented look on their faces, were happily watching the tide come in....

Convention Guest of Honour, Kingsley Amis, looked in just after I arrived, but declined the cordial invitation to step into the bath and have a chat.

I’d a pretty full day ahead of me on the Sunday, so I decided to have a reasonably early night and went to bed about 4 a.m., after attending some highly enjoyable parties. [4]

Sunday

Eric Bentcliffe:

I didn’t really feel like getting up for breakfast on the Sunday morning, but I did... probably because I don’t like paying for something and not getting it. Britain can learn from America on the matter of Hotel Breakfasts; in the UK you pay for it whether you get it or not, and you have to be in the dining room by ten at the latest to ensure you do get it. I became addicted to the American fan habit of getting breakfast in the afternoon when I was at Pittsburgh and it’s sort of hard to break the habit. One thing you can say that the British Method breeds a race of hardy conventioneers... even Norman Shorrock has been known to get up for breakfast at a convention! [4]

Joe Patrizio:

Sunday saw me up not so early, and definitely not so bright as Saturday. I was nearly put off my breakfast by the entry of Ina Shorrock, who bounced in looking disgustingly fresh and cheerful. I did get some consolation from seeing Norman, who looked as if he had crawled painfully from his coffin for the day. Bang on time Ina, as Chairman, got the BSFA General meeting started. [1]

Ella Parker:

We had a disappointingly small audience for this but those who were present showed they were actively interested in what the Association were doing and had many suggestions to make for an improved service. I don’t want to give the appearance of gloating even if I am, but all the suggestions are now the business of Joe Patrizio who is this year’s Secretary. Good luck, Joe! Ken Slater, Ted Carnell, Eric Bentcliffe and

Norman Shorrock came up with some pretty good ideas and were most helpful and encouraging in what they had to say about the Association's affairs. I think it was a most successful meeting. Further on in the magazine you will see a notice mentioning a fund which was launched during this session. As most of you have heard by now Doc Weir died just a couple of weeks before the Convention. Doc was actively interested in the BSFA and has done a lot of constructive work for us in the form of writing for our official magazine *Vector* among other things. We have launched the "Doc Weir Memorial Fund" to buy books for the BSFA library which was a part of the Association which was very nearly his prime interest. You don't have to be a member of the BSFA to help in this worthy project and I'd like to see us with something well worth his memory. [3]

Joe Patrizio:

One item of general interest was the choosing of the 1962 Con site.

After having suffered the disappointment two years in succession of being given the con for Harrogate, only to have it snatched away again, it was the general consensus of opinion that the 1962 con should be given to Ron Bennett. Everyone seemed agreed on this, the only one who would not give an opinion was Ron himself. Someone nominated Harrogate. People started to get up and say why they thought this was a good idea. Then some bright person came up with the bright idea of asking Ron if he was willing to take the con. Ron made the most of this, his moment. He slowly rose to his feet and waited for everyone to be quiet. Then he went into a long dramatisation of how for years he had nurtured the idea of holding a con in his home town, but nobody would listen. How at last it was reluctantly agreed that he could have it but finding his dreams snatched away, and this happening not once but two years in succession. By now, nearly everyone was in tears at poor Ron's plight, and it was now that he brought his speech to a brilliant climax by accepting the 1962 con, and then naming the committee which he had already formed.

This being Easter Sunday, after lunch the SFCoL started to distribute Easter eggs. Ethel stood at the door with a basket and, as far as we know, nobody escaped. They all got an egg whether they liked it or not, on the whole they were rather taken with the idea. [1]

Ella Parker:

After the business of the meeting had been completed we were free to go to lunch and Ethel and those who were acting in our club's (SFoL) playlet written and produced by Bruce Burn, were also free to get the

shakes and a bad case of butterfly stomach. This they did. We had a slight delay which is after all in the fannish tradition, and which did nothing to make our actors and actress feel any better, and then they were off – or do I mean on! Jimmy Groves and Bruce Burn had the stage to themselves for the opening and as they got into their parts it began to sound quite good to me out in the wings. Ethel, who had a song to sing in her part, was standing waiting to make her entrance and I hope I never again meet anyone with such a bad attack of the shakes. Never mind; once on-stage she did us and herself credit. Congratulations, you three. [3]

Joe Patrizio:

The first item on the afternoon programme was the SFCoL sketch. This had been written by Bruce Burn, around his pet fixation of Scotland taking over Anglofandom. The theme, briefly, was that Bruce and Jimmie Groves were prisoners in a fanzine factory (I seem to have heard this before somewhere) and were under the charge of Ethel who brought them fmz to collate, and occasionally something to eat. This plot was the vehicle for a few song parodies which seemed to go down pretty well. At the end Ella came on and gave me orders to shoot the pair, which I did with great pleasure, they being only Englishmen. Unfortunately, as this was put on soon after lunch, there was only a small audience, which was a pity considering the amount of work put into it by Ethel, Bruce and Jimmie, who had even rehearsed on the journey to Gloucester.

As is becoming traditional, Eric Bentcliffe put on another THIS IS YOUR FAN LIFE. After Eric's usual red herrings it turned out the victim was Eric Jones, and a more surprised man you never saw.

Eric Bentcliffe:

Plans for TIYL started almost as soon as last years convention ended. After some thought I decided that Eric Jones would be a most suitable subject, and John Owen proceeded to once more turn out an excellent script. In true fannish manner nothing else was done until a few weeks before the convention. Apart from spreading a few rumours to the effect that Other People – Terry Jeeves, Ron Bennett, Wm Harrison – were actually to be the subject of the programme. I would have started in on producing the show earlier if it hadn't been for a certain journey I made last year... however, it seemed to go over fairly well.[4]

Ella Parker:

Bruce Burn was notable as an Indian complete with sibilant accent as good as anything done by Peter Sellers. Alan Rispin too, was surprisingly good as a deaf old man, especially when he got his programmes mixed and

thought he was taking part in a give-away-show called Take Your Pick. Norman Shorrock was next to come on lugging with him a whacking great machine which when attached to Eric's person gave out with lots of flashing lights and twirling antennae. There was a clock in the front of it which whipped round at an alarming rate and a slot which lit up saying TILTED. All of it completely useless. Eric's face was a picture when he saw it being carried in as he'd made the thing himself thinking it was for Jeeves. Later in the evening Eric Bentcliffe was heard to confess he felt a bit guilty having asked Eric to make it himself, but the mood soon vanished. [3]

Eric Bentcliffe:

I'm greatly indebted to the cast who, unlike myself memorised their lines, and did a good job at shortish notice. Terry Jeeves took the part of an officer in the RAF Coastal Command Squadron which EJ served in during the war – during the period when Eric was "building the biggest rotary duplicator in the World, in No.3 Hangar". Bruce Burn, who did an excellent job of portraying a Maharaja Eric had met in India, "where he discovered Psionics and Hypnotism". Bob Richardson, as one of the few living survivors of the s-f film made by Eric and the Cheltenham Group *The Test*.... "and later issued as the Student Prince" – Bob managed to resurrect one of the costumes from the film and looked most impressive. Alan Rispin, who played the part of the Keeper of the St. Fantony Archives, and who got rather mixed up (intentionally) with *Take Your Pick*. Norman Shorrock appeared as himself with a wonderful box of electronics specially built for the show by Eric Jones (who thought Terry Jeeves was the subject)... a psionics machine which he had been using as a projector for 35mill films – which explained the picture quality he'd been getting!

Norman also helped prepare the tapes for TIYL, and John Owen lent his tonsils to the cause by impersonating Harrison* and "Fingers Finnigan (a former school chum of Eric's now fallen on hard times)" on tape. Oh yes, and I'm indebted to the MISFIT Song Book for the, version of "The Bradbury Hate Song" which was used to mislead the audience and Ron Bennett at the beginning of the show. I enjoyed doing the programme....

** Not Harry, but the intrepid Sir William Makepeace Harrison – see the free TAFF ebook* The Harrison Saga. *[Ed.]*

By the time TIYL was over my tonsils were feeling the need for something wet. I'd been suffering from a heavy cold during the week and as I had a TAFF TALK to give a few hours later, I decided to humour

them and went in search of Beer. Although the bar was closed I managed to find some, and with a cool glass of lager in my hand I returned to the con-hall to watch Ron do an excellent job on the TAFF AUCTION.

To follow this we had an “Initial Quiz” conducted by Ken Slater, in which he proceeded to fire the initials of various s-f authors at a panel in the hopes that they would be able to decode them. They did pretty well, too.

As I recall it this was followed by a break for refreshment, and Bruce Burn, Ron Bennett, Bob Parkinson, Ron Buckmaster, and I went out to a Chinese Restaurant for some espresso coffee and, of all things, fruit salad!.

Strolling back to the hotel we met several groups of people who had just decided that they wanted something on their stomachs before hearing my TAFF Talk.... I was quite pleased about this for my voice was suffering badly from wow and flutter and a few extra minutes might help. We also met Brian Aldiss, who was already crying forth slogans for next year’s convention, “See You In Harrogate, Mate”. Brian seems to get more fannish (if he’ll forgive the word) at each convention, and it wouldn’t surprise me to see him ultimately give up professional writing and start putting out a fanzine. It’s about time someone reversed the usual order of things.

The con-hall didn’t seem in any immediate danger of filling up and clamouring for a TAFF TALK, so Ron and I ducked off up to my room so that he could see some of the photos I’d taken in the States. We talked all too briefly, too, of the parallels in our respective trips – which will have become apparent if you’ve read both *Colonial Excursion* and *Epitaff*. “And I knew Sylvia before Ted had cornered the market...” A pleasant interlude, and I must try to get over to Harrogate soon so that we can finish the talk.

In typical Bentcliffe manner I hadn’t prepared any notes for my talk on my American Experiences, however the trip is still so clear in my mind that I can talk about it at length at the drop of a hat – and I’ve noticed a distinct tendency amongst my friends not to drop hats in my presence of late! I don’t recall now what I said, but I briefly (I had to keep it brief otherwise I’d have equalled the running time of *Forbidden Planet*) mixed in my route with a few reminiscences, and it seemed to go over all right... apart from the fact that my voice did keep petering out on me. Keith Freeman came to my rescue with a bottle of soda water and a glass, and this helped but as I said at the time, I hope no one got the impression that I’m in the habit of drinking soda water neat.

Ever since Pittsburgh I’d had the idea of running an “Auction Bloch” at a British convention on behalf of TAFF, and this I was able to do after

my talk. Authors Brian Aldiss, Ken Bulmer, and Walter Willis had previously agreed to allow their time to be sold for TAFF and I'm most grateful to them. Walt had also sent over one of the few remaining copies of *The Harp Stateside* to be auctioned off, and Bruce Burn and Bob Parkinson had volunteered to have their beards auctioned for TAFF – I was rather amused when Alan Rispin bid for and bought Bruce Burn's beard, and can only assume that he is trying to whittle down the opposition!

The big surprise of the "Auction Bloch" session however came from Kingsley Amis. Just prior to my going he'd asked me to have a few minutes to say thank you to everyone for having him as Guest of Honour. This I did, gladly, and immediately afterwards he volunteered to be sold for TAFF himself. [4]

Ron Bennett:

Ken Slater took Brian Aldiss for 22/6d, Norman Shorrock bought Ken Bulmer for 17/-, Alan Rispin bought Bruce Burn's Bushy Barbarian Beard for 12/6, Ethel Lindsay acquired Walt Willis at the bargain price of £1 and Walt's production, *The Harp Stateside*, went for even more than the man himself for 25/- to Peter Mabey. At the conclusion of the Auction Bloch, Kingsley Amis said how much he had enjoyed the convention, asked for the first membership for next year's Harrogate con, and agreed to be auctioned off himself. A syndicate composed of members of the SFCoL (Don Geldart, Ted Forsyth, Joe Patrizio, Bruce Burn and Ron Bennett) which had been formed in the eventuality of the Guest of Honour's sale, bought Kingsley for £2. 10s and are now at a loss as to what to do with him. Readers, do you want to read Kingsley Amis in OMPA? In *Skyrack*? [2]

Joe Patrizio:

I had to leave the hall as he started to auction off the professional authors. When I got back I was congratulated by Don Geldart and Ron Bennett for having a hand in buying Kingsley Amis, and asked to pay the 10/- that was due. I did. I must have been drunk.

The con was rapidly drawing to a close. A film show was the last item. *Forbidden Planet* was the main film to be shown, but of much more interest to most fans was *The Mesquite Kid*, which Dave Kyle had brought over from the States. This however turned out a bit of a disappointment. The soundtrack was very bad, and we could not understand most of the dialogue. We did have the consolation of seeing some of the Amerifen and when BJo came on the screen, there was more than a few dark mutterings,

all asking what fool voted for Don Ford. The films ended. The con was officially closed, and people started to pull the con hall to bits (or clear up it was called). [1]

Ella Parker:

I sat with Bobby Gray for a while and then did the disappearing act to my room. I'd seen the film twice already and as we were making a side trip to the Cheltenham Club rooms the next day I wanted to get my packing done without having to do it in a mad rush. Archie Mercer had kindly left his record player and records in my room. Now there are some of you who just aren't going to believe this, but with hand on heart I swear it's the truth; to the music of the bagpipes I skipped lightly round the room lifting things and putting them down someplace else only to spend the next twenty minutes looking for them. In two hours I had finished my packing so went down to pay my bill and then in to see the last half of the film. During the weekend I had raffled off two copies of the *Atom Anthology* and after the film was over I asked Eric Jones if he'd do the draw. Dave Kyle was one of the winners and Paul Andre was the other. Dave still thinks it was rigged. This was the end of the programmed items and we now had the desolate task of selling off all the posters which had made the hall look so gay and occupied. I bought one and Ethel bought me another, both of which will eventually find a home on the wall of the Penitentiary when I can figure where to place them; one is a Jeeves, and one a Parkinson, both very colourful. [3]

Joe Patrizio:

The room parties on this last night seemed to go very quickly, with everyone trying to talk about every thing they had forgotten at previous parties. I remember listening to Ron Bennett tearing Jhim Linwood's ideology to bits, in a very calm and reasoned manner, considering Ron has the same ideas on the subject as Jhim, while Alan Rispin mumbled drunkenly in the background. This was at a very sedate affair in Bob Richardson's room, which we soon left to go up to the Ethel/Ella suite. Here we found the usual boisterous mob, which this time included Amis, Aldiss, Geoff Doherty arguing in a corner about SF with Chris Miller and some other fans. Ian McAulay was becoming very intimate with Ina Shorrock at the top of the bed, while Norman was beaming benevolently at the bottom of the bed. There were dozens of others strewn about all over the room. Ethel was somewhat merry by this time, and on giving Amis a drink, proceeded to do so by pouring it all down his jacket, later she insisted that she saw a glass there.

This merrymaking went on for some time with various people coming in to make their fond farewells, and others drifting out to get some sleep. I found myself a seat on the bed, but no sooner did I get comfortable than I was pushed off by Ian. As I sat on the floor I thought that when it came to the bit that I couldn't hold my own on a bed with Ian, it was time for me to go home, which I proceeded to do by crawling along the corridor to my room. Before going to sleep I just had time to realise that my first convention was over, boy, had I enjoyed myself. [1]

Monday

Joe Patrizio:

Next morning was a flurry of activity, getting ready to leave, saying goodbye, and just walking about soaking up the last dregs of the convention. We met Tony Walsh who had bought *The Guardian*. In this paper there was a very good write up of the con by Geoff Doherty, who proved that he had been listening on the Friday, by including in his report a pocket description of fandom. A most fair report by Geoff, which left us all slightly bewildered that the paper hadn't insisted on BEMS, flying saucers and the like. [1]

Eric Bentcliffe:

One of the first things I seem to have done on the Monday morning is to have read Geoff Doherty's report on the convention in the aforementioned paper. On an empty stomach, too. The night's parties had been well up to the standard of British Convention Parties, and I think it was about tennish when I groped my way towards the dining room – to be met en route by Tony Walsh peddling copies of the *Guardian*. I was still somewhat bemused, but the fact that the report referred to "Faans" (with two a's) pierced the fog and helped to clear my mind. I felt like sending an immediate air-mail postcard to Boyd Raeburn, and I'd have done it, too, if it hadn't been for the fact that I felt I needed breakfast more!

The LXIcon was fortunate enough in receiving quite favourable press coverage, due in no small part to the fact that all the reporters were actually people who attended the convention, and not just reporters who had dropped in for something "silly" to write about. There were criticisms of course, but they were valid ones from the viewpoint of the writers, and the general public.

Monday was a day of reluctant leave-takings. I sat around in the main lounge until time for my train home, talked with Brian Aldiss about s-f,

Dave and Ruth Kyle about their plans to live part of the year in England (a plan which I'm wholly in favour of), and with just about everyone else left on how good a convention it had been. And it had been a Good Convention, one of the most enjoyable I've attended. Eric Jones, Keith Freeman, Tony Walsh, Ethel Lindsay, Bob Parkinson and the Cheltenham Group had put on the best all-round affair since the London Worldcon. [4]

Ella Parker:

On Monday morning as is the usual thing, people were disappearing from the fannish scene with regrettable regularity. Ken Slater popped his head into my room to say his goodbyes; Archie, Bobby and Bill Gray along with Keith Freeman, Ethel, Patrizio and Forsyth came in to sit and chew the rag for a while. I'll never forgive that Bill Gray; you hear me, Bill? Fancy coming into a ladies room – well, alright, mine then, and taking a picture before I'd had the chance to even comb my hair! I'll bet it turns out a beaut, too. Knowing that I had all my packing done with the exception of a few oddments still lying around, I wasn't bothered about how long we sat and nattered. In fact I think it was about 11 a.m. when I finally turned them out so I could get up and dress. I came down to the lounge to find there were still a lot of fen sitting around teaing and coffeeing. Having dispatched a couple of the lads to fetch my bags from my room, I joined Ethel Lindsay and Norman Shorrock in a tray of very welcome tea. Most of the talk buzzing around the lounge at this time was a mixture of comments on the Con just finished and plans for the one to come next year. I don't ever remember leaving a Convention with so many plans already made and firmed up in readiness for the following year. It was good to see how enthusiastic everyone was to keep up the good work. [3]

Eric Bentcliffe:

I reluctantly said goodbye to everyone shortly after noon, and left to catch the "Pines Express" for Manchester. Just before I left I'd been talking to Dave Kyle about England. He'd said he preferred the slower pace of living here, and I'd said yes, this extended even to the railways; "For instance you can get to the station only five minutes before your train is due to leave, and still have half an hour for a coffee!" The "Pines Express" was running some twenty-five minutes late, and I did have plenty of time for a coffee.... Many a true word spoken in jest department.

The weekend after the convention, Dave and Ruth came up to Liverpool, and we all started celebrating again.... but that's another story. [4]

Ella Parker:

Bruce Burn, who was the driver for the vehicle hired by the SFoL, had the job of carting a load of stuff back to the Cheltenham club rooms after which he was returning to collect us and take us to visit them in their natural haunts before we left for London and home. Groups were constantly forming, breaking up and reforming elsewhere all over the place. Friendships were re-affirmed, plans were made for more frequent visits to one another, and promises were made also for more frequent letters to be written. As you can see, we in Britain make our New Year Resolutions at Easter. We collected a bunch to go out for lunch at the local Chinese restaurant. This was to be our last real get-together near the Con hotel and we had: Dave and Ruth Kyle, Ina and Norman Shorrock, Eric and Margaret Jones, Bruce, Ethel, Pat Kearney, Ted, Joe, Jimmy Groves, Eddie Jones, Norman Weedall and anyone else who hadn't already left for home. It was a leisurely meal with all of us too tired to exert ourselves to be entertaining. After we left the restaurant we broke up for the last time. In some cases we refused to say goodbye as we intended to meet at the club rooms of the Cheltenham group. We got ourselves packed and loaded into our vehicle and were away.

After having lost ourselves among all the small back streets around Cheltenham we arrived at the club to find Ken and Pamela Bulmer had got there first. Those of our group on their first visit were asked to sign the wall and being "different" they chose to start off on a new section of the wall. Audrey Eversfield and Margaret Jones brought tea round to us all and I'm pleased to record that I was given the largest cup/mug to be found in the place. That could be because they had heard I like the stuff. We stayed in the club until about 4:30 p.m. talking over the past few days and making our criticisms to Eric who wanted to know if there was anything we thought he could have done better. We had few such criticisms to make. None of those who had promised to see us at the club, other than the members, had in fact turned up. Archie had been and gone and the Kyles hadn't shown up at all by the time we were reloaded and set to go. Goodbyes were shouted; fear was expressed that if we didn't soon get moving we might decide to stay after all so they all got behind and pushed, and as we finally took pity on them and drove off the Kyles appeared just in time to give us a wild wave of their hands. Trust them to be late!

We had a very nice, quick drive back to town arriving at my front door somewhen around 7:30 p.m. which was good going. I put the kettle on to make tea and while waiting for it to boil read a letter from Bill Donaho which was waiting for me. Half way through the letter and just as

I'd made the tea (it was a long letter), the bell rang. Arthur Thomson had come along to see how the rest of the Con had gone after he'd had to leave.

Oh, brother, did we ever have a Convention.. This year's was my fourth and the one I've enjoyed best to date. Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to the ConCommittee who worked so hard to make it the success it so assuredly was: Eric Jones, Keith Freeman, Tony Walsh, Bob Parkinson and Ethel Lindsay. I only hope they weren't all too tired to enjoy the result of their efforts themselves. [3]

Ron Bennett:

Probably the two most notable facts to emerge from the gathering were that judging from the large number of new faces present the BSFA recruiting system is extremely successful and that science-fiction conventions are back in fashion. The two points are of course probably related, but it is true to say that the bias of the convention was towards the sercon rather than towards the fannish. This is not to say that the fannish element was left uncared for – far from it – but this was a programmed convention. Neofans were not left out in the cold but mixed well with the old guard and indeed, a good time was had by all. The trouble with conventions like the LXIcon, as this get-together was termed, is that they are all too short. [2]

[1] *Scottishe* #24 (June 1961, ed. Ethel Lindsay)
[2] *Skyrack* #31 (April 1961, ed. Ron Bennett)
[3] *Orion* #27 (April 1961, ed. Ella Parker)
[4] *Bastion* #2 (August 1961, ed. Eric Bentcliffe)

1962

13. Ronvention Programme

Eddie Jones's hand-drawn programme book pages for this convention appear below, followed by a searchable transcript of the essential text since the smaller typed or printed captions may not be readable on small devices.

JUST GOING TO BED?
BUT IT'S TIME FOR –

SATURDAY

10·30 AM

'ON TAPE'

A SCIENCE FICTION DISCUSSION
FEATURING
ALDISS, AMIS, BULMER, BRUNNER, CARNELL.

AND NOW. IN PERSON

11·00 AM

E.R. JAMES

SURVEYS THE SCENE, LIKE.
THIS WILL INEVITABLY BE FOLLOWED
BY DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS,
UPROAR, AND SO ON.

LUNCH

2·00 PM

INTRODUCING THE GUEST of HONOUR TOM BOARDMAN

EMINENT SCIENCE FICTION EDITOR
AND PUBLISHER.

NOW IT'S

2·30 PM

AUCTION PART THE FIRST

BOOKS, MAG. & FANZINES, ORIGINAL COVER
ILLUSTRATIONS, AND OTHER HIGHLY
DESIRABLE FANNISH BRIC-A-BRAC.
ONE ITEM ONLY TO BE
RESOLD SEVEN TIMES PLEASE !

RAINING OUTSIDE?
MUST BE TIME TO-

SATURDAY

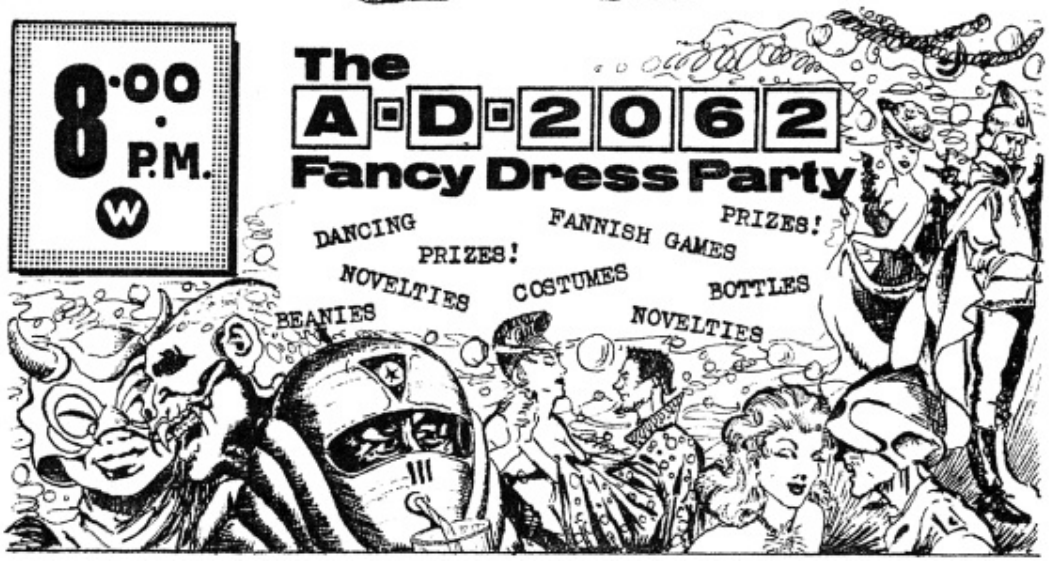
3·00 P.M.
OUT

SEE HARROGATE

It is not only exactly half-way between London and Edinburgh, John o'Groats and Land's End and the East and West Coasts; it is also the natural and obvious stepping-off place for those who wish to see England at its richest, historically, architecturally, and above all, scenically.

8·00 P.M.
W

The A·D·2062 Fancy Dress Party



ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

SUNDAY

11·00 AM (W)

B·S·F·A· A·G·M·

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1962-3 ETC.,
ALL SIDEARMS,HALBERDS,ETC. TO BE
HANDED IN BEFORE ENTERING.

2·00 PM (C)

"THE PROFESSIONALS"

PRO-AUTHOR'S PANEL FEATURING [illegible]
HARRISON [illegible]
ALSO GUEST APPEARANCE OF [illegible]

THEN

2·30 PM (C)

AUCTION PART THE SECOND

YOUR LAST CHANCE ! EVERYTHING
MUST GO ! (INCLUDING BEARDS)
BRING YOUR OWN SACK.

FOLLOWED BY

3·00 PM (C)

T·A·F·F·

TALK BY THIS YEAR'S DELEGATE
RON ELLIK
FROM SUNNY CALIFORN-I-A.
SUPPORTED BY ERIC BENTCLIFFE .

Programme

Locations

Programme items coded **(C)** at Clarendon Hotel
Programme items coded **(W)** at West Park Hotel

Times

Timing of programme items will be adhered to as closely as circumstances will allow. (It says here!)

Lapel Badges

are your insurance against gate-crashers, and make introductions easy for all. Please wear them.

- *For* Programming – See Phil Rogers
- Auction Material – See Terry Jeeves
- Displays (Pro.) – See Ken Slater
- Displays (Fan) – See Brian Jordan
- Photo. Exhibition – See Chris Miller
- Seating – See Jim Linwood
- Lost & Found Dept. – See Ron Ellik
- Complaints – See Alan Rispin

Friday

8:00 p.m. **(C)** Hi! and WELCOME
from Harrogate fandom, who will introduce some of the more ~~notorious~~ notable personalities present. Notice of alterations to programme alterations etc.

ROOM PARTY ANYONE?

Just going to bed? But it's time for –

Saturday

10:30 a.m. **(C)** "ON TAPE"
A science fiction discussion featuring
Aldiss, Amis, Bulmer, Brunner, Carnell.

11:00 a.m. **(C)** And now in person, E.R. JAMES
surveys the scene, like. This will inevitably be followed by discussion, questions, uproar, and so on.

LUNCH

2:00 p.m. **(C)** Introducing the GUEST OF HONOUR
TOM BOARDMAN
Eminent science fiction editor and publisher.

2:30 p.m. **(C)** Now it's AUCTION Part the First
Books, mag. and fanzines, original cover illustrations, and other highly desirable fannish bric-àbrac.
One item only to be resold seven times please!

3:00 p.m. **(OUT)** Raining outside? Must be time to
SEE HARROGATE
It is not only exactly half-way between London and Edinburgh, John o'Groats and Land's End, and the East and West Coasts; it is also the natural and obvious stepping-off place for those who wish to see England at its richest, historically, architecturally and above all scenically.

8:00 p.m. **(W)** The AD 2062 FANCY DRESS PARTY
Dancing • Prizes! • Fannish Games • Prizes! • Novelties • Costumes • Bottles • Beanies • Novelties

Anyone for tennis?

Sunday

11:00 a.m. **(W)** B.S.F.A. A.G.M
Election of officers for 1962-3 etc.
All sidearms, halberds, etc. to be handed in before entering.

LUNCH

2:00 p.m. **(C)** "THE PROFESSIONALS"
Pro-author's panel featuring XXXXXXXX XXX HARRISON XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX
Also guest appearance of XXXXXXXX

2:30 p.m. **(C)** AUCTION Part the Second
Your last chance! Everything must go! (Including beards)
Bring your own sack.

3:00 p.m. **(C)** T.A.F.F
Talk by this year's delegate RON ELLIK from Sunny Californ-i-a.
Supported by Eric Bentcliffe.

4:00 p.m. **(C)** TAKE YOUR CHANCES
A new quiz game devised by Ken Slater.
Volunteers will be selected from the audience. Like you, man! Prizes.

5:00 p.m. **(C)** THIS WAS 1st FANDOM?
(25 years ago)
J. Michael Rosenblum conjures up some ghosts of fandom past.

CHOW TIME

7:30 p.m. **(W)** *A Matter of Life and Death*

starring Raymond Massey, David Niven, Rodger Livesey, Kim Hunter

In lieu of *Metropolis* which was unobtainable this year

14. A Tale of Two Rons

Ronvention, the 1962 national British SF convention, was held in Harrogate from Good Friday, 20th April to Easter Monday, 23rd April – the fourth to be run under the auspices of the BSFA. It was split between the West Park and Clarendon hotels in Harrogate. The Fancy Dress, BSFA AGM and film being at the former and everything else at the latter. Guest of Honour was Tom Boardman. According to *Skyrack*:

Actual attendance, notwithstanding gatecrashers from the nobility and elsewhere, was 94 out of a 105 membership.

This included six from Germany who arrived in Harrogate on Wednesday and toured the area with Bennett in what he described as "one of those idyllic days in one's life and a wonderful example of international friendliness".

As previously noted, every Eastercon during this period was officially the "19xx British Science Fiction Association Convention", but they're all known by, and appear in listings under, other names. On the photocopy of the newsletter he sent me, Ron Bennett wrote:

"Just proving that it was *never* known as The Roncon until years later when Keith Freeman listed it as such in a con list he drew up for some BSFA publication."

By "The Roncon" I assume Ron meant Ronvention. If so, then his memory was letting him down since it was called that on the intro page of the Programme Book.

Ron Bennett was the Convention Chairman and the Programme Book credits Phil Rogers with planning the programme, but there were more people than just this pair involved in making RONVENTION a success, as Bennett acknowledged in his *Skyrack* con report:

The Programme Booklet was a superlative affair and was once again ably produced by Norman Shorrock and Eddie Jones. Many thanks, you Liverpudlians, and thanks too to all who helped make the con a social success – Ken Slater for his handling of professional advertisers and the auctions, Phil Rogers for his programme planning, Eric Jones for his work on the fancy dress party, Brian Jordan and Chris Miller for their fan and photographic displays, Terry Jeeves for his collecting of auction material and especially to Jill Adams for her work on the registration desk and to Jhim Linwood and his willing band of supporters for the work involved in moving chairs and facilitating seating.

This composite report was edited together largely from those written by Ron Bennett, James White, and TAFF delegate Ron Ellik.

Prologue

Ron Bennett:

The convention began for me, Wednesday, 18th April when the first delegation rolled in. At 8:15 an entire block of flats in which I live was roused by the arrival of the German contingent consisting of Tom Schlück, Rolf Gindorf, Wolfgang Thadewald, Thea Grade, Horst Margeit and driver Guntram Ohmacht. We had a whale of a time during those two pre-con days, driving out into the Yorkshire dales and visiting the limestone karst country at Malham, source of the River Aire. We climbed the 200 foot high Gordale Scar and walked mountain roads while Guntram waltzed merrily backward down a one in six gradient trying to take a picture. It was one of those idyllic days in one's life and a wonderful example of international friendliness. The six Gerfans stayed over in Harrogate until the Tuesday (as did Al Hoch) when Wolfgang celebrated his 24th birthday. [1]

Friday 20th April

Ron Ellik:

The Liverpool crowd and I arrived in their hired minibus at almost exactly noon, and the West Park Hotel was already churning with fans. Having no preconceptions of what a British convention should resemble, I was pleasantly surprised to find myself at home immediately: the Liverpudlians knew everyone and made sure I didn't wander alone.

Before I'd been in the hotel an hour I was into a game of Brag with Dave Barber and Phil Rogers. We half-blocked the entrance to the hotel lobby, and from that vantage point I met everyone who entered at least for the rest of the afternoon. From time to time Rogers (who was working as Ron Bennett's right arm on the convention committee) would be called away, and Dave and I would talk. He was astounded by my waterfall-shuffle, which is something any child in the States can do – but it made him think he was against some card-sharp. Each time the shuffle fell to me (which isn't often, as the cards remain ordered for a good while in a Brag game) I would riffle them together without thinking, and look up to see Dave staring wild-eyed at my hands. Then, of course, I'd do it two or three

more times, telling him how I learned this at the age of twelve while dealing Blackjack on a Mississippi riverboat.

The afternoon had not worn long when the door opened to admit the man who taught me Brag, the chairman of the convention, the editor of *Skyrack*, and the 1958 TAFFman, all rolled up in the person of Ron Bennett. We had a soul-stirring re-union ("You've grown taller," he said, with one eyebrow raised, "and you've let your hair grow out from that beastly crew-cut you had in South Gate"), and exchanged information and goods. I had bought him a carton of cigarettes in New York, for which he paid me in sterling, and he owed me 28 cents from our last Brag experience together. He has a long memory, and paid me with a quarter and three pennies – American.

"What the devil use is this?" I stammered, holding four coins that could do me no earthly good for weeks. "This isn't negotiable – it's play money!"

"We played for American coins," he pronounced, "and I owed you 28 cents, not shillings and pence."

Ron then introduced me to several people, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Tom Boardman, Harry Harrison, and Ajax Hoch – Americans all, under varying circumstances.

Tom Boardman, of Boardman Books, was Guest of Honour, and was an unusual combination: an American, living in England since the age of six months. He retains his citizenship, and accordingly has served in the U.S. Armed Forces – he's now an officer in the reserves, having to travel to an Army base in Europe every summer for two weeks active duty for training. He seemed both British and American, and it is probably this peculiar combo which has made Boardman Books so immensely popular in the science fiction market in England. His attractive wife is also American.

Harry Harrison, of course, is the author of *Stainless Steel Rat* and the Hugo nominee, *Deathworld*; what I didn't know until we started talking after the Fancy Dress Party the next night was that he also used to be an active fan in the U.S., up to 1951 or '2; his conventioneering stopped just before mine began.

Ajax Hoch is a one-time Philadelphian I had met at the Pittsburgh convention eighteen months earlier. He is employed by R.C.A., and stationed currently at the U.S. base outside Harrogate – very convenient for the con. Bennett had already mentioned this base to me – it seems Liz Humbie teaches school to dependents there, and she had tried to get some root beer for me.

At some point in the afternoon, someone – possibly Pat Kearney of London – heard me complaining to Bennett about the 28 cents he had burdened me with, and purchased the coins for two-and-six, a tidy profit. Bennett howled at this and demanded them back, shouting that if he'd known the fool things were worth *real* money he'd never have let me have them. I laughed, and at about this time dinner was served.

Meals at the West Park (part of the room charge) were pretty poor. Very flat, uninteresting food, often cold by the time it was served; we all sat down in the dining room, and were served the same meal, and of course this meant the tiny kitchen was strained to bursting to get it all cooked and served simultaneously. A very economical situation, I'm sure, but not inspiring, even to a crude meat-and-potatoes man like me. At one meal I was served a bun (or roll or biscuit or something – I can't remember what the British label is for what I call a bun) with some dried ground meat inside. I ate it with all the inattention it deserved, only to find after the meal that I'd just consumed my first Yorkshire pudding.

Fortunately Valerie Jeeves fixed me a Yorkshire pudding less than a week later. Tasty, if done right and served fresh.

Friday evening was the opening session – introduction of celebrities including me because I had hitch-hiked around the globe, said chairman Bennett; of course he also did me the favour of introducing nearly everyone else in the room which was in the Clarendon Hotel, a short walk from the West Park; most of the program was there, as it was the slightly more attractive of the two hostelries.

We mingled in the meeting hall after the session, and I made good use of the introductions with a round of hand-shaking and good cheer. I met Sid Birchby, Ken Slater and Archie Mercer, among others that evening. Mercer has a furious brown beard which has gone untrimmed since he began it in June 1961; he seems to be a marvelously hirsute individual, because it is easily longer than Walter Breen's growth, untrimmed since before Mercer's began.

This great brush obscuring half his face, and a large frame for an Englishman, give Archie the appearance of great strength and ferocity – but to my amazement he turned out a shy, modest individual with (he claimed) such a fear of the spotlight that my suggestion that he stand for TAFF was rejected out of hand. It's a shame, too – his timidity seems an obstacle, but he is certainly one of the most universally well-liked British fans, and has probably been of more service to American fandom in his quiet way than many more active souls.

Slater was the dickens of a surprise – since I recall him as Captain

Kenneth F. Slater, RAF*, from the letter-columns of *Startling* and *Thrilling Wonder*, he had assumed in my mind a striking military bearing. But the truth is out: Ken Slater is a ruddy-complexioned, stout, smiling man with a van Dyke, and a twinkle in his eye. Sid Birchby saved me from thinking all Anglofandom a set of contradictions by being an extremely normal fan – quiet, of moderate height and appearance, obviously soaking up the convention as a memorable experience.

** Actually, Ken was an Army man. [Ed.]*

About ten, the Clarendon quieted down to small conversation and I had had a few words with most everyone; Barber suggested Brag, and we took ourselves back to the lobby of the West Park, where we sat until I lost my limit about midnight. Jill Adams of London was most helpful in telling me how miserable a Brag player I am – if she hadn't kibitzed, I probably should have stayed on for a few more hours/shillings. I believe I lost a pound that night, at thruppenny Brag.

My room, number 2, was very comfortable despite the cold night, because Ella Parker had brought me an electric blanket. That's a bit of hospitality I've never seen equalled on either side of the Atlantic – good old Ella had remembered the sun and warmth of California and reasoned that her comfort here had a good chance of being at least matched by my discomfort there. The blanket connected with the light-socket, my head connected with the pillow, and before I knew it Saturday was upon me. [2]

Ron Bennett:

General merry making continued until 3 a.m. when the floating card school left the Clarendon where manager Brian Little had tried hard to lose the hotel to Brian Ball and Norman Shorrock. [1]

Saturday 21st April

James White:

We got to Harrogate on two planes and a train. The first plane was crewed by three men and a girl all of whom we had seen with our own eyes eating fish sandwiches, and to anyone who has read or seen *Flight into Danger* I need say no more. The second aircraft had nothing wrong with it *per se* or with its personnel, but it left without Walter and Ian's luggage. Nobly and with great personal bravery Walt offered to stay behind in rainswept Manchester for several hours until the missing luggage arrived – *Manchester*, several *hours* rain – so that us young ones could get

to the con without delay. We noticed that the train kept going slower the nearer we approached Harrogate, although this might have been a psychological thing.

When Ian and I arrived eager and soaking wet at the West Park we thought for an awful moment that we were witnessing the final scene of a fannish "On the Beach." All the usual appurtenances of a con were present, the advertising posters, the "Ethel for Taff" notices, the fan and pro artwork and Ken Slater's bookstall, but no people. It was like the beginning of a Don A. Stuart story before he became John Campbell; some brooding menace had obviously taken them all away. The first brooding menace we thought of was Burgess and we were examining this hypothesis in hushed tones when a voice, a human voice speaking English with a slight Californian accent, from behind us said:

"Everyone is in the other hotel. You haven't been reading your programmes (pardon me, programs) gentlemen..."

It turned out that the voice belonged to Ron Ellik, who went on to display his high intelligence and literary perception by saying that he liked the "Sector General" series. Later we were to discover that a fine brain beat behind that high, bespectacled forehead, although this was to be the first and only time that he referred to Ian and myself as gentlemen. [3]

Ron Ellik:

I missed breakfast, of course, and expected to starve out the morning or find some coffee somewhere; surprised was not the word for me when Ella and Ethel Lindsay grabbed the landlord on his way through and demanded tea and rolls. He seemed startled that anyone should miss breakfast, but off he went and in jig time he was back with chow for an army. The three of us surrounded it.

That innkeeper was a fine fellow, by the way, name of Bert Harman, a personal friend of Bennett (in Harrogate nearly everyone knows Bennett); he broke his back making us happy for the weekend – for instance, besides the extra breakfasts he made up without charge, when Dave Barber and I wanted cards Friday he got out a deck and made us a present of them; further, he was always interested in how the convention was going, how I was enjoying England, and like that. More of him later in this chronicle, to be sure.

Some time before noon, I walked downtown with the Slater family – Ken and Mrs. S., and eight-year-old Suzy. They were seeing the city, I was looking for flashbulbs; as it developed, I saw some of the city and they helped me look.

Harrogate is a spa, possessed of some 88 mineral springs (chalybeate

and sulphur), with only light industry to surround the tourist-focused activities which keep it going. The Stray, a huge public park and garden protected by act of Parliament from being built upon, fronts the main line of buildings and formed the scene for our walk to the business section, Suzy dancing ahead of us and swinging around tree-trunks.

It's a small town of approximately 60,000, and combined crowded, old-fashioned buildings with more modern department stores and restaurants. It sports a large J.J. Newberry's – incredibly American, with the prices all in sterling being the only difference – and a food I've never seen elsewhere: the Wimpy.

On my return to Harrogate after Sheffield, Bennett and I discussed this oddly-named hamburger*. Hamburgers are known in England and are nothing new – but recently an American-style chain of Wimpy stands has sprung up. I can't explain why I saw them only in Harrogate, either, as Ron assured me they would be in London. Perhaps I wasn't too interested in eating hamburgers while in England.

** Ellik calling Wimpy burgers "oddly-named" is a little surprising since I'd have expected everyone of that period to have heard of Popeye's hamburger-obsessed friend J. Wellington Wimpy. [Ed.]*

Leaving the Slaters, I investigated several photographic supply shops, and found they had no Kodak flashbulbs of the M type at all; all I could find as substitute was an F series that worried me – they had glass bases, not metal, and I know too little about cameras to experiment. I decided to take available light only, and chance the results. As you know who saw my slides at LASFS and New York this summer, many of my indoor shots were overly red, but almost all were properly lighted because of the versatility of Al Lewis's camera.

Returning to the West Park, I reasoned from its emptiness that the programme must have started at the Clarendon. I went to my room to drop some things I had picked up and to change film, and bumped into two gigantic young gentlemen, each well over 6' 3" tall, obviously looking for fans.

"The convention is starting in the Clarendon," I said, whereupon they looked at one another in surprise.

Just as I pondered what I had said wrong, they sprang upon me – they had spotted my slovenly American accent instantly, and introduced themselves as James White and Ian McAulay of Irish Fandom. They were late arriving – their luggage had not come through on the plane with them, and they'd finally had to leave Walt Willis to wait for the next plane. We

talked about travel and my visit that week to Belfast as we strolled over to the other hotel, and I was in the unusual position of introducing these seldom-visitors to England to the few fans I could name. [2]

Ron Bennett:

The Saturday programme began with a playing of a tape recorded by the BBC and belonging to Brian Aldiss of the Home Service programme *The Realm of Perhaps*, a discussion on sf by Ted Carnell, John Wyndham, Brian Aldiss, Ken Bulmer and others. Following the tape long standing Nova writer E.R. James surveyed the sf scene, defining sf as having a basis of scientific fact explained logically. He claimed that Yoga thought of the concepts of science fiction long before sf did so. James amazed his audience by removing his jacket and standing on his head Yoga fashion. He spoke of the claims of Yoga and the manner in which *Analog* was using stories based on the off-beat sciences, and mentioned how to work even slight scientific concepts into stories. He wound up by reviewing his own sf history and the trends of sf during the last ten years. One major theme, he said, is that of overcrowding and survival. As one gets older one writes better, said James. One has a better insight into human nature and this is all important to writing. A short discussion followed, mainly on Yoga. Harry Harrison refuted the claims of the Eastern mystics, following research by Koestler, and Liverpool John Roles defended James.

Brian Aldiss introduced Tom Boardman, the Guest of Honour, mentioning man's first efforts at writing which were possibly on the lines of "mastodons crossing" or "back in ten minutes, lunch in caldron.". The first book was possibly religious (like sf?) and written in cuneiform on baked clay tablets. This would have been difficult to interpret, rather like a fanzine. He spoke of progress made in publishing. Last year there were over 100 sf titles with much old reprint material because there is today a shortage of good SF writers in an age when there are great opportunities for writers who can think for themselves. SF, said Aldiss, is more than ever in the public eye. Only recently there was the Question in the House of Commons on *Skyrack* and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Actual examples, said Aldiss, included coverage by *Vogue* and the BBC's *Realm of Perhaps*. John Wyndham is selling regularly on the general market and sales for *The Day of the Triffids* are rivalling that of Agatha Christie. For years we have had to fight for a general acceptance of sf and now this has arrived. This year we had the first pocket books which had covers without the eternal bug eyed monsters chasing glamour girls. These are the Mayflower Sci-Fi series which have as their editor Tom Boardman.

Tom Boardman told his audience that surprised though they might be

to discover it, publishers are trying to make money. Publishing is their living. He asked why hardcover publishers sold only two thousand copies of a book and yet would repeat the experiment, and answered his question by stating that often they are hoping to sell subsidiary film or reprint rights. Subsidiary rights are very important in the publishing world, said Boardman. He spoke of the rivalry to publish only good sf, though this itself is a danger, he said, to publishers. If more publishers jumped on the bandwagon the cake would be split more ways for buyers such as chain libraries would spread their orders and there would be less cash per publisher. One solution for a publisher appeared to be the paperback field. SF appeared to be a cast iron bet as a steady seller with usually fifteen to twenty thousand copies sold. How different from books like Ted Tubb's *Alien Dust* in the hardcover edition which sold only one thousand. He spoke of his own experiences in editing paperbacked SF, mentioning Penguin, Corgi, Panther and finally Mayflower. After his talk Boardman was asked questions on reprints under different titles, many members of the audience accusing publishers generally of underhand dealings and quoting examples. Boardman spoke of several different legitimate reasons for this common practice and also answered questions on the selection of material and commissioning writers to work to specifications. Altogether a most interesting and entertaining talk. [1]

James White:

At the Clarendon the Guest of Honour, Tom Boardman, was addressing a hot, airless, crowded room full of con members, and as we were far too hot already we stayed outside chatting with Ron, E.R. James, and a German fan called Thomas Schlück, and some other German fans whose faces I can remember but whose names I am afraid to spell. Why is it, I wonder, that foreigners can't have nice, simple, easy to pronounce names like Aloysious Xavier O'Herlihy instead of Tom Schlück? From what we could see Tom Boardman's speech must have been very good, because everybody was looking at him and not at Brian Aldiss kneeling in the upper half of one of the windows with his feet and hands pressed against the glass. It was said that he was trying to get the window open so as to let some air in, but my own feeling was – judging by the odd, intent curvature of the spine and the juxtaposition of his various limbs – that he had been successful in gnawing away some putty and was breathing through the crack between glass and sash.

Brian Aldiss is very resourceful and has ways of dealing with things like Ian McAulay, Spanish restaurants, and criticism regarding cobwebs to the Moon which are peculiarly his own. Later, when Tom Boardman had

finished, I was privileged to witness him in action against Ian. It went something like this...

Ian: “Aldiss, what d’you mean having men with diode valves in their heads?”

Brian: “I know, I know. Totally implausible. Terrible story.”

Ian: “Absolutely no technical verisimilitude: how could the vacuum be maintained.”

Brian: “Worst story I ever wrote. Got sent out by mistake. Thought I’d burned it.”

Ian: “Full of scientific boners...!”

Brian: “I agree entirely. A horrible story. Lousy, should never have seen print. I feel terrible about it, Ian.”

Ian: “It wasn’t a *bad* story. As a matter of fact it was pretty good idea-wise. But for the one small scientific inaccuracy...”

Brian: “Can I get you another beer, Ian?”

I can’t remember exactly what Ian’s reply was and, not wishing to give a false impression regarding his drinking, I have chosen to omit it. [3]

Ron Ellik:

I was supposed to talk about MIT that afternoon, but things got a bit hectic in there when the speeches ran on towards dinner. Everybody wanted a break, and I was shuffled about to the next day, which didn’t bother me a bit.

During the afternoon sessions I met J. Michael Rosenblum, one of the nearly pre-historic British fans, sustainer of Britain’s famous *Futurian War Digest* throughout World War II when publishing fanzines was an almost impossible task. Mike is no longer the youngster described by Joe Gibson from a wartime meeting – he is now a robust, cheerful businessman with a quiet, clear speaking voice and an interest in almost everything.

More meetings: Brian Burgess of London, another towering giant, who reminded me of Bre’r Bar of the Joel C. Harris stories; Brian Aldiss, Hugo-award-winning Oxfordian who was helpful in my almost-meeting with Professor Tolkien; and – surprise – Eric and Beryl Bentcliffe, my hosts of two event-filled days earlier. Eric was wandering about with camera in hand, busy as a bird-dog and happy to be actifanning again.

It was pleasant to meet the Cheltenham crowd, too – Eric Jones, with whom I used to correspond as early as 1952, and who turned out to be an alive, outgoing man and the sustaining prop of the Cheltenham SF Circle; Peter Mabey, the hard-working Librarian of the BSFA; and Audrey Eversfield, Bobbie and Bill Grey, and John Humphries. They made sure I was thoroughly invited to visit Cheltenham and somehow at about that

point I found myself upstairs in the Clarendon losing a small fortune to John Roles and Ina Shorrock while Norman clucked at my eagerness for Brag. It wasn't until the next night (Sunday) that I began to win back my losings, a change at least partially due to that session in the Shorrocks' room, and Norman's comments about my playing. He has the most irritating manner of raising his eyebrows when I do something wrong – a sure-fire teaching system.

During the later afternoon I took advantage of a counter at one side of the assembly hall downstairs to set up with my camera taking fairly candid shots of many people intent on the programme. These shots with late afternoon lighting directly on the subjects were among my best – particularly one of Mercer, full-face, looking rather startled as I call his name, snapping the shutter a breath later.

Eventually the West Park inhabitants wound our way back to dinner; by this time Walt Willis had arrived from the airport, and I was privileged to meet him ahead of most other American fans by four months. He was tired and rushed from the hassle at the airport, and I don't recall him saying anything deathless that afternoon; as he and the other Irish fen were at the West Park, I saw much of them for the next day and a half, but as I was to visit Belfast the next weekend we naturally spent much of our time meeting others. The Irish boys are nearly as unfamiliar with English fandom as I am because they have attended very few conventions: Walt has been to two conventions in America, for example, and only three in the U.K.* John Berry is an even wilder example – he has never attended a British con, and the only ones who have met him are those fen who've visited Belfast; but he's an extreme, and Walt, James and Ian certainly knew their way about. [2]

** Not so. Willis was at cons in England in 1951, 1952, 1953, 1956 and 1957. [Ed.]*

James White:

During the part of the programme when everyone was supposed to be out seeing Harrogate, everyone wisely stayed inside – it was raining buckets, and buckets are even more painful than cats and dogs when they fall from a great height. I met Ethel Lindsay again, one of the nicest people I know even when she isn't heaping me with egoboo. And Ella Parker, who is something with which my four-letter alien classification system is not equipped to deal.

When Ethel introduced us I was particularly impressed by the way she said "I've heard about *you*...!" and while still holding my hand twisted

part-way up my back went to greet Ian with “You stinker!” to which Ian replied “Aaargh!”

There have been times in the past when I have thought that there might be something between Ian and Ella. I’ve seen him get suddenly flustered when her name came up in conversation, seen his face redden and generally act as if he was in the grip of some strong emotion. He had spoken of her in somewhat derogatory terms, of course, but we all know how love is akin to hate. Bearing in mind the fact of his approaching nuptials in July I had come to Harrogate expecting to see Ian take a tender, noble farewell of Ella like the lovers parting in *Prisoner of Zenda* only more sloppy – but I must say that nothing like this happened at all.

All during the afternoon the rain beat at the hotel windows, but inside, to me at any rate, the script was straight out of Kubla Khan – sweet words and soft music all the way. The music dealing as it did with my many fine qualities as a writer and my extreme modesty as a person, was repetitious but never boring and the libretto contained such thoughtful, perceptive passages as “The Sector General series is the *greatest*, man” and “You *must* continue the series, please, Mr. White” and “Are you a medical man yourself, Mr. White, the technical details...” When I’d read the blurb on the advance copy of Ballantine’s *Hospital Station* where they had said that I could only be compared with Hal Clement I’d thought that my cup had run over until it filled the saucer but the way egoboo was pouring in it looked like flooding the whole tea-tray, I was getting so much egoboo even I began to feel that it verged on the vulgarly ostentatious, and after one particularly pleasant chat with one of my public – a girl who just *adored* my stories and whose husband, who didn’t read s-f at all but promised to try some now that he had met an author – Ian asked me in somewhat withering tones if I was enjoying the Con so far?

I ignored the sarcasm, because I was feeling very good just then, and instead offered to buy him a drink. He refused it.

There are many people, particularly those who may have been at or been influenced by reports from last year’s Con, who will doubt the veracity of that statement. They will say that it is not only impossible for such an event to occur, it is completely ridiculous. But Ian Ross McAulay did on the afternoon of Saturday 21st April at approximately 17:15 hours, refuse a drink. I can even recall the actual words used in his refusal, which were:

“I’ve only *got* two hands, mate!”

Shortly after this Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Margaret Manson, Walt, Ian and myself suddenly found ourselves in the same corner of the

room thinking the same hungry thoughts. As it was still raining Margaret offered to drive some of us to a restaurant for dinner in her two-seater car. The car is fairly roomy for a two-seater, and Brian insisted that everyone would fit in it. Everybody very nearly did, too. Then Walter elected to walk to the restaurant so that the rest of us could ride. To me this proved the inherent nobility of the man and also, I think, his instinct for survival. In his younger days Walt was once run over by a bus, and at one stage there had been some talk about breaking his and Harrison's legs to make them – Walt and Harry, that is, not their legs – fit into the boat.

I was sitting in front beside Margaret Manson, who was driving, and thoroughly enjoyed the trip. The only odd thing I noticed about it was the way our headlights seemed always to illuminate the base of the rain clouds rather than the street ahead. Brian, Ian and Harry, however, kept grumbling all the time about not having room to breathe and then proving that they could by going into long, grisly descriptions of their internal injuries.

The moment we walked into that Spanish restaurant I had the feeling that we were not wanted. It was something about the way the patrons looked at us, I think, we were obviously so full of life and witty conversation, happy, well-adjusted, while they.... Well, they reminded me of a tin of biscuits once seen after it had been dropped from a third-floor window – outwardly polished and shining but all twisted and broken up inside. They also ran heavily to green suits with red beards or dinner jackets with the obsolete DB-lapels *[double breasted]* and lines of asceticism or maybe ulcers around their mouths. Our own party was dressed with casual elegance – Brian in a dark bronze shadow check number which made me feel envious, Ian in sober charcoal grey with a yellow sweater, which denotes that he is a physicist and not an advertising executive, Harry Harrison in a hand-woven Harris tweed jacket of excellent cut and possessing extremely long-wearing properties – I recognised it from the Worldcon in '57; and Walter and I (who patronise the same tailor, me) elegant in casual but well-cut tweeds. Margaret looked terrific, but as I don't touch Ladies I am unfamiliar with the terminology to describe her outfit. The patrons had, therefore, no right to raise eyebrows at our dress nor could they object to our conversation, which was quite clean and moreover scintillated as only can Con conversations between people who have been saving up their best and worst puns for years and don't want to waste a second of talking time. On reflection I think maybe it was the puns which made them not like us.

The waiter who came forward also showed that we weren't wanted,

although in a more polite way, by refusing to speak anything but Spanish at us. But by some strange coincidence we happened to have two Spanish speakers with us, Margaret and Harry, and he retreated towards the kitchen to further register his disapproval by making us wait a long time for our huevos revueltos. Considering the fact that I hadn't had anything except three potato crisps given me by an admirer at three o'clock, to eat since leaving Manchester seven hours earlier, I thought my eating with just one knife and fork showed commendable restraint. [3]

Ron Ellik:

Saturday night was the fancy dress ball, highlighted by a number of events reminiscent of the Variety Show at the Pittsburgh Convention. To start it off somebody bought me a drink and dealt me three cards and I learned some more about Brag. That was broken up shortly, though, by Ella who wanted me to meet Terry Jeeves; Terry and Val had to shout at me by then, though, for the Gerry Poole trio had started up in a corner, and the party was really warming. They shouted hello and I shouted hello back, and they roared an invitation to visit them in Sheffield after the convention, and I cheerfully bellowed back acceptance, just as Bennett came up and informed me that the panel of judges was supposed to have an American on it to lower the standards of judging. I contemplated slugging him but as I set my glass down someone filled it; so I picked it up and elbowed my way through the dancing crowd to where my fellow Areopagi sat.

We had fun judging that group; the costumes were few, and Ethel Lindsay agreed with me later at Chicago that they were less spectacular than the American costume parties, but choosing from among them offered some interesting problems – for one thing, we had to invent categories as we went along. Mr. & Mrs. Boardman and Harry Harrison were the other judges – Bennett had stuffed it solidly with Americans. As the monsters and girls paraded before us we talked and judged intermittently, taking our own time about it; and when we finally handed out the lavish prizes (Bennett outdid himself there, believe me) we pleased everyone and were well satisfied with our work. [2]

And the noise level continued rising.

Ron Bennett:

The Fancy Dress Party on the Saturday evening was extremely ably compered by Cheltenham's Eric Jones, supported by music from the specially imported Gerry Poole Trio. With the theme of the fancy dress A.D. 2062 prizes were won by Sector General Nurse Ethel Lindsay,

Traffic Warden Wally Johnson, Angel Jill Adams, Mutant Tony Walsh, and Hobbit and Strider Ken Cheslin and Susie Slater. Phil Rogers ran a book on a horse racing game which raised hopes of backers and fifteen shillings for the convention and Ron Bennett sidestepped a conga line which spread into the hotel's public bars to down the first glass of sulphur water – rigged of course (I live here) – in the spa-water drinking contest. Contestants were John Roles, Brian Jordan and Horst Margeit. Roles quickly retired and Jordan finally won. It is understood that when he recovers he will inform us as to the quantity drunk. [1]

Ron Ellik:

I don't know whether those waters were chalybeate or sulphur, but Norman Shorrock and I tasted a wee drop and agreed roundly that they'd have to catch us and throw us before we'd enter that contest. We watched and I worked the camera while Brian Jordan won by downing perhaps twelve ounces of the vile fluid, leaving his nearest competitor half a cup behind, spitting and grimacing horridly. Jordan was carried insensible from the room, uttering weird sounds; he should be available for comment within the sixmonth.

Right after the spa-water drinking contest I tried to have a word with Harry Harrison about American fandom; we actually did exchange a few phrases, at the top of our vocal ranges, but the music had started up again, and a conga line began. I was invited to join in right behind Ina Shorrock, and no gentleman could resist being in a conga line behind Ina Shorrock; the wildly swaying crowd of over two dozen fans wound its way about the hall, upsetting the remains of the Brag game and overturning tables, and suddenly the leader decided it was stuffy and we were bumping and singing through the lobby of the West Park, and I forget what happened between then and the party in the Parker-Lindsay room around two ayem. [2]

James White:

Meanwhile back at the West Park a Fancy Dress party had been going on, and after severing diplomatic relations with the Spanish restaurant we joined it. Here Ethel Lindsay, bless her long white cotton socks, bestowed upon me the ultimate in egoboo by winning the Fancy Dress contest, as one of my characters. I decided there and then that this was the best con I had ever been at. Nothing, even the smell of the Harrogate water which John Roles, Horst Margeit and Brian Jordan were quaffing in an attempt to win death and/or glory in the spa-water drinking contest, made me change my mind.

About the same time someone came up and started developing the argument that aliens in s-f weren't truly alien, that authors cheated by making them so very human when they should have been making them unhuman with completely alien motivations and thought processes. He said that Hal Clement and I were serious offenders in this respect. I thought that this was the second time that I had been compared with Hal Clement, and what a really good con this was. At the moment I can't remember this critic's name, only that he was an Oxford man, sensitive, intelligent and a mean climber of drain-pipes.

There was a certain amount of alcoholic drink at Ethel and Ella's party that evening. They had stocked up more than adequately and I had helped Ian bring in some beer – each of us taking an end while bringing the crates from the van downstairs to the room. On entering the party Ian displayed no signs of inebriation, although I had seen him holding a glass in his hand for hours, or sometimes two glasses. However, as all glasses look similar – sort of shiny and transparent and with brown stuff slopping about inside – I would not like to say that he drank continually all day. However, to scotch once and for all the rumour that Ian is a compulsive alcoholic I decided to count the beer he took.

Approximately three point two five seconds after entering the room he had his first beer, to be sociable, he said. This was at ten-thirty. At ten-fifty three I made it six beers. At eleven-five it was nine beers, and counting. Eleven-twenty came and it was thirteen, and holding.

Apparently somebody had pinched his glass when he had been in the process of re-distributing his mass on the bed to let Walter take his elbow out of Ella Parker's ear. A substitute receptacle had been discovered nearby, but Ian refused to use it on aesthetic grounds. Finally Ethel saved him by producing a plastic tooth-glass.

The count resumed.

At seventeen and counting I made a pun and Ella threw a whiskey bottle at me. It was an empty bottle – she knows I don't drink – and it missed. Then she kicked me out of bed, her reason being that I was giving her a cramp in the leg as well as a pain in the neck. So I moved to Ethel's bed which just had Ethel, Ron Ellik, George Locke, Archie Mercer, and part of Brian Aldiss on it. Here Ethel gave me three whole, full bottles of tomato juice. All this caused me to lose count.

I am very sorry about this as I was and still am anxious that no exaggerated rumours should be noised abroad regarding Ian's drinking, but I must admit that there is a fairly high probability that between the hours of twelve midnight and four o'clock when the party broke up he had another

beer, maybe even two. However the facts as we *know* them, verified by a sober, unbiased observer name of myself, are that between ten-thirty and twelve he had a very moderate seventeen beers. Any count made after this time is sheerest conjecture and should be discounted as such.

I can also state that, although the clarity of his speech left something to be desired at times – this was due to southern Irish environmental influences rather than beer – the incisive clarity of his intellect remained at all times unimpaired. [3]

Ron Ellik:

I mentioned earlier that Liz Humbey had tried to get root beer at the U.S. base near Harrogate; she had failed. She was abject, she was frightened, she was mortified – but I forgave her, because I was getting a bit scared that everywhere I went my hosts would have heard of my taste in soft drinks and stocked up on root beer. Fortunately I was guaranteed that her strongest efforts weren't good enough – and, of course, that cinched it.

So I wandered into Ella and Ethel's room, and Ella leaped up, elbowed the Brag players out of the way, and opened one of two CASES of Hire's Root Beer, in tins.

I was astonished.

The explanation was simple enough: Ajax Hoch, that sneaky American stationed at the same base, had civilian canteen privileges; Liz, as a British national, had none. He and Ella had contrived to surprise me and hadn't thought to tell Ron or Liz. Ella watched in glee as I chugalugged a can of brown carbonate, and then announced that, finally, she would let someone else try some. The room full of adventurous souls didn't exactly crush me in their press to this strange drink – especially when I told them it wasn't alcoholic – but my careful eye found about 50% favourable reaction among those who did try it. Ella, for instance, hates the stuff and insisted that I wasn't worth the trouble and should be made to drink all of it, right then; but Ian McAulay and George Locke rather liked it. Dave Barber says no respectable man would drink anything like that and try to play Brag.

Sitting on a small segment of one of the beds, I spent much of the night talking to McAulay, James White, Ted Forsyth and Peter Mabey. Ian and James were curious about my mathematical abilities – Ian is a physicist from Trinity College in Dublin, and James adopts the pose of a curious observer. It seems that all of Irish fandom was interested in relativity, because Ian had tried to explain Einstein's concept of the four-dimensional universe to Berry and failed.

They told me Berry refused to accept relativity until Andy Young, far-wandering astronomer, had happened to be in Belfast and told him the universe was shaped like Marilyn Monroe. Berry immediately brightened towards this visualization, and decided to undertake a life-time study of relativity in order to find out what part of the universe he was standing on.

Walt claimed to have defeated Ian in a physical sciences type argument by deductive logic, and Ian turned to me for help. "You are a mathematician," he proclaimed, "and mathematics is the servant of the sciences."

"And the queen," I insisted. "Eric Temple Bell says it's the queen and servant of the sciences. Yes."

"Well, queen and servant, then, but you admit it's the servant. What I want you to do, servant, is help me get out of this pickle with Walter, who wants me to explain – " and so help me, gentle reader, that was at three in the ever-loving morning, and I can't for worlds recall the problem Walter and Ian were having. All I recall clearly is that I considered the problem with a furious grimacing and wiping of my glasses, stared hard at Willis and harder at Ian, then turned quickly about and glowered at Liz Humbey, who cowered from me. Then I grimaced some more, muttered under my breath, and made my pronouncement.

"There is a simple, decisive answer to your dilemma," I said. "You stop relying on physics, and turn to logic and rhetoric, remembering that the true scientific method is eclectic and shuns no discipline where it may aid the advance of certain knowledge. And you tell him to define his terms."

Having spoken, I had to sit still while Walt roared in anguish – it seems he hadn't really known what he was talking about, almost as much as Ian hadn't known what he was talking about.

Somebody asked me if I was so smart, what was a Klein bottle, and I told him it was a bottle with its inside on the outside and both of them the same side, sitting on its top, and able to hold a liquid. That brought James White up short, and he stared incredulously while I attempted a detailed hand-waving description which was interrupted by Willis bellowing "Define your terms!" every few minutes. Amazingly, I think White understood when I was through. [2]

James White:

Ethel, Ian, Walt, Ron Ellik, George Locke and myself were on Ethel's bed – – the party had begun to thin out by that time – discussing the existence or non-existence of the square root of minus one, and Ian was with it. For all of three minutes he had me seeing the square root of minus

one as a living, breathing thing instead of a piece of mathematical sleight-of-hand. (Other people in the room were no doubt seeing things, too, but the square root of minus one isn't pink.) From there I steered the conversation into less esoteric channels by asking a question which had been bothering me for some time, namely how, if Space is curved, even negatively, in the fourth dimension is it not possible for a person travelling far enough to return to his starting point?

There was silence in our bed for a few minutes after this. Ron, who is very clean cut and intelligent, looked slightly fuzzy – nine cans of root beer by two-thirty – and pensive. Then suddenly his eyes lit up. Obviously he had the answer, or at least an out. With throbbing voice and flashing spectacles he demanded, "What is Space, what is curvature, what is a person? *Define your terms!*" [3]

Ron Ellik:

And then Dave Barber and Sid Birchby (I think) taught me nine-card Brag, which is in my estimation an extremely expensive game with no fun attached. It seems you get to pay sixpence for nine cards from which you assemble three Brag hands and you start betting to out-Brag your opponents' three hands. After I tired of giving Barber my shillings, I talked to Bill and Roberta (Wild) Gray about Arthur's grave at Glastonbury which unfortunately wasn't on my itinerary, and then I spent an extremely interesting hour or so talking the international fan scene over with Forsyth and the busiest fan librarian in the world, Peter Mabey.

The BSFA and the N3F started to get in communication with each other a couple of years ago, but I guess it just wasn't time for the idea then. At one point there was a new set of BSFA officers elected and no word about the N3F was passed on. We decided to talk about this with the entire BSFA slate the next morning after the Annual General Meeting, and at some time near dawn I found I wasn't looking at Mabey but at the inside of my eyelids. I sought my couch, grateful for the electric blanket. [2]

Sunday 22nd April

Ron Bennett:

Ken Slater ran a quiz game on the lines of the radio and TV *Take Your Pick* competitions. The top prize of a bottle of Haig went to Jimmy Groves whilst George Locke won a plastic bucket and bowl and Michael Rosenblum found himself owning a pair of cheap earrings. Other prizes during the weekend were awarded to Eddie Jones for his display on

Bastion, to Bob Parkinson for the highest auction bid (£2), to Phil Rogers for spotting the Con's deliberate poster mistake (directions to the West Park Assembly Room), to Terry Jeeves for the password (this was "Wilson Tucker" and was won when Terry tried to sell Ron Bennett a copy of *The Lincoln Hunters*) and to several fans for displays in the photo competition. Ethel Lindsay won the "Beautiful Britain" section (with the only entry) and first prize in the "What is It?" section went to Harry Harrison, with Eddie Jones second. Ron Bennett and Eric Bentcliffe won prizes for their pictures of "Fans." [1]

Ron Ellik:

Easter Sunday might have dawned gloriously in that northern city, but I didn't know about it until vastly after the fact. I lay insensible, and of course I missed breakfast again – but that didn't matter, because I was up just in time for lunch. Sunday was a muchly relaxed day, despite piling-up of programme items scheduled on from Saturday; the judging of the photo contest was over before I got to the Clarendon, and I was just in time to go back to the West Park for the BSFA Annual General Meeting.

During the AGM I sat still and listened – the concept of a national fan organization holding all its business during one annual meeting startled me, and I learned quite a bit; I was also entertained by the first competition for the next consite in the memory of British fandom. London had come to Harrogate expecting to take the 1963 con away with them – but that was because no one has ever wanted a convention in advance, and they figured to break a tradition.

Amazingly enough, Peterborough (it's 40 miles north and slightly east of London) also wanted the convention – so they had to shake the dust off the rule book and actually hold a vote. [2]

Ron Bennett:

At the BSFA's Annual General Meeting Ella Parker bid for the 1963 Convention on behalf of London and Ken Slater spoke on behalf of Peterborough. It was suggested that the issue be left until the afternoon when the vote would be taken. Discussion on the point took place informally at lunchtime and after the Professional Panel the vote was taken, the return being Peterborough 39, and London 23. It was generally agreed that poor presentation of a worthwhile scheme for a prestige hotel swung the favour to the Peterborough backers.

The BSFA's new officers took over at the AGM with Terry Jeeves stepping up to take over as Chairman for the coming year. Bobbie Gray was elected Vice-Chairman and Jill Adams took over as Treasurer from

Ted Forsyth. Ken Cheslin was elected Secretary and Jimmy Groves relinquished the post of Publications Officer to Michael Rosenblum and Ella Parker, two experienced publishers who will have the job of putting out *Vector*, and the *BSFA Newsletter*. Peter Mabey continued as Librarian and reported in detail of the Library's standing saying that it is now the largest SF lending library in the world. [1]

The Dr Arthur R. Weir Memorial Fund was discussed and it was agreed that the money collected during the past year, some fourteen pounds, should be devoted to a Fan Recognition Award in Doc's name. A British Fantasy Award was also discussed and Tom Boardman offered to publish an anthology to raise funds for this award, on the lines of a similar anthology project already in operation for the mystery writers under his wing.

Ron Ellik:

Tom Boardman made a surprising offer to publish a special anthology professionally, proceeds to go to the Dr. Arthur R. Weir Memorial Fund to establish a Fan Recognition Award in Doc's name. There are some fourteen pounds (about $40) in the Fund now, and British fandom has high hopes for a fitting memorial to that surprising and well-remembered fan.

That afternoon I spoke to the new BSFA officers about the N3F/BSFA alliance, and we determined that first steps would be made with small-scale exchanges of publications and information about activities sponsored by the groups. Afterwards, I set up in the assembly hall of the Clarendon again, fixing myself to a doorway near Slater as he conducted a scientifictional quiz game, bringing fan after fan into the range of my camera.

When the game was over, Mike Rosenblum brought out a great store of ancient fanzines and photographs, and talked for all too brief a time about Britain's past in the sf fan field. He went back to pre-1937 fan days, covering the Leeds SFL Chapter and the first convention in England, the SFA and the old BFS, and a hatful of other things of intense interest to natives and visitors alike; perhaps it was the tight packing of the crowd, perhaps it was that British fans know each other so well, but I'm sure Mike's talk would not have held a U.S. assembly as well. The lot in the Clarendon was totally attentive, intent on the reminiscences of one man; there are too many strangers at American cons, and too many differing types of fans. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Michael Rosenblum gave what was generally agreed to be the most

interesting talk of the weekend with informal reflections over the past 25 years. He read from Speer's original Fancyclopedia and spoke of the days when the Clayton Astounding was brought to this country as ballast and could be bought for 3d or 4d a copy. He mentioned Hornig's club for letter hacks and Douglas Mayer's formation of the first foreign chapter of the SFL in Leeds. Other chapters were formed and eventually the first British convention was held in January 1937. Michael distributed photosheets (originally published in *The New Futurian*) which showed attendees to include Eric Frank Russell, Arthur Clarke, Walter Gillings and Ted Carnell. He spoke of the beginnings of *New Worlds* and the disintegration of British fandom within a fortnight when war broke out in 1939.

Fanzines at that time included Liverpool's Satellite and Gargoyle, he said, and his own *Futurian* which was later combined with Ron Holmes's *Science Fantasy War Digest* to become the *Futurian War Digest*. Michael spoke of the formation of the British Fantasy Society, originally a temporary war organisation, and his own virtual gafiation until 1953 when a new Leeds group (LSFA) was formed. He was asked questions about the whereabouts of various fans of the last twenty years and also how present day fandom compared with that of 25 years ago. Michael said that both fandoms appeared to contain their thinkers, but whereas the fandom of yesteryear worried about the wrongs of the world and thought that perhaps it could put them right, fandom today worried just as much but was more inclined to live for the joys of the hour. The talk had to be terminated because of the lack of time available. [1]

James White:

Ian said that he wouldn't drink that day but save his small capacity for the party that night. He looked like Death warmed up, and from my First Aid and Nursing lectures I decided that his symptoms could be ascribed to one or all of a number of conditions which included malaria, morning sickness, jaundice, alcohol poisoning or rigor mortis. In the interests of fairness and because he is a friend of mine, I would not wish to state the one I thought most likely.

After the serious constructive business was out of the way – Peterborough won the 1963 con to the surprise of everyone including the people who had voted for it – came the Professionals' Panel. This was something which I had been dreading because I don't speak well and prefer to *write* my spontaneous witticisms using approximately twenty minutes polishing on each one. Somehow I didn't think the panel could wait that long for a lousy White-type pun. I prepared to take my place feeling scared and not a little envious of people like Brian and Harry and

Tom Boardman who could talk off the tops of their heads as if they had never used the tops of their heads for doing anything else. But the Professional's Panel wasn't too bad after all, I didn't have to say very much and what I did say I said too softly for anyone to hear or object to it; and there were certain undercurrents of intrigue which very few people suspected which kept my mind off my tied tongue.

Sometimes I wish I lived in the probability world where that Professional's Panel went exactly the way we professionals had planned it....

Harry Harrison possesses, among his many other fine characteristics, a diabolical brain. Brian Aldiss's brain is such that it can contemplate mile-long spiders without qualms – spiders have six feet but no qualms anyway – and they both remembered that my brain, together with its necessary locomotive appendages, had taken part in an unscheduled gun-battle during the '57 con. Tom Boardman joined in the plot immediately it was mentioned, being a person with boundless enthusiasm for practically everything. I don't know if Steve Hall was in on it or not – it was a last-minute thing and there might not have been time to tell him. E.R. James certainly wasn't in on it, he being the person indirectly responsible for the whole thing.

E.R. James, a quiet-spoken, likeable and shy individual had, despite those characteristics, aroused feelings of envy within the breasts of certain pro authors by lecturing the convention membership on Yogi while standing on his head. In an effort to reassert themselves in the public eye the diabolical, peculiar, enthusiastic and big brains of Harrison, Aldiss, Boardman, and White respectively devised a little treat for the convention which they hoped would be rather more spectacular.

The way it was supposed to go was for Tom Boardman to keep filling the water carafe with water from a large gin bottle. He was to do this surreptitiously, but in such a manner that the audience would see him. It was a very warm afternoon and the other members of the panel had courageously agreed to drink water for the hour given over to the panel. As an added touch I, whom everyone knew was a confirmed water and/or tomato juice drinker, was to grimace slightly every time I knocked back a glass. The idea being that I thought the water tasted peculiar, but not knowing what gin tasted like was drinking it anyway. Then gradually the polite answers to questions from the Chair and audience were to take on a more caustic edge. We would become less than polite about each other's stories and graduate to criticisms of personal habits. Not knowing much about each other's personal habits we planned to invent some as we went

along. Some of these were to be a trifle on the bizarre side, but as vile pros used to engendering the suspension of disbelief we thought we could make them sound plausible.

At this stage we expected E.R. James to step in to try to calm us down, or at least aid Ron Bennett in the chair in doing so. This would be the signal for us to start coaxing E.R. James to show us how to stand on our heads, and the Chairman would be politely but firmly restrained if he tried to stop us. We did not foresee any trouble in this, as Ron Bennett without his elephant is at a disadvantage. We would start to stand on our heads ourselves, singly and in unison. Naturally we would topple and fall against one another, and say "sorry" to each other in loud drunken voices, or phrases like "who d'ye think you're shovin' mate?" And Harry Harrison would start using horrible language on all and sundry – actually it would be quite clean language, out of deference to the ladies present, but he would speak loudly and with feeling, in Danish. Various refinements were expected to suggest themselves as we went along, such as asking the people who asked questions from the audience to come out and fight, but the main idea was for it to end with a grand old drunken brawl all over and around Ron Bennett...

What actually happened was that, just as Harry Harrison was becoming impassioned in his replies to questions, and Brian Aldiss was waving his arms more than usual and I was breaking in on him – and the audience had gone quiet, possibly because they suspected something but more likely because they were beginning to hear us properly for the first time – Ron Bennett wound us up. Looking at his watch he said it was time for the auction and thank you gentlemen for a most interesting discussion.

All I can say is he should have waited a bit. It would have been much more interesting.

Up in Brian's room later we sympathised with each other and wondered how we had all had the idea that the panel was to last a full hour. When the half hour had finished we had just been warming up. It was during this meeting that Tom Boardman launched his idea for an sf authors' choice anthology which would not pay the authors anything but which would finance a British and/or International Hugo, the rest of the proceeds going to the BSFA. When I think now of how we all promised to donate stories to this anthology for free, hardened pro that I am, I get a certain sense of unreality. And it was also during this meeting that I saw Ian drinking whiskey out of a cut glass vase. In all fairness, however, I must add that the vase was eighteen inches high and there wasn't very much whiskey in it.

Because we had been talking about something or other during the time everyone else had been out to lunch, we missed the auction and TAFF address by Ron Ellik through having been overtaken with a strange alien craving for food. But everywhere in Harrogate seemed to be closed, it being Sunday, except a dank, noisome, first-floor cellar whose air was solid with the smell of very old fried fish. We wasted nearly an hour before we finally discovered a Chinese restaurant which was open. I think it is a very odd thing that people who we once considered dirty foreigners are the only people capable of serving clean food.

It was late afternoon when we returned to the hotel. The rain had stopped and the street and park outside were drenched with warm sunshine instead of cold water. It really was a fine afternoon and we went into the hotel feeling happy and eager to meet anybody we hadn't met yet and talk until it was time for the film, which was one I had wanted to see for about ten years and still want to see again. [3]

Ron Ellik:

In the evening Eric Bentcliffe and I entertained the (seemingly) entire mass of attendees with a talk about TAFF, its future and its problems. We had quasi-rehearsed this at Eric's home a few days before, and it went off like clockwork, corny jokes and all. In fact, I daresay I have never played to a better audience. One of the most interesting outcomes of this talk was a short list of American fans whom the British would like to see nominated for TAFF – it amounts to a mandate.

Later a mob filled the West Park assembly room (where the fancy Dress Ball had been held) to watch a Guinness movie, *A Matter of Life and Death*. Then we all charged over to the Clarendon for a wine-and-cheese party, brightened considerably by some of the hoariest old silent pictures I have ever seen – Tarzan from before Weissmuller, and Popeye cartoons like you have never imagined.

When the cheese and movies ran out, I found myself in a flying wedge headed for the lobby of the West Park and – you guessed it.

That game was an extraordinary event in itself; we must have settled down around midnight, when someone asked us if we intended to stop early or late. We replied that the cards would stop being dealt when the sun's first rays illuminated the lobby; and we paid no heed to cries that the lobby opened westward. [2]

James White:

After *A Matter of Life and Death* the Cheltenham Group showed old con movies and Tarzans. The only other things I can remember about this

party are that everyone seemed to be enjoying himself, that at one point there was a loud splintering crash from somewhere, and that everyone watching the movies had either to sit or lie on the floor because the screen rested on a chair little more than a foot above floor level. This horizontal rather than vertical distribution of bodies made walking and talking remarkably difficult.

Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison were in the lounge feeding meat pies to a crowd of emaciated fans. Brian had been charged 2/6 the previous night for one sandwich so tonight he had imported his own food. I heard later that he had grilled them in a metal wastepaper basket, but when they arrived they were going like – dare I say it – like hot cakes, I managed to get one just before Brian Burgess took off with the last dozen with some idea of auctioning them at the other party. Hearing that there was another party, in Ethel and Ella's room, I went looking for it and met Walt and Ian doing the same.

This was a very quiet party at first. Until people began breaking away from the other one there was only a handful there. We talked seriously about a great number of things fannish, and listened with awe to the sound of a typer coming from the next room where some fan was already bashing out a con report. Then gradually more people came in and it became impossible to sit less than eight to a bed. About five o'clock people had begun to drift away again until just Walt, Ian and myself were there and Ethel stated her intention of going to bed. Ella also said she needed her sleep otherwise she'd be a sight in the morning. I had a choice of replies to this, but refrained from making them and merely said that in my opinion anyone who went to bed at all on the second night of a convention was sissy and effeminate. Oddly enough, neither of the girls objected to being called effeminate.

We were all hungry again and went down to the kitchen on the off chance that the staff had forgotten to throw out some crusts. I don't know how the others felt, but I was hungry in italics. In the kitchen we found the walls, ceiling, floor and fittings streaming with water and clouds of steam hanging in the air. Obviously there had been a recent catastrophe with the hot water boiler. We waded out carefully and went to the small lounge, where a group containing Ron Ellik and Ron Bennett were playing cards. [3]

Ron Ellik:

During the night, at least the following people sat in from time to time: Norman Shorrock, Ron Bennett, Liz Humble, Phil Rogers, Sid Birchby, Dave Barber, Pat Kearney, Jill Adams and myself. I don't believe

more than six of us were at the table at any one time; if anyone else joined, he was there for only a brief span.

By this time I had gotten the hang of the game – you don't play your cards, you play your opponents; I was winning fairly regularly, and if Norman had thought I was keen the day before, he was goggle-eyed at my enthusiasm for the game when I began raking in chips – HIS chips. He played casually, as always, and won heavily from Bennett on some of the most fantastic hands I've seen: hands where the bet went up to a pound, where pots often totalled more than five pounds, and where tension all around the table was incredible. I learned how to be out-Bragged, and I learned how to laugh insanely at my cards no matter what; but mostly I learned how to rake in Norman's chips.

By the way, I am deliberately not describing Bennett's style of play. Anyone who has engaged in any game of skill or chance with him will appreciate the problem – and you who have not would doubt the most conservative description. Let it be said merely and stand as inadequate but all stencil can convey that he is the most disconcerting opponent possible, and also a subtly skillful player; whenever I thought I had the game cold, Ron would completely upset me in my complacence and while doing so would take a big pot.

At something like two o'clock Sid Birchby sat down with us, and by three or so he conceived the idea that nearly destroyed the West Park Hotel – he suggested coffee.

"But there'll be no hot water at this hour," muttered Norman, much more interested in cards than coffee.

"They have a geyser," insisted Bennett, "and it's worked just as one I have at home." And you know, it didn't register that he had said "geezer" instead of "guyzer" – the same pronunciation I had noticed when I had trouble understanding how Mrs. Bentcliffe procured hot water. No, I just wrote it off to tapping the heat of the aforementioned Harrogate mineral springs – the alert reader will observe that I am a peculiarly unscientific sort.

So Birchby and Bennett trundled out to Birchby's auto and retrieved his camping equipment, which just happened to contain some essence of coffee (a romantic name for instant coffee – it's what the British call it) and they set up in the kitchen to serve the rest of us. Bennett turned the geyser to "fill" and went about getting tea and tea-things out of the cupboard; and, when the clear-plastic water-container was rising to full, he reached up –

And turned the knob the wrong way.

It continued to fill, and he turned the knob more violently the wrong way, letting out a squeal while Birchby laughed hysterically, insisting that it was identical to one Ron had at home. At this point the card-players came charging in to the rescue, to find Birchby doubled up in laughter and Bennett struggling with the infernal geyser, which was letting huge gouts of warm water all over him and the kitchen.

Norman got the fool thing turned off, and Liz helped Ron to a chair, while the remainder of us looked for pans and cloths with which to mop up. All the time Bennett was swearing at the geyser and laughing alternately, and the situation was getting funnier and funnier, as such things do at three ayem. Liz was trying to calm Ron a bit, but she kept bursting into gales of laughter; it was all anyone could do to mop up.

In this incident I learned the meaning of geyser – it's a small, wall-mounted water heater, gas-operated. This was what had been on the wall above the sink at the Bentcliffe home, but it was metal and I didn't understand its use; it must have held at least three imperial quarts, while the West Park's geyser held perhaps one, to be used for single pots of tea or to infuriate Ron Bennett.

And so we mopped up, and Norman started the just-full geyser heating, and Liz helped Sid fix tea and coffee. As I was carrying my fourth tin of water from the room, I noticed the water beginning to bubble, and pointed it out to Ron.

"Don't pay any attention to the dirty little thing," he snapped. "You have to wait until that little red light goes out."

And, since he has one just like it at home, I took his word for it. On my next trip with a tin of water, as we were getting the last of it off the floor, I mentioned to Ron that the water was coming to a gentle, rolling boil.

"When that light goes off," he said, "the water is ready. It has a thermostat which clicks the light off at just the right time."

He was still shaking from his hysterics about shutting the thing off, so I made another trip. As I re-entered the kitchen, I saw steam rising from the far wall and boiling water spurting out the top of the geyser; nobody else was paying it any attention.

"Ron!" I shouted, "the geyser is boiling!"

He looked at me as if I had not a brain left.

"That red light –" he began, and turned to look at it.

"Oh, my ghod!" he screamed, suddenly hysterical again, "that light must mean it's finished heating!"

And with a cry of "But I have one like it at home!" he leaped across

Dave Barber and grappled once more with it – only this time every control was being doused with scalding water, and it took a seeming eternity to get it under control.

He had no help this time, because one and all we stood gasping for breath, holding our aching ribs and nearly collapsing with laughter. And of course we had to mop up again, but Bennett and I had to go to the lavatory about this time. When we returned, nearly recovered, the group was put into fresh paroxysms of hilarity by Sid Birchby, who unthinkingly picked up an unusual spoon, with half the bowl missing for some reason, and attempted to spoon instant coffee with it. He stood there inanely with coffee spilling out of his utensil, while we stared, and pointed, and laughed.

From then on to dawn, someone might say spoon, or water, or geyser, or "I have one just like it at home," to find gales of laughter.

At dawn the Irish boys descended from a party in Ella and Ethel's room which had lasted the night, and we told them the story. [2]

James White:

Ron Bennett stopped long enough to reassure us that the slight dampness in the kitchen was nothing to worry about and that the boiler had been unco-operative the first few times he had handled it, but now it knew who was boss. He also said he knew where there was some instant coffee and offered us boiling water prepared personally by the hands of the Convention Chairman.

While we were drinking this glorious, warm stuff, Ron Ellik gave us the details of how the other Ron had tamed the boiler. Not wanting to steal his thunder – boilers make an explosive, hissing noise when they blow up in any case – and in an effort to avoid puns with "highest steam" in them, I will not repeat them.

Ron went back to his brag and we began debating whether or not we should go to bed, deciding finally that we were all too hungry to sleep. Walt, Ian, the fan who climbs drainpipes and compares me with Hal Clement, and myself were beginning to brood about the injustices of the world and society in general, our thoughts being strictly from hunger. Then Ian, Walt, and the drainpipe-climber from Oxford left me in a last desperate attempt to find food... and stumbled on an unlocked refrigerator.

After we had made a large dent in the contents of the refrigerator and left some conscience money behind to cover the cost, we all felt more like ourselves. But still we were not completely happy. Possibly it was a sense of loneliness that ailed us, because we had been used to large crowds of people and now we were only four. The fans playing brag at the table a

few yards away were in another world, and didn't count. It didn't feel right being able to talk without raising one's voice, or walk from one end of a room to the other without saying "Excuse me" six times. In any case someone, possibly me, suggested that we wake up Harry Harrison or Brian Aldiss and somebody, me again, thought it was a good idea. We batted it about for a while, discovering that we weren't sure of Harry's room number and that there would be an element of risk attached to waking the Harrison up, and that we had a rough idea where Brian's room was and that he was the type who was invariably polite.

It was 6:45 when we left for the other hotel to wake up Brian.

His hotel was locked but there was a drainpipe which led past a half-open window which, according to our calculations, opened into Brian's room. The fan who compared me with Hal Clement said that he climbed drainpipes all the time at Oxford and started to scale this one. But drainpipes in Harrogate are made of softer stuff than in Oxford and it began to wobble alarmingly, so he came down without accomplishing his mission. Which was perhaps as well, since we were told later that it had been Margaret Manson's room.

Gradually we became resigned to the fact that we would be unable to wake anyone to join our party and we headed back to our own hotel to freshen up before breakfast. The sun was still shining down warmly and the sky, trees and grass had a newly minted look. I think we were all feeling a little poetic and philosophical about things, because it was suddenly borne upon us that when we had gone into the West Park Hotel to see *A Matter of Life and Death* the local meteorological phenomena had been identical with the conditions around us now. It made us wonder where Sunday night had gone, even if there had been such a thing as Sunday night. We had all been so busy enjoying ourselves and the time had passed so quickly that we began seriously to doubt Sunday night's existence. [3]

Monday 23rd April

Ron Ellik:

One by one British fandom filed downstairs then, as the day brightened and sobriety returned to our all-night Brag game. The Slaters set up their stand for Peterborough on the card table, and someone suggested breakfast. It was Monday, and the night was over.

After breakfast my main task was co-ordinating with the Jeeves family, with whom I was to travel to Sheffield that morning. This may

sound easy, but I had to keep moving to keep awake once I'd eaten, and I did it by walking from one of the two hotels to the other all morning.

Early off, Susie Slater came into the West Park with a popsicle; "penny ice", I think she called it. It was a muggy, hot day, and it seemed that all fandom turned on that pretty child to rob her of her tiny, but cold, popsicle. She looked frightened for a minute, then in a very businesslike way she took sixpences from everyone and went out to get more. I have a picture of Jimmy Groves very soberly working at a "penny ice" (at sixpence?), with the red colouring that many of my photos took when indoors – he looks preposterous.

And I said goodbye to one and all – to the German fans, the Cheltenham fans, the Irish, the London, the Scot fans – and Terry, Val and Sandra Jeeves and I headed south to Sheffield. The convention was over. [2]

James White:

After breakfast we returned to the two Con hotels and spent the morning waking people up and saying goodbye. Our train did not leave until mid-afternoon and so I was able to watch the convention dissolving around me – the Gerfans piling into their station wagon and driving off; Ken Slater, his wife, portable bookshop and lovely little daughter pulling away in their van; and the others who staggered away with suitcases so loaded with auction material that toothbrushes were carried in the breast pocket. There seemed to be a lot left unsaid to an awful lot of people and I expected to feel sad at coming to the end of such a wonderful convention, but somehow I didn't.

Then we all lunched with Ethel and Ella, who also left us to the train where we were joined by the Bentcliffes, and sat talking in the sunshine outside the station for a long time. Ethel said "See you in Peterborough, James" and Ella was rude to us all again, but even I could see that her heart wasn't in it. All this time I was still half convinced that it was yesterday afternoon and wholly convinced that it had been the nicest afternoon I had ever known. And so it was, when the train entered one of the long tunnels on the other side of Leeds with a roar that woke me suddenly to pitch blackness, that I reached across to touch Ian and Walt and yell that Sunday night had caught up with us.

Symbolically, and rather dramatically, the Long Afternoon of Harrogate had come to an end. [3]

After the con the German fans appear to have headed for London. The Science Fiction Club of London's Visitors' Book

for 27 April 62 was signed by Thea Grade, Rolf Gindorf, Wolfgang Thadewald, Horst Wolfgang Margeit, Guntram Ohmacht, and Tom Schlück.

[1] *Skyrack* #42 (April 1962, ed. Ron Bennett)
[2] Ron Ellik, from his TAFF report *The Squirrel's Tale*
[3] *Hyphen* #32 (March 1963, ed. Walt Willis)

1963

15. The Doc Weir Award

Peter Weston:

Now, this next bit might at first seem boring but it answers a question which has been repeatedly asked; why do we have a British fan-achievement award named after “Doc” Weir, who was only in fandom for a relatively short time and didn’t actually do that much? Well, it seems it was all a bit of a muddle, really, and it continued to be a long-running muddle for the next twenty years. In consequence a thick file of correspondence accumulated, recently passed to me by Rob Hansen, and without comment I’ve extracted the highlights below (heavily abridged for reasons of space). The whole thing serves as an object lesson to anyone who might consider starting some sort of continuing Award-scheme – and to put things into perspective, multiply the 1962 sums quoted by a factor of 30, at least, to equate to modern values.

From: John Phillifent to Peter Mabey (BSFA Librarian), 15th March, 1961

“I’ve just had the sad news about the death of Doc Weir... But I feel this is where we of the BSFA can do something more than just offer condolences. I have reason to believe that Doc wasn’t any too well-off. I know that he was bothered about being retired as an invalid because he wouldn’t have much of a pension as his teaching years were mostly abroad, and didn’t count. I should imagine he was insured, but I doubt if it would be much.

“I’m not suggesting charity, even if we were in a position to hand it out, or his widow willing to accept. But we know that Doc had a fine collection of SF and related literature. I happen to know that his wife is not a fan. So, unless she means to keep his books out of sentiment, they are going to be disposed of to a dealer.

“I suggest it should be possible for us, the BSFA, to make a bid. It would need someone preferably known to Mrs Weir, and someone who knows a bit about books... plus the authority to bid for us. It won’t be a tremendous amount, I know, but I think we could offer far more than she would get from a dealer. In this way we could do her a bit of good, preserve a fine collection, and, incidentally, do a bit of good for our library, too. It might even run to an auctioning-off of the more rare items towards a fund for Mrs Weir.” (Note: This letter was not passed to Archie Mercer until January 1970).

From: Archie Mercer (BSFA Treasurer) to Eric Jones (friend of the Weir family), 19th October 1961

"I hope you don't mind my enquiring after a matter that I know is of the most delicate, but as ad-hoc Treasurer of the Doc Weir Memorial Fund I'm beginning to wonder what the situation is from your end. I haven't heard a thing since Easter and feel somewhat in the dark about it all."

From: Archie Mercer to Ina Shorrock, (BSFA Chairman), Terry Jeeves (Vice Chairman), Peter Mabey (Librarian), Eric Jones (interested party), 2nd December 1961

"This is the circular that is about to be circulated, through Ken Slater's catalogue and *Skyrack* for a start, *Vector* and other things later. My idea is to saturate the home market in the hope that enough can be raised from within these crowded isles." (Attached is a circular produced by Ken Cheslin and headed, "A Memorial Fund", stating that at the Easter convention (Lexicon) "a Fund was launched with the object of raising sufficient money to purchase the relevant part of Doc's collection... or if the scheme proved impossible, used to commemorate Doc in appropriate fashion, probably by purchase of books from outside sources. It is estimated that at least £50.00 will be required to bring the project to fruition.")

From Archie Mercer to Ina Shorrock, Terry Jeeves, Peter Mabey, 8th and 17th December 1961

"Snafu. Ken Slater, having previously agreed to help distribute the Doc Weir Fund circular, now (having seen it) writes to say it's like, up the creek. Most of the stuff he's already bought from the Estate according to instructions Doc left, and he says it wasn't worth our bothering about, anyway. Anything of any special value Doc had previously bought from Ken.... I prefer Terry's No.1 suggestion (to wait until the next AGM and then put proposals on the subject to the Committee). As against this, however, the Doc Weir Fund's precise connection with the BSFA – and thus with the AGM – is still somewhat vague. The *Skyrack* copies (of the circular) are the only ones to have already gone out to the public. It's rather a lot to expect people to give to a cause with a Purpose to be Agreed Upon At Some Later Date."

From: Archie Mercer to Ken Bulmer, 1st February 1962

"....Right now the Fund is looking for a Cause, as it were. Suggestions so far include buying something in the way of quality books for a Memorial Collection, and donating it to Mrs Weir, in varying proportions.... Where you come in is in the matter of the London Circle

funds. As you will remember, last Easter you (on behalf of the London O) offered these funds to the BSFA to assist the Doc Weir project. As things are now, it looks as if the target will have to depend on the amount of available money rather than the other way around. To that end I should be glad to know precisely how much is involved, or who I should contact for such information. (Charlie Duncombe?) PS: I realise this comes in the middle of moving, coping with a new baby, etc. Sorry for the awkward timing."

From Ken Bulmer to Archie Mercer, 12th April 1962

"... I'd completely forgotten about the Weir Fund in view of the absence of any words from anyone about it in the months following the Gloucester con, and quite frankly, was attempting with some regret to withdraw from fandom. Then the new London people led by Ella Parker asked us about the old London O money. They felt it was lying about doing nothing when they could put it to good use in a number of ways, not least in financing the London convention and possible Worldcon. By "us" I mean Ted Tubb and myself. This seemed to me a good opportunity to get shot of responsibility for the cash.... I felt acutely aware that I was still the president, chairman, what-have-you, of the London O, which had never been wound-up. All we had done, if you recall, was to call a halt to the excessively official London O we'd started and which had been deliberately sabotaged by the Sandersons. Of course, the activity of that little trio had also driven the final nail into the coffin of old-time London O activity. The new people are now going ahead on their own lines and I am glad to see new blood taking over. So I wrote to Charlie Duncombe, asking for the cash, and he, on my instructions, sent it to Ted Tubb as the new interim Treasurer. Your letter reviving the old question of the Weir Fund then came as an embarrassment....

"I shall not be at the con this year but it wouldn't surprise me in the least if Ted turned up unexpectedly. Ted has a great and fine feeling for fandom and although at times his methods of expressing this strike a jarring note to heads-in-the-clouds dreamers, he is one fan who I believe really values fandom, and I deplore the denigration and scorn that has come his way over the years. He now has the cash and as far as I can see it is in good hands."

From Ted Tubb to Archie Mercer, 14th April 1962

"As I understood it, at the con last year Ken Bulmer offered the London Circle money to help buy the Doc Weir library in order to save it from the hands of the hucksters. This was the understanding of others in

these ’ere parts. At a meeting here recently the question was discussed with the following result; it was obvious that the question of helping to buy the library was academic – there was no longer any library to buy. As the library wasn’t being purchased the offer made by Ken was automatically washed out. Never, and I was there at the time, was the money offered for any other purpose.”

From Archie Mercer to Ken Bulmer, 28th April 1962, copy to Ted Tubb

“The Doc Weir Fund ended up – barring any minor last-minute accretions – with some £14-odd in hand. The whole subject was thrashed out at Harrogate and the various possibilities boiled down to two – set up an Award, or turn it all over to Mrs Weir. The idea of buying special books for the Library was not popular with anyone – not even with the Librarian – and so was dropped. The two final ideas were put to the vote at the AGM and the Award won by a substantial margin.

“The scheme, then, is that a trophy be presented annually to “the person (fan) voted the person one would most like to see win the said Award” (Ken Cheslin’s definition). The Award will be kept centrally, with the winner’s name engraved on it, and the winner will have a scroll to keep. It will be called something on the lines of “The Doc Weir Recognition Award”, any fan will be eligible to receive it, and voting will be restricted (probably) to con attendees.

“This should see some sort of good result from something that has been rather a mess since its inception. The terms of Doc’s will could not have been foreseen, of course, but nobody has been able to pin down responsibility for the idea getting around that there was a fabulous library worth saving – it was just a general impression. Another general impression was that Eric Jones would in the fullness of time have been initiating negotiations with Mrs Weir. This impression, unfortunately, was not shared by Eric himself. So the original plan sort of quietly folded up on itself and collapsed.”

From Terry Jeeves (new BSFA Chairman) to Archie Mercer, 11th May 1962

“I have circularised the committee with a request for anyone who will carry out the actual purchase of the Weir Award, or with contacts who can do same. Wanted: 1. Statue, 2. Plaque, 3. Shield, in that order, value c. £15.

“Re; the 1962 con. Ron has been billed £9 over cancellations. I instructed him to pay up, then bill those responsible. If they don’t cough up the BSFA will cover the loss. I feel this way we not only avoid getting

any bad name as an Association, but we also give confidence to con-organisers that we back them all we can."

From Archie Mercer to Terry Jeeves, 19th May 1962

"I'll willingly pass the balance and the records to Jill Adams (BSFA Treasurer) if it's OK with her. The current BSFA committee seems to have adopted the Fund, anyway – which is more than the last one seemed capable of doing. Me, I have no contacts suitable for this sort of thing. As a point of interest, Ken Cheslin has sent me a bit of paper with four rough sketches on it. I favour the drinking-horn one, but I was under the impression that successive winners' names would be engraved on, not just written on a card. 1962 con; you reassure me. I'm glad to hear it. To my mind that's part of the purpose of there being BSFA funds in the first place, for them to be available for such eventualities as this."

Receipt from Jill Adams (no letter), 20th August 1962

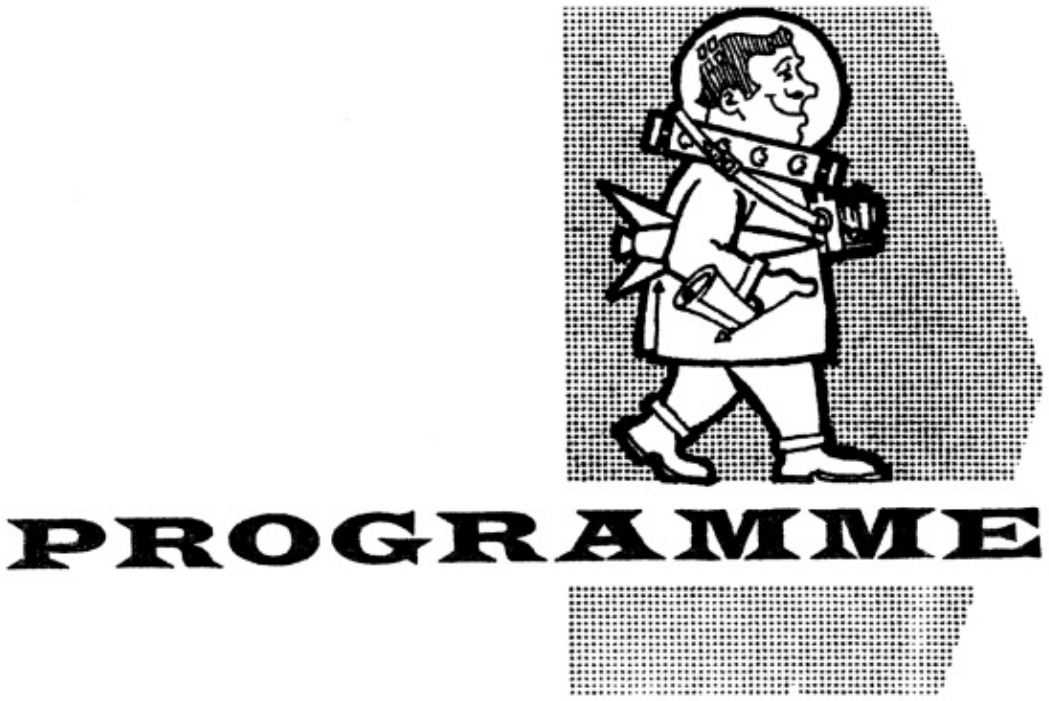
"Received from A.H. Mercer to date the total sum of £15.15.10d, representing the entire sum collected in connection with the Fund, to be disposed of as decided by the committee of the British Science Fiction Association."

We know that Jill bought a silver communion cup from a shop in Southampton, which was presented for the first time at the 1963 Peterborough convention, to Peter Mabey.

– *Prolapse* #6 (April 2007, ed. Peter Weston)

16. Bullcon/Petercon Programme

Eddie Jones's hand-drawn programme book pages for this convention appear below, followed by a searchable transcript of the essential text since some of the smaller hand-lettering may not be readable on all devices.



TIMES TIMING OF ALL PROGRAMME ITEMS WILL BE ADHERED TO AS CLOSELY AS CIRCUMSTAN--CES WILL ALLOW. (IT SAYS HERE!)

BADGES BADGES ARE YOUR INSURANCE AGAINST GATE-CRASHERS, AND MAKE INTRODUCTIONS EASY FOR ALL. PLEASE WEAR THEM!

BOOKLET DESIGN © EDDIE JONES

FOR-

PROGRAMME -	See DAVE BARBER
AUCTION MATERIAL -	KEN F·SLATER
PRO. DISPLAYS -	DAVE EGGLETON & PAULINE JACKSON
FAN DISPLAYS -	CHRIS MILLER
PHOTO EXHIBITION -	CHRIS MILLER
FAN ART COMP -	DAVE EGGLETON

(CONTD. - LAST PAGE)

Let's go! **FRIDAY EVENING**

8·00 **WELCOME** FROM THE CHAIRMAN (IF WE CAN FIND HIM!)
GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTIONS AND LIKE THAT.

8·30 B·S·F·A PRESIDENT **BRIAN ALDISS** WILL INVITE PERSONALITIES TO A TALK IN THE FANTASTIC **HOTHOUSE**

9·30 THE FIRST **AUCTION** KEN SLATER MIT GAVEL FOR THIS ONE!

10 PM. - 5 AM. — AND **NOW** THE CONVENTION REALLY STARTS!

---

too late for breakfast?

SATURDAY MORNING

10·00 BRIAN ALDISS WILL INTRODUCE THE GUEST of HONOUR
BRUCE MONTGOMERY (EDMUND CRISPIN)
EMINENT AUTHOR & EDITOR Who will talk on –
SCIENCE FICTION: is it significant

11·00 YET ANOTHER CONTROVERSIAL TALK BY
The HARRISON (HARRY)
SEX & CENSORSHIP in S.F.

12 NOON THE 2nd **AUCTION** (PART ONE) FEATURING THAT ITEM SOLD SEVEN TIMES IN THE FIRST AUCTION!

IT'S TIME FOR **LUNCH** BUT BE BACK ON TIME, FOLKS FOR THE TED TUBB SHOW, FOLKS.

Everyone out of the Bar!

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

2·00 **AUCTION·2 - PART·2·**
COMPERED BY THAT RISING STAR OF STAGE, SCREEN AND BAR
EDWARD C. TUBB ESQ. (CON REPORTERS TAKE NOTES!)

OPEN HOUSE
THE PEOPLE OF PETERBOROUGH HAVE BEEN INVITED TO A 'SCIENCE FICTION AFTERNOON' AND COMMUNE WITH S.F. FANDOM (YOU'D BETTER SHAVE FOR THIS!)

5·00 **JOURNEY INTO SPACE**
A SLIDE SHOW PRESENTED BY
• PETER HAMMERTON
of the LINCOLN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

DINNER - DON'T EAT TOO MUCH - YOU HAVE TO GET INTO THAT FANCY DRESS!


8·00
SATURDAY EVENING
THE AFTER THE END
Fancy dress party
The latest trend in elegant entertaining.
With DON COWLAN'S BAND
1AM.-5AM - PARTY IN ROOM 28 & 31, 62, 4, 19, 11, 36, 9, 3, 22, 8, 15, 6, 39, 53, 197.


Damn those bells!
SUNDAY MORNING
10·30
ETHEL LINDSAY TALKS ON TAFF
HINDERED SUPPORTED by RON (anyone for Brag?) BENNETT and ERIC (what happened to Bastion?) BENTCLIFFE (support TAFF!)
11·00
B·S·F·A-A·G·M
ELECTIONS · REPORTS · OFFICIAL BUSINESS
12 noon
The 'Doc Weir' Award
TIME FOR LUNCH - MEAT PIES ANYONE??

Anyone for Tennis? **SUNDAY AFTERNOON**

2.00 **SCIENCE FICTION: OLD LAMPS FOR NEW**
A TALK BY
GEOFF DOHERTY

2.30 **PRO PANEL**
IN WHICH AN ARRAY OF PROFESSIONAL TALENT
AND HARRY HARRISON
BRIAN ALDISS & TED TUBB
WILL BE SUBJECTED TO A SEARCHING INQUISITION BY MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE. WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!

*SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

See yourself on film in....

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

4.00 **The GAFIA SHOW**
PRESENTED BY **ERIC BENTCLIFFE**
WHO MAY AFTER THIS! WATCH IT BENTERS!
A FANNISH SLIDE SHOW
ON THE NEW, IMPROVED, SMALL SCREEN
DEFINITELY UNSYNCHRONISED SOUND.

5.00 **how to write an S.F. story** ~~by HARRY HARRISON~~
A TALK BY **Brian Aldiss**

BUT WHAT ABOUT NEXT YEAR'S CONVENTION.....?

(CONTD. FROM FIRST PAGE)

REGISTRATION – JOYCE SLATER
LAPEL BADGES – PHIL ROGERS
SEATING – MARC ASHBY

ALSO

COMPLAINTS – TONY WALSH
RES. HORTICULTURIST – B. ALDISS
OFFICIAL GOURMET – Ed. JONES
PRESS REP. – R. BENNETT
OFFICIAL WINE BIBBER – N. SHORROCK
TABLE LEVELLER – H. HARRISON

Programme

TIMES – Timing of all programme items will be adhered to as closely as circumstances will allow. (It says here!)

BADGES – Badges are your insurance against gate-crashers, and make introductions easy for all. Please wear them!

- *For* Programme – *see* Dave Barber
- Auction Material – Ken F. Slater
- Pro. Displays – Dave Eggleton & Pauline Jackson
- Fan Displays – Chris Miller
- Photo Exhibition – Chris Miller

- Fan Art Comp – Dave Eggleton
- Registration – Joyce Slater
- Lapel Badges – Phil Rogers
- Seating – Mark Ashby

Also

- Complaints – Tony Walsh
- Res. Horticulturist – B. Aldiss
- Official Gourmet – Ed. Jones
- Press Rep. – R. Bennett
- Official Wine Bibber – N. Shorrock
- Table Leveller – H. Harrison

Let's go!

Friday Evening

8:00 WELCOME from the Chairman (if we can find him!)
Greetings and introductions and like that.

8:30 B.S.F.A President BRIAN ALDISS will invite personalities to a talk in the fantastic HOTHOUSE

9:30 The first AUCTION
Ken Slater mit gavel for this one!

10 p.m. – 5 a.m. And *now* the convention really starts!

Too late for breakfast?

Saturday Morning

10:00 Brian Aldiss will introduce the Guest of Honour:
BRUCE MONTGOMERY (Edmund Crispin), eminent author and editor, who will talk on –
SCIENCE FICTION: IS IT SIGNIFICANT

11:00 Yet another controversial talk by The Harrison (Harry)
SEX & CENSORSHIP IN S.F.

12 noon The 2nd AUCTION (Part One)
Featuring that item sold seven times in the first auction!

It’s time for LUNCH but be back on time, folks, for the Ted Tubb Show, folks.

Everyone out of the Bar!

Saturday Afternoon

2:00 AUCTION 2 – PART 2
Compered by that rising star of stage, screen and bar
EDWARD C. TUBB ESQ.
(Con reporters take notes!)

OPEN HOUSE
The people of Peterborough have been invited to a “science fiction afternoon” and commune with S.F. fandom
(You’d better shave for this!)

5:00 JOURNEY INTO SPACE – A slide show presented by PETER HAMMERTON
of the Lincoln Astronomical Society

DINNER – Don’t eat too much – you have to get into that fancy dress!

Saturday Evening

8:00 The AFTER END Fancy Dress Party
The latest trend in elegant entertaining.
With Don Cowlan’s Band

1 a.m. – 5 a.m. – Party in room 28 & 31, 62, 4, 19, 11, 36, 9, 3, 22, 8, 15, 6, 39, 53, 197.

Damn those bells!

Sunday Morning

10:30 ETHEL LINDSAY talks on TAFF
~~hindered~~ supported by Ron (anyone for Brag?) Bennett
and Eric (what happened to *Bastion*?) Bentcliffe (Support TAFF!)

11:00 B.S.F.A. A.G.M
Elections • Reports • Official Business

Time for lunch – meat pies anyone??

Anyone for Tennis?

Sunday Afternoon

2:00 SCIENCE FICTION: OLD LAMPS FOR NEW
A talk by Geoff Doherty

2:30 PRO PANEL In which an array of professional talent
and Harry Harrison, Brian Aldiss & Ted Tubb
will be subjected to a searching inquisition by members of the audience. What an opportunity!

12 noon The "Doc Weir" Award

4:00 See yourself on film in THE GAFIA SHOW
presented by Eric Bentcliffe (who may after this! Watch it Benters!)
A FANNISH SLIDE SHOW
on the new, unimproved small screen. Definitely unsynchronised sound.

5:00 How to Write an S.F. Story ~~by Harry Harrison~~
A talk by BRIAN ALDISS

But what about next year's convention?

Sunday Evening

8:00 Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (The first time at any con this decade!)
also Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*

The end of the official programme but *not* the end of the con!

17. The Bull and the Bells

The 1963 UK National Science Fiction Convention – the fifth to be run under the auspices of the BSFA – took place over the weekend of 12th April – 15th April, 1963. It was held at the Bull Hotel in Peterborough, as it would also be in the following year. Guest of Honour was Bruce Montgomery aka Edmund Crispin, and the committee were Ken Slater, Pauline Jackson and Dave Barber.

In *Skyrack*, Ron Bennett reported that: "this was the best attended British Convention to date, with over 130 avid fans gathering to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the British Science Fiction Association." Not so – several cons had attracted greater numbers a decade earlier.

Officially the 1963 British Science Fiction Association Convention, it was called both "Bullcon" and "Petercon" in the Programme Book. "Petercon" is the most sensible name for it in this writer's opinion, but it has come down to us as "Bullcon". In *Hyphen* #33 (Jun 1963), Brian Aldiss concludes his con report with "Yours, James, till the Repetercon", which appears to be the first use of that clever name for the 1964 Eastercon (and another reason why this one should be "Petercon").

BULLCON saw the penultimate appearance of the Eddie Jones-designed con badge that would be used for four consecutive Eastercons, with only the colour changing. This year it was blue. This was one of the Eastercons that issued nicely printed membership cards instead of a receipt for payments made before the con, a practice which died out in the late 1960s.

Friday 12th April

Langdon Jones:

On Friday, April 12th, 1963, I set out for my first convention. It was a bright, warm morning. Earlier on Gerry Webb had come round in his car to pick up my taper which I hoped to be able to use. Then I picked up my suitcase, filled with clean shirts and *Tensor*s, and set off. I had been fortunate enough to obtain a travel warrant from the army, which took me from Ealing Broadway to Peterborough North absolutely free. When I changed trains at King's Cross, I scoured the countryside looking for an Indian Restaurant, for I was absolutely drooling in anticipation of a Madras Meat, not having been able to afford one since Christmas.

However it appeared that there were no available Indian-type nosh houses in the area. So I went back to the station and caught the 1:25, telling myself what a wonderful meal I would have at Peterborough. I spent most of the journey reading *Tensor*, and trying to tell myself that it wasn't really as bad as all that.

> *A "taper" was a tape-recorder, and* Tensor *was his own fanzine, the first issue of which he was distributing at the con.*

Soon the train drew up in Peterborough station, and I made my way down to the street. As I set off down the road, on the other side I saw a group of people who had just got off the same train. Now was that Jim Groves or not? (At this point I'd better say that the only fans I had ever met up until this time had been Jim Groves and Ethel Lindsay). I decided not to go over as I might have been mistaken (actually it was Jim, and one of the others was Brian Varley). I asked about a bit, trying to find an Indian Restaurant, but in each case the people concerned said that they had never heard of one in Peterborough. What, thought I, can it be that there are some places so far from the stream of civilisation that they cannot boast of even these most essential of amenities?

I had lost my copy of the *East Fanglian Times* containing the map, and the terrain seemed nothing like what I had remembered. However, after passing the thing about three times, I eventually found the "Bull". I registered for my room, and made with the unpacking. Then I ventured out and made my way down to the BSFA reception desk. The programmes had not yet arrived, so I lounged about the area. Suddenly a voice called out, "Are you Langdon Jones?" I looked around and saw a young lady with a vaguely familiar face, I stood there in some amazement trying to think of who could possibly know me. It turned out to be Simone Walsh, who used to knock about with our little gang when I was about fourteen. I stood there amazed. Could this charming, self assured, attractive young lady be the adolescent kid I used to know? It made me realise with a shock how time can slip past when one is not looking. After a few questions on how the other members of our little group had been doing, I decided to explore the place a bit. I ended up in the fan display room. There I met Ethel Lindsay and Jim Groves, who were trying to turn out a page of forms on a little Emgee duper. I met more and more new faces and forgot more and more names, popping down now and again to see whether the programmes had arrived yet. I met Ella Parker who was sitting at the BSFA reception desk, and eventually received my programme. This was rather a funny procedure, rather like being doled out with army kit. One moved along the

table and was given a programme, a souvenir pencil, a badge and a little Easter egg. [1]

Brian Varley:

It's a strange feeling to attend a Convention again after a lapse of many years, part familiar, expected, part unexpected. A subtle change in the atmosphere has taken place, maybe roof-parties still abound, drunken pros still stagger through the corridors followed by their acolytes, Ken McIntyre still imbibes endlessly. The programme is always behind time, Norman Weedall's rosy glowing face still beams like a benevolent sun on all who come his way, yet still there is a change.

Children have appeared on the scene giving the air of a family party. Husbands no longer feel the need to lock their wives in chastity belts, single girls ("nice" ones like Ethel) no longer carry hat-pins clutched firmly in trembling hand. Zap-guns belong to the "good old days" and we reminisce, half-wistfully, of the Bonnington, the Supermancon, bottles dropped down chimneys and massed assaults by porters. No bottle parties now which, with considered cruelty, decree "no charge" for young and lissom but 10 bob for the sad forties. The past is an echo and fandom, all considered, better for it.

Friday, a busy bustle of arrivals, the swirling stream occasionally clotting as fans meet to rejoice or enter solemn conclave, delightful to see so many well-remembered faces. Terry Jeeves, suffering badly from asthma, but still the same cheerful, matey Terry. Ron Bennett, in a blue double-breasted suit, bighod! The Shorrocks loaded down with cameras, programmes, and children and, of course, Ken McIntyre with his plastic portable bar, patiently awaiting opening time.

Frances and I escaped a while to view Peterboro' and, perhaps, obtain a cup of tea. A stroll down to the River Nene with a distant view of Bertram Hills Circus and the inevitable swans floating in the foreground. A cup of tea was taken, but virtually untouched, in the Granville Café. Stewed tea, battered cups, disgusting tablecloths and the electronic roar of a juke-box demolishing the ear-drums hurried us out.

What a change awaited us as we wandered under the arch into the Cathedral grounds. Impressive at first sight, set away from the traffic and surrounded by lawns and flower-beds it does not disappoint on closer inspection. When some relief is needed from the smoke-laden air and alcohol fumes, then the whirling mind may well be soothed by the peace of the Close on the Cathedral's south side. This is indeed cloistered calm. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

It was a great moment when our car rolled into Peterborough. Margaret and I were tired, for the roads were crowded right from Oxford, and it had been a constant battle to get through the Easter traffic. In fact, we travelled dual carriageway all the way.

The battle was over when we reached the Bull. At once we were shaking hands with old friends. Margaret and I arrived before twelve noon on the Friday, but already plenty of sf types had appeared. The first person we saw was Chris Miller, now going about disguised as himself without a beard. We got busy unpacking at once, helping Ken Slater and his noble gang to arrange the art display, and also bringing out my collection of wind-up dolls. I had a Bentcliffe doll – you wind it up and it appears late on Saturday; and a Dave Barber doll – you wind it up and it does a barber; and a Burgess doll – you wind it up and it sells you its key; and a Ron Bennett doll – you wind it up and it reports the event in *Skyrack* next day; (lucky I have an Aldiss doll that winds me up and then I write this stuff without knowing).

The Bull's a good hotel, the best a convention has ever been housed in. The rooms in the new wings might have been built for con-goers. Towards evening, people were pouring in, including the Liverpool group, and soon Norman Shorrock was pouring in – his usual brew into tooth glasses. He brought over the stylishly produced Con programme in the 22-seater bus the group had hired for the occasion.

Margaret and I collected Edmund Crispin, Guest of Honour, from the station. His real name is Bruce Montgomery, and so I will call him throughout. We just had time to get him a drink before the first event. [3]

Archie Mercer:

Unlike most Guests of Honour, he has been a member of the Association for several years – I was the Treasurer to whom he paid his first subscription, in fact. All the more Honour to him.

The programme took place in a crowded upstairs hall of the hotel. There were two other Convention rooms. One of them (lockable) contained the professional displays and the artwork display, the other was a comfortable lounge which also contained displays in support of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund. [4]

Brian Varley:

Ken Slater bid us welcome, said a few appropriate words and handed over to Brian *W.* Aldiss who interviewed many notable personalities and initiated the well-known act of Aldiss and Harrison, that lovable, knockabout comedy duo. Each interview was concluded with an attempt

by the interviewees to identify a “famous last line” and many a heart was touched as Ted Tubb, with a tear in his eye, identified the last line of *Alien Dust*. A poignant moment this. I might add here that Brian *W.* Aldiss has been engaged to provide a Con report for *Hyphen*. I understand that no effort is being spared to bring this out before the “London in ’65” Con, which will, fortunately, occur in September of that year rather than the April. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

The programme was opened at eight by Ken, who declared the bazaar open and warned us of some of the things we were to expect. Then I had my brief hour of glory before a backdrop splendidly painted and arranged by Mark Ashby of Wisbech, *Skyrack* please note*. I did a sort of “In Town Tonight” stunt, luring up to the microphone some of the notables from the audience. These included Ethel Lindsay, who besought us all to support TAFF by buying *The Lindsay Report*; Eddie Jones, who now has a lot of pro art brewing; Jim Groves who is going to dig himself a hole now that he has crawled from under *Vector*; Ella Parker, who was in most pleasantly jovial form throughout the Con; Ron Bennett, who told us that two hotels in Harrogate were having to be rebuilt; and a whole whack of pros, some of whom, even at this early stage, were experimenting with the effects of alcohol in the bloodstream.

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* *Which its editor Ron Bennett did, claiming the backdrop depicted a scene from Aldiss’s own* Hothouse. *[Ed.]*

Never were pros so thick on the ground, or do I mean floor, at an English Con. Here’s the roll of horror: Ted Carnell, Tom Boardman. Geoff Doherty, Mike Moorcock, John Brunner, Mack Reynolds, Ted Tubb, Ken Bulmer, the French writer Max Jakubowski, Bruce of course, and the Danish ex-fan I have already been forced to mention, Harry Harrison. They all came up to the mike in turns. I forget what they all said; mainly it was propaganda, of course, but John Brunner’s was certainly the most calculated to dismay other pros: he claimed he had written four books since Christmas.

At that, the meeting broke up in confusion, and Slater rushed in with the first auction session. Faintly, I allowed myself to be guided to the nearest bar. Let us, as they say, draw an ale over what followed. That was when the Con really began. [3]

Langdon Jones:

There was an auction conducted by Ken Slater, who, incidentally

looked nothing like I had imagined him, I had visualised a tall, stooped, old ex-army type. It was interesting to meet these people I had read about, and to see how much they differed from what I had imagined. Ken Cheslin I had imagined as a very tall thin anaemic type, Archie Mercer as a young, freckle-faced schoolboy (no reflection on your writing, Archie, I think it was the name in most cases that gave me a picture of the people concerned). The only person who turned out remotely as I had imagined was Jim Linwood.

After the programme was over I had a look round the pro room, winning a very fine lavatory brush on a number machine, a sort of emasculated ERNIE, but, alas, no lavatory to go with it. There was a wonderful selection of artwork, and I would have hated the job of judging it. There was an interesting exhibit, stuffed miserably away in one corner, called "The Artwork of Aldiss", This contained many examples of – well – "interesting" work. Like an old sandal mounted on a piece of wood, and called "Progress". And a piece of dyed tissue paper, Izal, I'm sure, called "Epidermis". A rather new angle on Leda and the Swan was given by the title of another picture called "A Problem in Genetics". [1]

Brian Aldiss:

It was good to talk to Bruce *[Montgomery alias Edmund Crispin]* again; I had not seen him for some years. He is a quiet, erudite man who has done a great deal to silence if not win over a lot of the pseudo-intellectual opposition that sf was meeting a few years ago. Margaret agreed with him that he was unbelievably handsome. It was good, too, to meet Mack Reynolds in the flesh with which he is so well provided. Mack's not at all the rugged, square-jawed type I had conjured up from those unique stories; nor did I hear a political reference from him throughout the Con, aside from a comment on the difficulty of getting a good Jugoslav Reisling in Madrid. [3]

Archie Mercer:

There were a lot of new faces. Far too many for me to remember, for the most part. Lang Jones who seems to have sprung from Ella's head as a full-grown trufan, is more memorable than most for that reason. To any of the rest of you who may be reading this, my apologies. From the first night onward I managed to have just enough to drink, and just enough sleep, to become an almost perfect case of walking euphoria. I wouldn't know, but I felt akin to the mescalin takers one reads about. In some ways my senses were perceptibly sharpened, in others they were dulled. This matter of names and faces unfortunately falls into the latter class. But whoever you

were, I enjoyed meeting you.

A specific sub-category of new face is the newly-acquired wife. Here I single out Wendy Freeman. She's not very big – she admits to four-eleven-and-a-half, and is the only person of either sex I ever remember hearing admit to under five foot – but what there is of her is simply bubbling over with fun. Keith says his recent gafiation was not entirely on her behalf – the exigencies of service life (he's in the Air Force and they keep moving him about) are also to blame. But if it had been, it would have been entirely understandable. As it is, I'm glad Keith's back – and Wendy with him. [5]

Brian Varley:

After the auction closed we paid a flying visit to the Liverpool party, a free-for-all, everyone welcome, party where the products of the Merseyside Wine Club flowed generously. Soon, however, we gave way to our gambling instincts and joined the Bennett brag-session on a convenient landing. Here I lost steadily, but was cheered to see Frances just as steadily, and more speedily, profiting. The game broke up around 2:30 causing me no little surprise as I had fully expected to re-join the game after breakfast. [2]

Archie Mercer:

For many years I've had a "thing" about Mack Reynold's stories. It wasn't just that I didn't enjoy reading them. It would be more true to say that I enjoyed not reading them. And as I'm only in fandom for enjoyment after all, I sooner or later did the obvious thing and stopped reading them altogether, and was far happier for it.

Thus, when I heard that Mack was to be present at the Con, I wasn't precisely enthusiastic. I took the news stoically. I'll leave him alone, I thought, and he'll leave me alone. I'd still go to the Con, even if Randall Garrett was scheduled to appear. And that seemed to be that.

Except that that wasn't. Somehow I found myself on the Friday (I think) night as one of a small bunch in Mack's room, drinking his spirits sitting in on the edge of a conversation which he very much dominated. Dominated not through big-headedness, but simply because what he had to say about things in general was eminently worth listening to.

Damn it – Mack's not only a Good Man, he's a nice man. There should be more like him. Next time I come across a story of his, I'll read it. And I'll even be prepared to like it. [5]

Saturday April 13th

Brian Varley:

The Bull is, in some ways, an ideal Con-site. No interference by the management, no complaints from the resident Rip Van Winkle. Part modern, part archaic. We were unfortunately given a room in the old section, a large and dusty room hanging over the main road and traffic lights. At 5 a.m. that Saturday morning we were both shaken from a sound sleep, fought desperately to close an open window which, inevitably, had a broken sash-cord. Breakfast was taken quite early that morning, two shell-shocked wrecks seeking refuge, both immovably convinced that heavy transport MUST return to the railways. [2]

Ron Bennett:

The Saturday morning programme opened bright and early at ten with the address given by the Guest of Honour Edmund Crispin. Brian Aldiss introduced him briefly by saying that he was "incredibly handsome." Crispin remarked that he was attending as a member of the BSFA who had been lucky enough to do a few anthologies. After what he had seen the previous night one's life span is shortened if one is a practising member. He moved on to his talk – "Science Fiction: Is It Significant?" [6]

Brian Varley:

Mr Montgomery gave a most interesting address in which he stressed the need to keep science-fiction separate from the mainstream of literature and proceeded to outline three possible dangers in its growing popularity.

Firstly, he said, there was the danger of placing too much emphasis on depth of characterisation. The nature of sf is such that the individual is not so important; he is merely representative of his society and must, therefore, be to some extent a cardboard figure. Conversely, in "good literature" the deep characterisation of the individual is of prime importance.

Secondly as the genre became more accepted it would become, and was becoming the happy hunting ground of mainstream authors who produced bad novels with hackneyed themes – in effect non-too-efficiently reinventing incandescent gas and gunpowder. He named no names at the time, but later, quoted *On The Beach* as a prime example.

Thirdly, through the influence of television where there is little differentiation between merit and demerit and through the association of the earth-satellite programmes it was becoming, in the public mind, a synonym for space-travel fiction. In actual fact only rarely was sf concerned with space travel as such; in the majority of cases space ships occupied the same position as the transatlantic liner or the railways in

mainstream literature.

He then changed to a more optimistic note when he maintained that modern sf was wholly worthwhile and getting more so all the time. It was coming-of-age in a big way, many more novels were being produced than in earlier days and novel-length plots were not so frequently being cramped into novelettes and short stories. The flowering of the hard-cover novel was a good thing, especially as they were being published under more diverse and better range imprints, thus making then acceptable to a wider audience. [2]

Ron Bennett:

He concluded by saying that S.F. writers are generally underpaid, to which remark Harry Harrison shouted “Hear hear!” Many S.F. writers use novel length ideas for short stories, said Crispin, and noted that thanks to Ken Slater there were 60 titles he could not mention, either favourably or unfavourably, a reference to the Convention’s novel competition.

In answer to questions Mr Crispin said that he had chosen his pen name from “Crispin” meaning curly haired and “Rufus” meaning red. He did not like “Rufus” so substituted “Edmund” from *King Lear*. He was once asked to write a SF story and he had sent it to *F&SF* but it had been rejected with “a long, cautious and courteous letter.” He said that because of main stream writers entering the field the name of SF was becoming debased in the eyes of the general reading public. He deplored the success of that which is bad and also the state of affairs which allows the bad to be successful. [6]

Brian Aldiss:

Bruce finished by saying that he considered sf to be the major literary revolution since Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Elizabethan dramatists. Even those who had never read one of Marlowe’s mighty lines clapped very loudly at this.

In the discussion which followed, Tom Boardman said he thought sf should avoid too much clarification; its chief duty was to draw strangeness. John Roles said that fanzines contained a great amount of exegetical literature, and Aldiss wrote the word down in his notebook. Taking up one of the points Bruce had made, Geoff Doherty said he thought that such novels as Karp’s *One* and Golding’s *Inheritors* represented examples of incursions into the field by outsiders who might be reckoned to have gingered it up. This was generally if reluctantly agreed. [3]

The Danish gentleman, Mr. Harry Harrison, was the next distraction

on the programme. He spoke on two subjects dear to the heart of the assembled multitude, Sex and Science Fiction.

Brian Varley:

It is extremely difficult to do a fair report of Harry's speech, for despite the gag-a-minute approach it was obvious that he was dealing with a subject close to his heart. He started out by handing a large quantity of leaflets out, which on examination proved to advertise the Esperanto system and whilst these were being fought over pinned up his three exhibits. These were, a large-sized nude (large in every way), a copy of an cartoon depicting two children seated on their pots, and an American pb entitled *Damn It!*.

His main theme was the peculiar world of pulp publishers. Covers strongly suggested rape, captions promising vicarious thrills, yet inside the writing censored to a degree of unnatural purity. Pointing at Exhibit A, the nude, he announced that this was culled from a magazine which had deleted the word "breast" from one of the stories. SF writers had been conditioned to this pulp attitude to sex; evidence Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* which was supposed to herald the new "liberal" Heinlein, untrammelled, modern and without taboos. Whilst the story implied such things as free-love, and group copulation (in one great rotting heap, I think his words were) in actual fact the nearest the book approached to a direct description of sex was in the phrase "Their lips met".

Harry was explaining how, in *Deathworld*, after the hero had suffered mightily for more than 200 pages he had felt it reasonable that he might put into the hero's mouth the word "Damn". This was excluded by *Analog* from the published version. It was during this part of the speech that Ted Carnell rather astonished this naive member of the audience by admitting that if a word or phrase offended him personally, then it was deleted. Ted, for example, dislikes "Bastard" and, as Harry said, there are many more prurient minds than Ted's in editing.

This certainly touched off a response in me, for I prefer not to have my reading expurgated, having a reasonable desire to know in the author's own words what point he is making. By all means exterminate the filth for filth's sake, but let the magazines grow up by removing their suggestive covers and, at the same time, printing fiction written with an adult audience in mind, and uncastrated. *Kama Sutra* anyone? [2]

Brian Aldiss:

He ended a very stimulating speech, which was illustrated by a number of exhibits, by saying that he thought censorship was just an

editorial bad habit as far as the sf editors were concerned. When it had been pointed out to them often enough, sense should prevail. In fact, he said, “this small animal of censorship” can be killed by exposure. Indecent exposure, no doubt.

In the discussion which followed, John Brunner rose to defend Philip José Farmer’s writings and Sturgeon’s *Some of Your Blood* on the grounds that these at least got away from gadgetry. Chris Miller replied that they were merely psychological and sexual gadgetry; it struck me at the time and now that I’m sober as a good point. Editor Ted Carnell rose to say that there was a rising tide of sex, and that twenty percent of the stories he received in MSS were full of sick sex. Some uncouth knave from the back of the hall urged him to publish them instead of what he does publish.

After a brief fight for Harry’s exhibits, the meeting broke up, and drinking and fraternisation took place.

By now it was apparent that the Convention fairly bulged with life. There were more pretty wives and girl friends in evidence than ever before, not to mention a host of jolly and pattable children; the whole affair was like a big family gathering, and made me feel more than ever that fandom is a lay of wife.

At this stage we were about to depart for lunch. We had the glasses in our hands, when we had to face a reporter from the *Sunday Telegraph*. Miss Heather Nicholson was certainly easy to face, but she soaked up our comments with the sponge-like facility of a block of graphite. Bruce, John Brunner, Geoff Doherty and I, not to mention a maverick Oxford scientist called Denys Leston, talked to her for three hours about sf. Need I add that she got her own back? Not a word appeared in the paper! [3]

Brian Varley:

A second auction session followed, ending the morning programme and we wended our way out for lunch. We decided, for once, to give the Great Wall a miss and instead went next door to the Wimpy bar. In the thirty minutes it took to provide us with our Hamburgers, the debate on the Harrison talk flourished. The main protagonists were Ella Parker and Bobbie Gray with occasional encouragement from Ethel, Frances, Ken Cheslin, and I. Many of the expurgatable words were given an airing. I can well appreciate Ella’s objections to censorship, if you carry it to the logical conclusion she might as well cut her tongue out.

The afternoon’s proceedings started with the third and final auction, this time presided over by the master salesman, Ted Tubb. It is useless to try and report a Tubb auction, indeed dangerous. A good quote may well cost you five bob with a copy of *New Worlds* thrown in if Ted catches you.

Anyone who has seen Ted in action needs no report from me, anyone who hasn't should make it a number one priority – but come along prepared to pay for the pleasure. Without any doubt, one of the highspots of the con. [2]

Langdon Jones:

Max Jakubowski, Jim Groves and myself went out to the Mayflower/fair?/fly? which seemed to be full of fans, then wandered back to the "Bull". I had been warned by someone that if I recorded nothing else in my life again, to record Ted Tubb conducting the auction. So I got back from the May-thing with plenty of time to spare. However when I took my taper to the hall, it was full of people in fancy-dress and reporters. Quietly cursing the daily press I put my taper away. I wish I hadn't. It is useless trying to describe the thing, if you have ever seen Ted Tubb conducting an auction you will know what I mean. The highlight of this auction was when Ted was trying to convince us that the handful of crud he was selling was good radiation protection. "A few shillings will buy four inches of safety for the wife and kids" he said earnestly.... [1]

Brian Varley:

After half an hour or so Ted's place was taken by Ken Slater, a sad anti-climax. Nobody, but nobody, should follow Tubb in this game. We sat in embarrassed silence whilst Jeeves's "Soggy" illos were auctioned off at a tanner apiece. Even worse was the sale of the original typescripts of the Aldiss novels *Hothouse* and *Nonstop*. One was sold at the ridiculous reserve price of £1 to Jimmy Groves and the other, for which no offer at all was made, was later disposed of privately to Mike Rosenblum. The price that these would have raised on the American market make this a farce, a £100 might easily have been obtained. I feel strongly that any future acquisitions of this type should not be restricted to sale at the Con, but should be offered to the American market as well. The effective sale of these two manuscripts alone could and should turn a moderate loss into a good profit.

The afternoon, according to the programme, was given over to an "Open House" where the people of Peterboro' were invited in to meet fandom. The populace streamed uncaring past the Bull and fandom, left to its own devices, talked, read, drank tea, and even wandered out to inspect the town. The most unsuccessful part of the programme, and one that does not require a repeat. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

At last I dragged a starving Margaret off to eat. She had spent a while

shopping with Joan Harrison and children, and had a good appetite. With Geoff, we took a well-bread snack in the hotel buttery, before slipping out to do some window-gazing. I should have known there was trouble afoot – she lured me into a shoe shop and I bought her a pair of shoes. We also had a quick look at the cathedral. There were a number of citizens of the Soke [of Peterborough[looking disgustedly at a notice two hundred feet up the fine west front that said GOD FOR TAFF.

During that afternoon, I managed to get around and chat with a lot of people, though I missed an auction at which I hear Ted Tubb excelled himself; apparently he also ex-selled a number of books. In particular I had a long serious talk with Mike Moorcock and Denys. Mike circumambulates about his points, but they are generally ones it is worth walking around; we had a big chat about Ballard, Mike claiming that Ballard's limitations were his strength, I that they were his weakness. Mike almost has me convinced. [3]

Archie Mercer:

On Saturday evening, Peter Hammerton of the Lincoln Astronomical Society gave a slideshow-talk on the planets, and the conditions that we may expect to find when we reach them. This was received particularly well by the younger attendees, and the question-and-answer session which followed went on so long that the item was never formally brought to a close at all, and if Peter's two assistants hadn't started packing up the equipment it might still be going on yet. The trio wasn't able to stay for very long afterwards, and are to be thanked for making the journey for the occasion. [4]

Brian Aldiss:

How difficult it is to recapture on paper the essence of these events when they have passed into history. A straight run through of events and gags by no means catches that big sweet fleeting dumpling of a thing that is the true Con flavour. Myself, I think it's the friendliness of the whole event, that particular friendliness which stems from the fact that you are with people who, in the main, are at once buddies and strangers. Added to this is the feeling nowadays that British sf is getting somewhere; and Geoff Doherty, who missed last year's Con, claims that the people grow more sophisticated and polished each year. It may be so, though the civilized milieu of the Bull certainly helped this year.

But enough of this philosophising, for I see by my notes that by now time was getting on and the frailer of the brethren were suffering from pangs of hunger. In fact, the weaker went to the wall – the Great Wall –

and I with them. Our party consisted of the four Harrisons (who act like six, although Joan and the children are so well-behaved), the Brunners and their immense black dog, the Moorcocks, Margaret and I, Mack Reynolds, and friends of his from Paris, the Yarboroughs. Bill Yarborough is a nice guy, a true fan (have I spelt that right?) and very generous with litres of bourbon. It was under the influence of his drink that we coined all our bourbon mots.

That I remember as a very complicated meal, not only because most of the men insisted on drinking more than one macaulay (that's what fandom calls the mundane lager), or because Harry was ordering up in Spanish, but because we were being interfered with from the next table, where sat Brian and Frances Varley, who are still on the lam after organising the SUPERMANCON in '54. Well they were still on the lam, waiting for the mint sauce, when we left the Wall, which will tell you what the service was like there: a church service.

The meal broke up with the arrival of Kingsley Amis, who had driven over from Cambridge with a friend of his, Bill Rysinker or such a name – an American of infinite jest. Back at the Bull, other notables had checked in, including Dan Morgan, whose name was once very well-known in *Authentic* and *New Worlds*. He still takes a keen interest in sf, and looks as spry as when I last saw him, back at the London World Con in '57. Also arrived, Yorkshire author Brian Ball, who also seems to be in on the school sf anthology racket. Later, Eric Bentcliffe, who publishes – as old fans will recall – *Bastion*, appeared with his wife, Beryl. His flash equipment looked larger than ever; later, in the fancy dress parade, he and Eric Jones were having an absolute duel, with bulbs going nova every second.

Bruce and I took Kingsley to see Ken Slater's tremendous book display. It was a great collection, and seemed to be selling well. The three of us were then hauled away to judge the fancy dress, while the local press squeaked and gibbered about us. [3]

> *The large, dedicated bookrooms that would be a feature of later conventions did not exist in the 1960s. Instead, Ken Slater would usually have a small area at the back of the con hall where he could sell books or – as appears to have happened at this one – would sell them out of a hotel room.*
>
> *At some point during the proceedings, to the bemusement of locals, a group of Fancy Dress participants took to the streets. These appear to have been led by Manchester's Harry Nadler, Charles Partington, Tony Edwards and Tom Holt. Given the*

daylight, this presumably occurred an hour or two before the evening's Fancy Dress Party took place.

Ron Bennett:

A four piece band and T.V. cameramen were in attendance on the Saturday evening for the Fancy Dress Party. The theme of the fancy dress this year was "After The End" and monsters were certainly in evidence. It was good to see the support given this venture by new convention attendees and Ted Tubb – hardly a newcomer, really, – caused quite a stir by rushing into the hall clothed in a costume made up from sheets of manuscripts. Harry Nadler of Salford was adjudged "Best Monster of the Year" and another special prize went to cat girl Janet Shorrock, whilst Tony Walsh won first prize for his costume which was simplicity personified – a sandwich-board man toting the slogans "Prepare to Meet Your Beginning" and "The Beginning is At Hand." [6]

Brian Varley:

The evening was set aside for the Fancy Dress party. For a long time the hired band plugged away in an empty room and throughout the whole evening only one couple attempted to dance on the carpeted surface. All in all the band appear to have been pointless, a tape-recorded background would have been cheaper and better. As it was, those nearest the band had to shout to make themselves heard above the din. Slowly however, the fancy dresses started to appear, Alan Rispin and Ken Cheslin being among the early arrivals, followed closely by Ethel attired in a torn evening gown, loaded with jewellery as a drunken looter "after the end". (Who was it said to me, "Isn't Ethel coming in fancy dress then?".)

A sensation was caused by the arrival of the four Salford/Manchester lads, first time con attendees, Harry Nadler, Chas. Partington, Tony Edwards and Tom Holt in really excellent costumes. It occasioned a great rush of amateur photographers. There was no surprise when Harry Nadler won the prize as "Best Monster" and was subjected to great attention by Press and ITV cameramen. Pity was they all couldn't get an award. Ted Tubb, surprisingly, arrived in costume, but too late for the judging. He certainly deserved commendation for originality: a patriarchal beard, a gown of tattered manuscripts and a selection of placards bewailing the lot of the poor author. It took me a few moments to realise that it was Ted inside the garb. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

We gave Harry Nadler the Best Monster prize, and Tony Walsh the Best Fancy Dress because we thought it had wit – he paraded solemnly as

a sandwich man, with boards saying “Prepare to Meet Your Remaker” and “The Beginning is At Hand”. Note: *Skyrack* has these slogans differently; one of us must be Ron*. There was also a special award to dainty little Janet Shorrock as a cat girl. Ted Tubb, as a bearded and bepaged author, would surely have won a prize had he rolled up on time. [3]

** Photos confirm that Aldiss was correct. [Ed.]*

Archie Mercer:

Music was provided by Don Cowlan’s band, a quintet of local musicians. They put up a brave showing despite the fact that few people wanted to dance – or indeed, had room to (which must be a considerable discouragement to a musician who’s trying to play dance music). Somewhere around midnight, however, when the crowds had thinned out somewhat, in walked Dan Morgan (the science fiction author), unpacked his guitar, walked up to the far end of the hall, sat down beside the band and started to play. The difference was dramatic. Instead of playing pop music for dancing that nobody wanted to do, they were now playing for sheer enjoyment, and the result was an extremely enjoyable hour or so of mainstream jazz that I for one am most certainly glad I didn’t miss – in a near-perfect atmosphere for that sort of thing.

(Incidentally, coming from a traddie like me this is praise indeed). [4]

Brian Aldiss:

Frankly, much of the rest of that evening was hell. There was so much confusion. Down in the bars, the Salvation Army had broken in and were selling their magazine, *War Hoon* – in fact, Harry told them to bergeron off. Then upstairs we were hounded and dogged by the press. We took refuge in room five, the Black Hole of John Brunner, but they rooted us out. We all hid in my room, and were just settling down to a l’il drink when they came in and said could they film us if they did not interrupt. We said okay, so they said right, let’s have you in a bigger room. It was too bad: Kingsley was just talking about John Baxter’s Guest Editorial in *New Worlds*.

Eventually some BBC fellow flung the youngest Slater out of her bed and got Bruce, Kingsley and me into her room with a tape recorder. There he milked (with the aid of whisky) a marvellous quarter hour debate from us, three minutes of which were heard on the Midlands programme *Counterpoint* three days later.

Once the vultures had gone, we began to enjoy ourselves. [3]

Brian Varley:

Next stop was the party in 258 open-house held by Ella and Ethel. The start was rather delayed due to large numbers of people disappearing to watch *TWTWTW [*That Was the Week That Was*]* on the telly. When it did get going the party was a roaring success, too successful in fact. An astonishing number of bodies jammed themselves into the room and the scene gradually faded in a pall of smoke and steam. Every so often the seething mass swirled and in one of these Frances and I were erupted into the passageway where Aldiss and Harrison were in full cry, eventually disappearing down the fire-escape. This was, we discovered later, part of a deep laid plot which led to the Case of the Missing Pork Pies. Great rivalry had broken out between the Burgess Pie Marketing Board and the Aldiss Combine. Returning up the fire-escape the two anti-heroes had broken into the Burgess hideout and, discovering the stock of pies laid out on the bed, had secreted them in the wardrobe. This occasioned Brian no little discomfiture and his heavy tread and dirgeful voice were heard throughout the night as he searched for the missing provender. One up, indeed, to Aldiss, but beware the wrath of Burgess in 64!

Unaware of the high drama being enacted elsewhere we had entered a draw-poker school and again my better half (better indeed!) was scraping it in whilst I was quietly losing our fare home. [2]

Archie Mercer:

Ella and Ethel, of course, threw one of their open parties to which the attendees flocked fifty at a time. Whenever they saw a free square foot of floor space, Bruce Burn and Maxim Jakubowski squatted down and Russian-danced against each other until both fell over. Another time (still the same party) Eric Jones tried to hypnotise somebody – I forget who. He stood there behind him repeating over and over; “You are falling backwards... falling backwards... backwards”. As I happened at the time to be sitting on a window ledge straight in front of a wide open window, I’m rather glad it didn’t work out properly. [5]

Langdon Jones:

I was wandering about the hotel when Ella told me of the party in her room. I managed to get a few square inches of space on one of the beds and watched the crowds of people pouring in the door. At one time, in this small room, there were fifty-three people. A fellow called Burn did some sort of strange dance in the centre of the room, after a little space had been painfully cleared. Then there was an amazing demonstration of the powers of hypnotism that left us all laughing/gasping. I remember Brian Aldiss bursting in and firing a gun, shocking me out of the stupor I had been

falling into. Finally everyone began to depart, so I said goodbye, and left. It was a fine party, thank you Ethel and Ella. By now the time was about four in the morning, and as I collapsed into the bed, I consoled myself with the thought that at least I would be able to get a breakfast next morning. (I awoke at 10:15, rather too late for breakfast.) [1]

Brian Aldiss:

To preserve some of the decorum of this report, I have postponed until now any account of the previous night's activities; but in the interests of truth I must here reveal that on that preceding night – Friday – Danish fan Harrison and I were chased down the corridors by a horde of pro-eating fans. These uncannybals were led by promising new sharp-toothed Manchester fan Charles Partington. To escape their clutches, Harry and I had to flee down a fire escape at a rate of three cents a minute.

So we resolved to take Saturday night more cosily. We pressed into the notorious Room Five, and I managed to sell quite a few meat pies. (This transaction showed a considerable profit over last year's similar enterprise at Harrogate, although Brian Burgess was competing with me with a vast range of pies stuffed with pterodactyl meat; fortunately, I was able to enter his room and hide his stock in his wardrobe, thus stealing a munch on him.)

Room Five was at its prime. The Brunner's double bed boasted as fine an array of knees as ever kissed nylon. They belonged to mesdames Manson, Harrison, Yarborough, Brunner and Boardman, and Mack Reynolds lay in the middle of them. With great devotion to duty, Harry and Tom Boardman brought out a subscription sheet to *SF Horizons*, the forthcoming review of sf, on Ken Slater's duplicator, and extorted several subs from the more gullible attendees.

Time concertinaed down until you could get it all into a brown ale glass – they call it the XXX effect – and too soon it was 4:30. I crept to bed past Ron Bennett's brag party. He looked quite comfortable, sitting there in his braces.

At 4:35, the sturdiest curate in the Soke of Peterborough started ringing reveille in the cathedral. That's a fine peal they have there, and from my room, 114, the belfry was visible as well as audible. Rousing the performance definitely was, and I wished the curate was a decampanologist. [3]

Sunday April 14th

Brian Aldiss:

For Sunday breakfast we had double coffees all round. It took some while for service was so slow it became retrograde at times, but John Brunner was being unreasonably witty and we were naturally all cheered to find that the *Sunday Telegraph* printed not one word of Miss Heather Nicholson's report. As always, it was amusing to see others stagger in and assay bacon and eggs; some of them looked as if they had been up all night, performing eye operations on each other.

Ted Carnell and I had a long, serious chat on future plans. Delayed-service breakfast meant we missed Ethel's TAFF talk, but we had bought her report. Margaret and I sat talking to two of the most charming people at the Convention, Betty and Mike Rosenblum. Throughout the Con, Betty looked as if she was freshly dressed from her bath and about to spend an afternoon on the beach. I haven't your keen eye for sartorial detail, James, but I noticed Mike was also smartly dressed. Even Betty's fountain pen was elegant. When she lent it to me to sign a book, she said it would be hallowed from then on; I assured her I liked it so much it was nearly good-byed instead. Before we left, to show they'd forgiven the pun, Mike presented me with a set of his fanzine, *The New Futurian*. It's so readable I'm forging through it before embarking on the great pile of paperbacks I bought. [3]

Brian Varley:

Sunday morning we missed breakfast and also the heavy traffic noises of the previous day. Still we were all present and correct when Ethel opened the programme with her TAFF talk supported by Ron Bennett and Eric Bentcliffe. The three TAFFers were almost inundated by a Brag school set up by Phil Rogers on their table, the rest of the space being taken up by the Lindsay tea-tray. The session began some fifteen minutes late, in front of a surprisingly good audience, with Ethel giving a resume of the history and purpose of TAFF and outlining ambitions for the future.

Being very controversial for such an early hour Ted Tubb proposed that the administration should consider amending the voting system by allowing fans to buy more than one vote, paid for by doubling up so that, in effect, one vote would cost 2/6d, two 5/- and three 7/6 etc. After a heated discussion a vote was taken and only three hands were shown against this proposal being considered. A motion was also passed proposing that the voting subscription should be doubled to 5/- whether or not the Americans doubled their contributions.

Archie Mercer was then invited to the table to put forward a proposal. Firstly Archie stressed that he was not anti-TAFF, but rather, against open

elections. He reasoned that in one year it was possible to have two excellent candidates competing against each other, yet in the following year have two second-rate contestants. The results were obvious to all as was the risk of bad feelings between the nominees. He therefore proposed that a panel of selectors be set up, consisting of three fans-in-good-standing, plus the last two trippers. This panel would select the most deserving fan to benefit from TAFF.

The proposal was discussed and eventually defeated, mainly on the grounds that a) a pressure group could still work on the panel and b) the voting and the contest brought in the cash. Ken Slater, worried at the delay in the programme interrupted the proceedings with a proposal that the present system, which apparently had the support of most fans, should be retained. This proposal was passed and the meeting closed by Madam Chairman.

Next in line was the BSFA AGM. Having had enough of earnest discussion we retired to the lounge for a long-awaited pot of tea, but rallied ourselves sufficiently to creep back for the closing minutes. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Chairman Terry Jeeves outlined the schemes inaugurated during the year and mentioned that *Vector*, the official journal, hoped to go on to printed covers shortly. It had been a year of "solid slog," he said, mentioning the year's crises when Association Editor Ella Parker had to give up her post and when the BSFA Library had had to be moved to Liverpool. Round-robin letters were being started and there was a scheme in hand for encouraging aspiring writers. Chris Miller asked how new members were being recruited and Brian Aldiss muttered "thumbscrew." Peterborough was voted in as next year's convention site and next year's BSFA Committee was decided upon, as follows: Chairman – Phil Rogers. Vice-chairman – office jointly held by Bobbie Gray and Tony Walsh. Secretary – Maxim Jakubowski. Treasurer – Jill Adams keeps her post. Publications Officers – Archie Mercer and Michael Rosenblum. [6]

Brian Aldiss:

Most of the morning was occupied with the BSFA AGM. It was like all AGMs, and Bobbie Gray showed great resource in pushing it through as she did, though her opening remarks about "Discussing our usual crises" struck a chill note. It was revealed that half the BSFA membership does not renew, although it is in fact increasing its numbers. This is not the place to go into details of that meeting, but personally I felt that we have secured a very good joe in the person of our new book librarian, Joe

Navin.

Amid a gale of amazement, we were told that the Bull management would have us back next year. Taurus saw us, bore us, encored us!

Owing to ill-health, Bobbie is unable to act as BSFA Chairman, while for the same reason Terry Jeeves cannot chair again. Phil Rogers was put up for the job.

> "But I don't know what the job entails!" Phil exclaimed.
>
> "Therefore you're the ideal man," Bennett said, and the idea was carried.

I was chosen to be Chairman for the '65 WorldCon; Ella tells me it entails nothing, but I admit my hand isn't quite steady. [3]

Archie Mercer:

Prominent amongst this year's emergency absentees were ex-Librarian Peter Mabey and Treasurer Jill Adams, both of whom had to stay away for personal reasons. In Peter's case it was particularly unfortunate, because it turned out that he was voted to be the first recipient of the Doc Weir Award – an award he richly deserves for his services to the Library over at least four years besides other general service to the Association, to the Cheltenham S.F. Circle, and to fandom as a whole. Arrangements are being made to present him with the regalia in London (where he now lives). Jill's absence was occasioned by her small daughter Penelope, who came out in spots at just the wrong moment. I know some people claim they can't afford to visit Conventions (even though they're not all that expensive), but this is the first time I've ever heard of anybody having to miss one just because of one measly Penny. [4]

Brian Varley:

Silence fell as Ken Slater got up to announce the Doc Weir Award for this the first year and tumultuous applause greeted the announcement that Peter Mabey was the winner. A well-deserved award for one of the busiest backroom boys of fandom. Peter was unable to attend, and the job of passing him the handsome trophy was given to SFCoL who promised to make a ceremonial presentation.

This is, perhaps, an appropriate moment to mention the Art Awards. The Best Colourwork and SFCoL Special Award went to Jack Wilson. Jeeves took the Cartoon Award. Marc Ashby's Conhall backdrop was highly commended by the judges which, in their opinion contributed greatly to the success of the convention.

After lunch Geoff Doherty gave his talk "New Lamps for Old".

Unfortunately with the programme running late, this had to be drastically cut and so, what turned out to be one of the highspots of the programme, was reduced to a miserable half-hour. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

With the Yarboroughs and Mack Reynolds, we ate in the hotel. That was the time when the wine waiter refused to chill the Reisling. It was during that protracted battle that Geoff Doherty, still resolutely talking about sf, announced that one Northern England Examination board was now setting A Level questions on sf. He said, and I scribbled his immortal words down at once, "The winds of change are blowing even down the stuffy corridors of the academic world." I wish I'd said that.

Geoff excelled himself later in his talk on "SF: New Lamps for Old". He spoke very forcefully, and said that what we identify as an sf feeling has been felt often before, not least by poets. He illustrated the point by quoting from Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came":

> What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
> Or brake, not wheel – that harrow fit to reel
> Men's bodies out like silk?

Even Milton, he said, is to some extent an sf writer, in that he presents a view of man in a system, although it is a rigidly Christian system. And in *Paradise Lost* one often catches the echo of enchanted horns that we call the Sense of Wonder.

He said that sf has something in common with many types of saga from the Icelandic down to Pilgrim's Progress – anything in fact that showed Man engaged on a journey. In short, he claimed a lot more that you or I would have the nerve to do.

He denied that outside writers by writing sf, "jumped on the bandwagon". They might do it to express a different view of mankind, as Harry Martinson has done in his epic poem, *Aniara*. As the new views spread, so more writers will write sf; as proof of which is the growing output of hardcover sf.

Geoff's was a stimulating and difficult speech. I liked it a lot, and I disagreed with much of it. Soon after it was finished, he had to phone his report of the Con to the *Guardian*, and then catch a train home.

So he was unable to sit in on all of the Pro Panel – not that that long-suffering board was not heavily loaded enough. We did a sort of shift work on it, which was none too successful. [3]

Brian Varley:

There was such an abundance of professionals around this year it had been decided to ring the changes on the panel every two or three questions. The result was nobody really was able to get warmed up, those who were making a show were unceremoniously ejected and many follow-up questions died unspoken as the speaker they were intended for left the platform. As group after group of writers trooped up to the platform the listeners slowly began to filter away. As one writer fumbled his way through a semantic barrier, trying to express his thoughts, a voice murmured in my ear: "More cock from Moorcock." This may well have been true, but certainly wasn't fair. Many of the experts were tongue-tied, inarticulate or just inaudible. There seems to be a mistaken view that because a man can write adequately he can also express himself on the public platform. That this is not so was unquestionably proved by the majority of the panellists. Future programme organisers might care to take this to heart and select only one panel chosen, if possible, for their gift of the gab, but in any case it would allow them to get warmed up to the job. The panel should be there to entertain the audience, not pander to every professional ego. Mind you it is only fair to say that many of the questions asked were not conductive of sparkling wit and so, in part, the audience were to blame. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

Ella asked the first bunch of pros what we would write if not sf. Brunner said historical novels, Aldiss sex novels, Moorcock books on mountain climbing although (or because?) he had never climbed a mountain, Geoff sex plays.

Max – my notes tell me – asked what we would write if we could write what we pleased. Brunner said that would change from week to week. Aldiss said he would go back in a time machine to before H.G. Wells and write *all* the science fiction. Moorcock said he would go ahead and write as he was in any case planning to do. Doherty said he would write sf as social satire.

Chris Miller asked what the panel thought about sequels. Harrison said Edgar Rice Burroughs was the only man to make a real success of it. Aldiss began "For those in peril on the sequel –" and was thrown off the panel. Kingsley Amis said authors should be paid as much as possible.

In answer to a question from Betty Rosenblum, passing through the hall on her way to the beach, Bruce and Amis discussed a novel called *Time's Ruin*, which the former liked and the latter didn't. Very few other people seemed to have seen a copy; if you have a spare in your library, James, I gather Bruce would pay generously for it.

In answer to a question from Brunner, who by this time had been demoted to the floor, Bruce said that the first story ever to give him the true sf kick was Sheriff's *The Hopkins Manuscript*, also known as *The Cataclysm*. Amis had forgotten the title of his first kicker, but it featured an awful monster who engulfed things; people eating meat pies in the audience blushed. Dan Morgan recalled Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and Asimov's "Foundation" series. Harrison said that one afternoon when he was seven he found an sf mag which featured a story about a guy who discovered in the Antarctic a lost civilisation founded by intellectual tyrannosauri; the cover was by Paul.

The Pro Panel went on for a long while, everyone taking turn and turn about. Your reporter reports that he sneaked away and took turn and turn about with a bottle of whisky in the Harrison suite. There, a hilarious session developed, with Kingsley, Bruce, Harry, and Kingsley's friend Bill producing a series of superbly outré jokes. [3]

Brian Varley:

Following the Pro-panel was Eric Bentcliffe's "Gafia Show" consisting of colour slides showing scenes from Liverpool fan-life and shots taken during Eric's TAFF trip, including the fancy dress ball and fangroups. These were padded out with holiday snaps of Rumania and Venice which were of no fannish interest but which provoked a deal of worthwhile audience participation. This isn't by any means the ideal Con slide-show. What, I wonder, happens to all the film exposed at conventions? Presumably it disappears into private archives, but surely these could, and should, be collected and presented at the succeeding convention.

The finale was the traditional film show consisting, this year, of Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. There is a convention in Anglofandom to groan whenever *Metropolis* is mentioned, but in actual fact it was in 1951 that the film was last shown. Not many of these present were around in fandom in 1951 as was soon proved by the incredulous joy with which the majority of the audience greeted it. The film was actually made in Germany in 1926 and some of the scenes, especially that of the flood, are remarkable even by today's standards. However, the overacting of the silent era induced audience participation and slowly the hilarity grew until devastating shafts flew from all sides. The identification of one burly bearded character with Archie Mercer was the source of much humour, the pity being that Archie himself was not present. The film ended in a tumult of laughter and there was a general agreement that this was one of the brightest items of the whole convention. There would seem

to be a lot in favour of producing another silent epic for next year, for example the 1919 version of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. [2]

Archie Mercer:

The postponed after-hours unfinished business meeting was an experience unique in my recollection, and an object lesson in sheer cussed persistence. The main business left unfinished from that morning was the question of who would run next year's Con. We had a site – same place as this year's. We had certain offers of specific assistance – including one from Ken Slater, who could not have been blamed in the least if he'd insisted on a year's complete relaxation after all the work he's put into this one. But so far nobody had come forward to accept responsibility for general coordination, which those with experience agreed was the king-pin of the whole setup.

The meeting was, in effect, chaired jointly by Ken Slater and Bobbie Gray – Ken because he was this year's Con Chairman, and Bobbie because she'd been conducting the BSFA business meeting. It started half an hour later than scheduled (people were eating) and gradually snowballed as more and more fans crowded into the little lounge, many of them quitting *Orphée* (which, though I didn't see any of it myself, I understand called for considerable devotion to fandom on the part of those leaving it) in order to be in on the deliberations. And we argued and we argued and we argued. We argued round in circles, in fact. Somebody would say something, suggest somebody's name perhaps, or ask a question. The suggestee would decline "on the grounds that...", or the question would be answered, Ken or Bobbie would complete the circular argument and start again in the same place as before. More suggestions. More regretful refusals. More questions. And somehow the shape of the circle would subtly shift, as Ken (or Bobbie) started the argument again – from (if it were possible) a slightly different side of the same place.

And suddenly the circle was broken. Some subtle shift in the formula, some illumination sparked by a casual but pointed interjection from somebody, had left open a way out of the circle. And Tony Walsh – may much egoboo accrue to his name – had agreed to accept the job.

If he hadn't, I think we could easily have been there all night. I understand they elect Popes the same way.

But I'm damned if I can remember a word that was said – or by who. [5]

Ron Bennett:

At an extra-ordinary business meeting on the Sunday evening in the

Wakeford Lounge a goodly proportion of the attendees gathered to discuss plans for holding next year's convention in Peterborough. Ken Slater pointed out that he could not afford the time away from his business to put on next year's convention but was willing to take charge of professional displays. George Locke said that he would be willing to produce the convention's newsletters and Ken Slater said that he would also be willing to look after the hotel bookings. At the end of the meeting Ethel Lindsay staggered out to find herself in charge of the 1964 programme. She was supported (yes, held up) by Tony Walsh who looked shaken himself – he will wake up to find himself Convention Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, a formidable combination. Peter West offered to provide and put on the films and is asking anyone to suggest titles of both professional and/or amateur SF films they would like to see next year. How about *The Trouble with Harry*, Peter? [6]

Brian Varley:

After the film, which finished shortly after midnight, there was a small gathering in 258. A dozen or so fans spread comfortably over chairs, beds or floor, a drink in hand, good conversation and a pleasant atmosphere made it a joy to be there. We learnt the Aldiss method for finding plots and this is now available to aspiring writers, price ten shillings, and will be forwarded under a plain brown cover. We would also like to offer Mack Reynolds's method but he was too busy trying to persuade someone to play with his toes. Tom Boardman was holding forth on the publishing life in general and the peculiar habits of certain writers in particular. John Brunner was holding forth... Altogether a very pleasant evening and a most enjoyable end to the convention. There is an opinion, widely held, that all parties should be open to all comers, and there is much to be said for the spirit behind this. Personally though I can only truly enjoy a party if there is room to breathe and move in. I attended both parties in 258 and must say that the Sunday evening "closed" session was infinitely more preferable... but then I am speaking from the inside. [2]

Brian Aldiss:

And so the Sunday wore delectably on. Kingsley returned to Cambridge by taxi, most of the rest of us – and that makes about 169 – saw one or both of the two films, *Metropolis* and Cocteau's *Orphée*. The latter has most powerful symbols of death and the unknown, but the former was the more popular; in the immortal words of *Skyrack*, "There were many impromptu remarks from the audience."

So the gaiety went on unabated. When Tom and Joyce Boardman

dragged Margaret goggle-eyed from *Metropolis*, we went and had a drink in the notorious Room Five, where the Brunner's massive dog was just finishing the remains of a delicious fan. Serious discussions then took place, on the subject of whether world conditions had not seriously deteriorated since women were given the vote. On the bed John Brunner and Bruce were entertaining Margaret and Joan Harrison with the exploits of Feghoot. I sold one of my oil paintings to Bruce for an undisclosed sum. Eric Bentcliffe suggested that since people got tired, all-night parties should in future be held during the afternoon.

At an undisclosed time of night, Tom Boardman and I decided we should visit Ella and Ethel in room 258. Unfortunately they were not alone, and the room was full of Jimmy Groves, to mention but a few. The talk there was more intellectual than in the pro room, and we discussed some of the points raised in the speech of Danish fan Harrison (whose cry "Elsinore in '64" had not been taken up). This was a very nice party, and I managed to get on to a bed with Frances Varley; Brian Varley was also there. They voted that I had the best red socks of the Convention, which was some sort of consolation.

Eventually Tom and I left; the party was still going strong, and Ethel lay fast asleep on her bed. We went to look up the Harrisons, and found Joan in bed. Margaret joined us, and the five of us had a quiet little session on Joan's bed. It had to be quiet – the children snoozed only a few feet away.

The tremendously high level of the discussion deteriorated after a while, notably when I could no longer resist a slice of midriff Joan kept on showing. I pressed a passionate signature to it with my ball-point pen. So Harry got to signing Tom with a sharp-pointed Parker '51.

Having been signed and resigned, we resigned from the party, and tottered off to bed. Even the jolly sound of a corridor con upstairs could not lure us, though Tom went. We heard later that Mike Moorcock had been composing a new Elric story, with additions by various hands and censorship by Ted Carnell. Tom bought the result, all rights, for a penny. Last I saw of Mike and Ted, Ted was trying to get his ten per cent.... [3]

Langdon Jones:

I wandered upstairs, and walked round the hotel talking and lounging about. I finally wandered into Mike Moorcock's party. Mike was quite worried as I had paid him some money for booze, and then hadn't turned up to drink it. However I got as much of my money's worth as I could. Later I wandered out into the corridor and found a party going full-swing there too, at the top of the stairs. I remember passing Ted Tubb as he was

reading the palm of Gerry Webb's girl and saying, "Ah yes, you are a woman of tempestuous passion..." and the girl looking up at him, drinking in every word. For some reason things began to get a little blurry. I remember collaring a bottle from somewhere, goodness knows where. Max Jakubowski was sitting at a typewriter, staring at a sheet of paper containing the words THE SHAVEN SUN. Mighod, thought I, what a wonderful title, I eventually persuaded him to let me type out the story, I got very engrossed in this epic, and just remember being infuriated by some woman called Ina Shorrock, who kept saying, "Ooh, we haven't got one of those on our typewriter..." and pressing all the available keys.

Still, I unintentionally got my own back by confusing her with Inchmery. At last I perfected the epic to my own exacting satisfaction, and cried, "Look everybody!" There was silence. I looked up, and found that I was completely on my own, I picked up the typer and staggered downstairs to the lounge. There I found Mike Moorcock, Max Jakubowski, Ron Bennett and Ted Tubb. I gave the typer back, and collapsed into an armchair, I looked at the window, through which the light of dawn was greyly shining, and I thought with satisfaction, "Well, at least I'll get breakfast tomorrow." There followed a drunken (at least on my part) conversation on the merits of Bradbury. Suddenly my memory of the conversation cuts off completely.

I was manhandled into wakefulness by Ella Parker. The lounge was full of light, and people. I looked desperately at my watch. The time was 10:30 a.m. [1]

Monday April 15th

Brian Aldiss:

As we hit the sack, the curate across the road waded into the cathedral bells... and we roused to the last hellish breakfast. Service was slow. The waitress told us they were cleaning the silver in the kitchen. Could she have meant counting it? We observed a curious phenomenon at the table: the coffee got hotter the longer we sat there. It was John Brunner who gave us the explanation: it was slowly coming up to room temperature.

After that, we all adjourned, picked up Bruce, who was expressing dismay that he had missed earlier cons, and had two Bloody Marys apiece. Then we moved slowly out to the car, passing Betty Rosenblum on her way to the beach. When I was demobilised, leaving the Bull gave me a distinct thrill; this time, it was no such pleasure. Every con has its flavour; and the Petercon had a bouquet all its own. I'd say '63 will go down in the

records as a real vintage year. [3]

Archie Mercer:

At both Harrogate and Peterborough, the Shorrocks have brought two of their four with them – the oldest and the youngest, the former to look after the latter. And if that sounds like child slavery to you, then obviously you don't know the Shorrock family. Janet Shorrock manages to get her full quota of enjoyment from the weekend, largely in the company of Susie Slater – also a veteran of two Cons now. The Bulmers brought their two little girls, but these were never seen far away from one or the other parent. Harry Harrison and his wife brought one of each – a boy Todd and a girl toddler – who seemed somewhat shy but still ran happily about the hotel. Sundry other juvenile fannish progeny showed up from time to time; in fact I can't recall having seen so many fannish offspring in one place before.

I remember on the Monday morning passing along the corridor on the way to my room, to find it entirely blocked by a mixed quintet racing along it on hands and knees, comprising Janet and Alan Shorrock, Susie Slater, and the two Harrison kids. Then they crawled into one of the bedrooms, and vanished from sight. I hope to see them all there again next year, and more like them. [5]

Brian Varley:

It was a good convention and I am positive that there are few who would disagree with me. Witness to this is borne by the fact that on the Monday morning when, with most of the Londoners we left to catch our train, over 50 registrations had been made for 1964. At this stage I would like to express my appreciation to the organisers for putting on a most enjoyable show. They must have worked exceedingly hard indeed for our benefit.

For me, the star turns were Ted Tubb, whether as auctioneer, panellist or the Dior of the Fancy Dress parade; the Doherty talk; *Metropolis*; Aldiss both as MC and as himself; Harrison for his rampaging humour; the hotel staff who, though not always available, gave cheerful service for hours of noise; the four Salfordians as a sign of the future of fandom, but above all the sociable atmosphere created by all those attending.

Brickbats? Well if I haven't said it already perhaps it's best left unsaid.

One final thing before we end. Why, in Ghu's name, do we bother with moronic reporters who turn up every year? The only decent report appeared in the only decent paper, *The Guardian*, and this was done by

Geoff Doherty who just listened and then reported. The others were a waste of time and effort. As Harry Harrison said when he saw Monday's *Telegraph*:

"Four bloody hours for seven lines – and then they've misquoted!"

PETERBOROUGH IN 64 ANYONE???? [2]

[1] *Tensor* #2 (May 1963, ed. Langdon Jones)
[2] *Scottishe* #32 (June 1963, ed. Ethel Lindsay)
[3] *Hyphen* #33 (June 1963, ed. Walt Willis)
[4] *Vector* #19 (May 1963, ed. Archie Mercer)
[5] *Les Spinge* #11 (June 1963, ed. Dave Hale)
[6] *Skyrack* #53 (April 1863, ed. Ron Bennett)

1964

Eddie Jones badge design used with different background colours every year from 1961 to 1964. This is the final 1964 version, whose original background – here shown as grey – was orange.
Image courtesy of Bill Burns's eFanzines.com.

18. RePetercon Programme

Friday Evening

8 p.m. WELCOME TO THE CONVENTION. BY TONY WALSH.
followed by “WHO’S WHO” and “MEET YOUR TAFF DELEGATE”.

9:30 MEMORY MAN – KEN SLATER & CO
Can you beat the wizard of Wisbech? Ask your snap questions on any SF subject.

From here on in Friday evening is left free for the meeting and greeting of old friends and new in the lounges and bar. Let’s get friendly, circulate, join the various groups, introduce yourself to people if you are a new fan... don’t be shy. We want to know you.

Saturday Morning

10:30 FAN PANEL “DOES FANDOM NEED SF?”
Chairman Ron Bennett, panelists W. Weber, A. Thomson, P. Rogers, T. Bull.

11:30 AUCTION.
Auctioneers – Ted Forsyth, A.N. Other.
All auction material gathered and guarded by G. Locke.

1 p.m. LUNCH

Afternoon

2:30 FILM SHOW. A selection of films obtained at enormous expense from selected sources for your delight and approbation.

4:00 BREAK FOR TEA “...AND ARE THERE MUFFINS STILL FOR TEA?”

5 p.m. SURPRISE ITEM. A must, for those with enquiring minds.

Evening

6 p.m. DINNER BREAK

7. EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT. Fancy dress party/competition.

If a slide show was not needed during afternoon it may be shown during evening.

Competitors for fancy dress parade to gather in nearby lounge at approx 9 p.m. There will be cards for them to fill out their names and titles.

Categories:

Most Beautiful.
Most Bemish.
Most Authentic – specific SF character.
Most Authentic – specific fantasy character.
Judges' Award – any costume not in other categories.

M.C. for evening – Phil Rogers.

Bar built, decorated, and manned by stout hearts of the SF Club of London.

Sunday Morning

10 a.m. B.S.F.A. GENERAL MEETING.

11:30 "DOC" WEIR AWARD.

12:30 GIVE AWAY AUCTION.

All at rock bottom prices

1 p.m. LUNCH BREAK.

Afternoon

2:30 SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE WISE

Worlds of science fiction, fantasy, and the macabre, the "alien" way by Charles Partington, Harry Nadler, Tom Holt, and Tony Edwards.

Films produced by the Delta amateur film group.

(see full page notice)

The notice, hand-lettered by Arthur "Atom" Thomson and headed "The 'Alien' Film Festival", listed the films to be screened thus:

- *Frankenstein's Xperiment*
- *From Earth to the Moon*
- *I Was a Teenage Birdman*
- *Jekyll and Hyde*
- *First Man in the Moone*
- *Son of Godzilla*
- *Conquest in Space*
- one hour of fabulous films

3:30 TRIBUTE TO NOVA. Chairman Lan Wright. Panel composed of authors who wrote for Nova.

Evening

8 p.m. SPEECH BY GUEST OF HONOUR E.C. "TED" TUBB.

PRIZEGIVING.

CLOSEDOWN BY TONY WALSH.

The organisers of the programme have purposely not overloaded it with a full minute by minute schedule of items so that all conventioneers will have ample time to get round meeting and greeting old and new fan friends, see Peterborough if they wish (the cathedral contains the tomb of Mary Queen of Scots) without having to cut or rush items on the programme, which the organisers feel is full of interesting items for all.

19. Peterborough Redux

RePetercon – the 1964 UK National Science Fiction Convention and the sixth to be run under the auspices of the BSFA – took place over the weekend of Good Friday, March 27th to Easter Monday, March 30th. It was once again held at the Bull Hotel in Peterborough. Guest of Honour was Ted Tubb, Wally Weber was the TAFF delegate, and the committee consisted initially of Tony Walsh, Ethel Lindsay and George Locke, with Dave Barber, Arthur Thomson, Ken Cheslin, Ken Slater and Marcus Ashby being added later.

In *Skyrack*, Ron Bennett reported that: "virtually the same number of fans attended this year as did last, 125 with a SEm of 3 points! Once again there were many new fans present, though this year the professional turn-out was somewhat disappointing, not only when compared with last year's all-time record." Again, last year's was not an all-time record.

Officially the 1964 British Science Fiction Association Convention, it had, as previously noted, first been dubbed "RePetercon" by Brian Aldiss in *Hyphen* #33. This seems to have quickly caught on and though the name doesn't appear in the Programme Book or on the con badge, it *is* used in the progress report *The East Fanglian Times*.

There was a third convention held at the Bull in 2004. Not an Eastercon this time, it was called ReRePetercon and celebrated the 40th anniversary of RePetercon. Peter Weston organised it.

RePetercon saw the final appearance of the Eddie Jones-designed con badge that had been used for four consecutive Eastercons, with only the colour changing. This year it was orange.

Prologue

Wally Weber:

The non-stop flight from Seattle to London (or from March 18, 1964 to March 19, 1964, if you want to look at it from the fourth dimension) was pleasant and quick. London's Heathrow Airport looked freshly built for the occasion and, like most of the new construction I was to find in England, looked like any newly built fantastically expensive Stateside building. Realizing that Ella Parker would be at work on Thursday until late afternoon, I loitered for some time at the airport, then spent the rest of the day sightseeing in London. Around 7 o'clock I finally called Ella and

was informed, as only Ella can inform, that she had skipped work that day to be on hand when I arrived.

To rectify this, the first mistake I've ever made in my whole life, I arranged to meet her for lunch on Friday. I shrewdly arrived an hour early and, discovering she was not there, naturally assumed I had been too late. At least I was spacing my blunders one day apart.

Friday night I witnessed one of Ella's weekly fan gatherings. She has the fans trained for neatness. For example, when Langdon Jones saw tea about to be spilled, he immediately threw himself under the falling drops to protect Ella's rug. Fans visiting Ella seem to have a fierce desire to survive.

In the interests of surviving, I tried to leave for Ireland on Saturday, March 21st, but the flights were all booked. I ended up taking a flight that left so early on Sunday morning that Ella had to go without sleep all night to be sure to get me up in time for it. You could tell, I was making life very interesting for Ella.

Walt Willis and family met me at the airport near Belfast and immediately took me on a tour of the major attractions of Northern Ireland including a quarter-of-a-million-dollar wastebasket, the giant Potato Crisp industry, and the modern M1 super-highway.

After spending a few days with John Berry (exploring a castle, playing billiards with coins, looking over space stamps, playing records, sightseeing, and swilling Guinness because it is good for me), I returned to the Willis home. There I got to see one of the world's most interesting paper hangers since Adolph Hitler, marvel over fannish artefacts in the attic, attend a gathering of those famous Irish fans you've all read about, and witness a suspenseful procedure for acquiring airplane tickets back to London.

Eventually Madeleine and I ran away to London together, but Walt followed us after seeing his daughter safe in the hospital, and Thursday night, March 26 found Walt, Madeleine, Ethel Lindsay, Ella and myself trying to get some sleep in preparation for the Peterborough convention which was to begin the next day. [1]

Archie Mercer:

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line – in the opposite direction.

Therefore, when at half past four on the Thursday I quit work an hour early, saddled my trusty scooter Laideronette and set off for Peterborough – which lay towards the north-east – naturally I travelled south-west. Peterborough was pulling hard in the opposite direction, however, and

Laideronette responded strongly to its attraction. First I found it hard to stay in top gear, then impossible. Before long I found it increasingly difficult to stay in third gear, then in second.

Abandoning all thoughts of circumnavigating the globe to approach Peterborough from the far side, I coaxed Laideronette into Bridgwater at not much more than walking pace and drew up thankfully outside the Walsh abode. There the Mercatorial effects were off-loaded and transferred to the mighty Walsh automobile, and soon in company with Tony, Simone and Sarah I was following half the milk tankers in the South of England on the road to London.

Pausing only to offload Sarah with her aunt in Berkshire and frighten their cat, we continued on into London. Pausing (in turn) only long enough to stay the night at George Locke's palatial apartment overlooking the Chelsea Royal Hospital we continued on with George and the auction material to arrive in Peterborough at around mid-day on Good Friday. [2]

Friday 27th March – a.m.

Langdon Jones:

It was at nine-fifteen, after a mad struggle to leave the house on time that I finally set off for Ealing Broadway Station, where I was to meet Charlie Smith, the other half of Ealing Fandom. We arrived at King's Cross at 10:15, fifty minutes before the train was due to leave. In vain did I try to explain that I had suggested we left early so as not to miss the train; he just wryly pointed at the 10:50 train to Peterborough, still standing quietly by its platform, showing no signs yet of leaving. This was the train before ours. I consoled Charlie by saying we could have a leisurely cup of coffee, a very leisurely cup of coffee, in the buffet.

Unfortunately the buffet was closed.

This caused Charlie to utter expletives that I consider very unbecoming to one whose job it is to mould the innocent minds of the young. We wandered dejectedly along the platform and then – wonder of wonders – discovered another buffet that was open. We trooped in and came face to face with a group of fen. I left Charlie talking, and went to join the queue for refreshments. By the time I came back, half the wait was over. After I had finished my British Railways Hot Cross Bun, the wait was three-quarters over. We went out to the barrier then, and awaited the arrival of the rest of the London, Irish and American contingents. Everyone arrived in little groups, and eventually we all found our way to our reserved compartment. For the sake of posterity I shall try to

remember who went up. There was Ella Parker, Ethel Lindsay, Jill Adams, Ted Forsyth, Jimmy Groves, Sheila Barnes, Desmond Squire, Chris Priest, Mike Moorcock, Walt and Madeleine Willis, James White, Wally Weber, I think, and probably, one or two I forget.

We found that all the seats were reserved except one. In this seat was an inoffensive-looking character who was quietly reading. Ella Parker came up and did a double-take.

"What's he doing here?" she asked, pointing her finger at him. He looked round to see the terrifying spectacle of a ferocious Ella, with her finger hovering a few inches away from his face. I'll give him credit. He didn't flee, gibbering in fear. He was a real man. He just sat there; perhaps trembling a little.

"Er – er – er – "

"All these seats are reserved", growled Ella, her voice increasing in volume. He gripped the edge of his seat and swallowed convulsively. Sweat began to stand out on his brow.

"Er – this one isn't reserved".

"What?" bellowed Ella, "they're all reserved!" He whitened, and his teeth began to chatter.

We tried to explain to Ella that the seat really wasn't reserved, but she began to get more and more ferocious, and the poor fellow's teeth began to chatter so hard that pieces of tooth were flying all over the compartment. Abruptly he got up and fled to the relative safety of the next compartment. We later found a ticket to Hull on the floor, and found that the fellow had dropped it in his terrified flight.

We soon began to sit down. I sat opposite Charlie, then Mike came over, and then finally Willis Himself came down and sat next to me. Me.

Mind you, never let it be said that having Ghod sitting next to me unnerved me at all. I think that Charlie will agree that I conducted myself with complete decorum. I am a mature adult, not a slobbering sycophant, and I conducted myself like a mature adult. Walt was wearing quite nice-tasting shoe-polish....

Arthur Thomson was not going up until Saturday, but he turned up anyway to see us off. As the train began to move, he put both hands to the side of the carriage, and pushed. Soon he had the train moving at a respectable speed, and dropped behind, waving. [3]

Jim Groves:

My Convention really began when the SF Club of London decided to organise its usual party travel to the Consite. As Secretary, I did the booking. Among others a good proportion of Irish fandom turned up in

London and was included in the party. Also with us was the TAFF delegate, Wally Weber, from Seattle, Washington. As usual, with an SFCoL outing, the general public got a traumatic shock. Arthur "ATOM" Thomson, our not-so-tame artist, had drawn one of his usual posters for the train window. This one bore the legend ANNUAL OUTING OF THE ESCAPED PRISONERS SOCIETY! [4]

Charles E. Smith:

A guard saw it and expressed surprise, saying that most of us would have had to be child POWs. At which point Willis spritely suggested that we must have been stalagmites. I'm still wincing. [2]

Langdon Jones:

Maxim Jakubowski turned up in the carriage with a French fan, whose name I never did pick up. The French fan spoke very little English, and Mike Moorcock, rather unkindly, began explaining to him that Norman Sherlock's amplifier, which he was carrying, was really a Heironymous machine, and even got him twiddling the knobs.

Then Mike suddenly reached into his bag and brought out a couple of mouth-organs and a kazoo. I had heard Mike play the mouth-organ once before, in a taxi on the way back from Ella's. As soon as he started to play the taxi began to swerve violently. The taxi-driver must have been tone-deaf. If he hadn't been, we'd have crashed. So in self-defence I grabbed the kazoo and started to play Schoenberg. Somehow I've always had this strange ambition to play Schoenberg on the kazoo. Anyway, when I finished I felt much better, I don't know whether the others did though.

Needless to say, the train journey was sheer hell. Trapped between Willis puns and Moorcock mouth-organ playing, I even tried to escape through the little ventilation window. However, we saw a couple of slag-heaps, and realised that we must be nearly there. And before long the train drew into Peterborough North.

Once off the train, we all accumulated outside the station, there meeting George Scithers and someone whose name I forget. (Remember that phrase – you're going to hear it a lot.) After a little aimless milling around, we eventually started off in the direction of The Bull. [3]

Friday 27th March

Harry Nadler:

After many variations on how to reach Peterborough, the site of this year's British Science Fiction Association Convention, we managed to

squeeze the car through the narrow entrance to what had once been the stables of the Bull Hotel.

The lobby inside the hotel showed signs of a little confusion, for it seems the Con badges had not arrived and everyone was either dashing around trying to find out when they would turn up or sitting on chairs, banisters, floors etc. around where the registration desk was last year. Someone had a tape recorder and was entertaining the waiting throng with something that sounded like the Goon Show, but turned out to be one of the Liverpool Group's tape plays: *The March of Slime*.

Chuck Partington, Tom Holt, Clive Fowkes and myself had checked in at the hotel desk, and leaving Aub Marks to sign the register we wandered to survey the scene I have just described.

Archie Mercer was the first person any of us recognised and the usual introductions came into force. A pause was reached when I realised that Aub was still not with us, and on returning to the desk we found our first spot of trouble. The Bull was full to the brim and Mr Marks had left his booking too late, there was only the overflow hotel left. There was nothing anyone could do apart from walking round to the Angel Hotel and getting him fixed up. [5]

Archie Mercer:

Right from the start, the hotel seemed to be overrun with Brummies, "Easter Brummies", somebody (me, I think) dubbed them, though "Peterborough Rabbits" might be an apposite description. For every ten new faces one saw, fifteen belonged to Brummies. I suppose this is the point to begin describing a few. Ken Cheslin one knows already, he being a survivor from a previous age. Pete Weston is young, serious and slightly vague. Rog Peyton, the BSFA's new Editor, is slightly older and exudes an air of quiet competence. Charlie Winstone, the new Treasurer, is small and obliging. Mike Higgs "MIK" the cartoonist swears he was drawing that way before he even heard of Arthur Thomson. Cynthia, his girl-friend, has a lovely smile. Mike Turner is just old enough to have grown his first beard, Ed James is capable of talking but seldom admits it, and I'm sure there were more than that but one tends to lose count. (Yes, come to think of it – there was Cliff, who refused to lie down on the floor so that everybody could jump over him.) And some of the best ones, so I hear, didn't turn up at all.

Mary Reed is a member of the Birmingham SF Group, but being a Geordie she actually lives in Banbury, well outside the normal sphere of influence of the Brummie metropolis. She arrived together with her friend Julia Stone, from Chipping Norton. Julia (who weighs rather more than her

surname might suggest) is about sixteen, has a rabbit called Fred, and spends her mundane nights chasing pigs round the Oxfordshire countryside. Mary's a couple of years older, and is already known in fandom as something of a letter-writing phenomenon. Both girls had got hold of the notion that the way to spend a Con is by going for three whole nights without sleep. This makes them somewhat difficult to carry on a meaningful conversation with at times. They'll learn – I hope. Both seem to be well worth talking to.

Even younger than Julia is Brian McCabe, from Slough, who admits to being only fourteen. He came with Pete Mansfield – it turns out that they're cousins or something. Brian seemed very shy, but if he develops as he matures, he'll soon be an artist of considerable repute. The stuff he's doing now, at fourteen, is nothing to be sneezed at.

Terry Pratchett, who sold a story to Carnell at that age (14) is a comparative veteran – though this was his first Convention, too. I was interested to have my suspicions confirmed that he is indeed an Oliver Anderson fan. Dave Busby, who has also sold to Carnell, is one of a trio of tall thin youngsters, the other two being Peter White and Chris Priest. Charles (don't call him "Twisher") Platt deserves a paragraph to himself, but we don't all get what we deserve in this world. I can best sum him up, I think, by comparing him to myself. He is much as I was at that age – except that he's extrovert enough to try to do something about it, whereas I wasn't.

Some of last year's newcomers have survived to this year, too, and I'm beginning to put faces to them. The Alien group from Salford are at least easily distinguishable from everybody else, if not from each other. (Particularly when in costume). Brian Allport, who last year came from Nottingham, now comes from Liverpool instead. I've dubbed him Brian Export, and can even vaguely remember what he looks like now. His friend, Mike Booth, also from Nottingham, is nowadays mainly from Bristol. It goes without saying that I never meet him except in Peterborough. This could probably be better organised.

Tyneside, too, sent its cohorts. Some, like Con Turner, have emerged from the dust of the years. Others, like Phil Harbottle, are not so dusty. Phil (another New Face) looks about as like one's mental image of him as it is possible for one to look outside Salford and environs. (No, Mary. I know Salford isn't on Tyneside. Refer back to the previous paragraph and all will become clear to you – I hope.)

I seem to have dwelt at some length on the new faces – and still haven't mentioned Dick Howett who can draw and things. As a matter of

fact, I seem to have spent more time in the company of youngsters half my age or less than in fact of fans nearer my own generation. This could be due to my retarded nature, or to the onset of second childhood, but I prefer to ascribe it to the fact that over the past year I've found myself corresponding with a lot of them and this was the first time I'd met them face to face.

Plenty of the older hands were there as well, of course. Ron Bennett (who lost his voice specially for the occasion – to him, a fate indeed worse than death. He had a good name for it, though – "Vox Pop"). Ina Shorrock (I always like to mention Ina Shorrock) – likewise Norman of that ilk and several lesser representatives of the species. Madeleine Willis, who brought her husband with her. She twisted my arm – needn't have bothered, though, because I'd already voted. Still, I can think of plenty of people I wouldn't be nearly so keen to have my arm twisted by. TAFF delegate Wally Weber, an ethereal creature most unlike his on-paper image. Jhim and Marion Linwood – who had got married only a day or two earlier. Ethel and Ella, and Jill (it was her turn to come this year) and Peter Mabey (likewise) and scads of assorted Jeeveses, Slaters, and the like.

As usual, there were a number of notable absentees. Brian Aldiss had just departed for a six-months' stay in Yugoslavia, so he couldn't make it. I'm not sure where Harry Harrison had gone to, but he wasn't there either. Val Purnell also had to miss it. I asked Marion to express my condolences when she wrote, and she said she would but she intended playing down the fabulous time everybody was having so that Val wouldn't feel so sad she'd had to miss it. This, however, in the interests of accuracy I cannot do. Val – it was an excellent Con. Would have been better still if you'd been there of course. See you at the next one, I hope. [2]

Langdon Jones:

Entering the portals of The Bull was almost like coming home. Just after I got in I had the most peculiar sensation that the '63 Con hadn't really finished, and that this was really the fourth day. It was as if the intervening year had been completely wiped out. After an interminable wait for hotel registration there was a nasty and extended moment, during which it appeared that I was destined for The Angel, but all was well, and eventually I got a room. This year, instead of the monstrous, twenty-pound, foot-long, lead tag on my key, I got a small plastic one. Charlie got a monstrous, twenty-pound, foot-long, lead tag on his key however, a fact which afforded me no small amount of pleasure.

The general tone of the Con was then set at the beginning by the fact

that immediately we had put our bags in the rooms, before even unpacking, Max Jakubowski, Mike Moorcock, Charlie and myself adjourned to the nearest bar. We chose a place outside the hotel because we wanted not only to drink, but to eat. Unfortunately the place was a bit inferior on the food side, so we had to settle for a few packets of biscuits and cheese. It was rather peculiar actually. We were just sitting round a table, talking quietly, not going mad or anything, and yet we were subject to the most intense, sidelong scrutiny by most of the locals sitting around. After finishing our cheese and biscuits we decided that we might as well be in the hotel bar, and crept furtively from the pub.

By now more and more fans were appearing in the bar. George Locke, Archie Mercer, the newly-wed Jhim and Marion Linwood showing great fannish dedication, and a few others. By now Charlie and I decided to have a look around. We had hoped that registration would have started, but the table was sitting there just looking lonely. We wandered around for a while, meeting someone now and again, and generally lounging.

Suddenly strange moaning noises began to fill the air. Strange subterranean rumblings, weird unearthly moaning, that seemed to pervade the very structure of the hotel itself. For a moment I thought it was trouble with the pipes then as it got louder and still more horrible I considered that it might at last be judgement day, and the noises were the screaming of the tortured souls from the very bowels of Hell itself. Then I realised it was just Mike Moorcock, upstairs in the Con hall, practising for the Bellyflops. Singing.

A tape-recorder was produced, upon which was placed a tape made by the Cheltenham Group, It was very funny, and I'm only sorry that I couldn't hear it properly; it just couldn't compete with the conversation and Moorcock.

And still registration hadn't started. Charlie and I said hello to Tony and Simone Walsh, and found that Phil Rogers hadn't yet arrived with the name-badges. After a little more wandering about on my part, Tony and Simone decided to go ahead, Phil Rogers or no Phil Rogers. I had the honour of being the first official attendee. The process of my registration took about ten minutes owing to a dispute between Tony and Simone over how much I was to pay. This price fluctuated alarmingly between five bob and a pound. However, soon it was sorted out, the price levelled at ten shillings, and the Con had started. [3]

Ron Bennett:

In suspended animation since the early Kettering conventions, the phantom quote card distributor struck again this year. Under every beer-

mat, in every toilet roll, along corridors, in sandwiches... there were quotecards. In the main, these fell into three categories: those supporting Phil Rogers in the current TAFF campaign, those featuring a saying or, er – a quote, and those which could be flashed in conversation or could be otherwise be used appropriately in certain naturally-occurring situations. The cards were contrived by the Liverpool Group, illustrated by Eddie Jones, duplicated by Norman Shorrock and complained about by Alan Rispin. There were some ten thousand cards distributed in all, of which no fewer than one hundred and ninety-four were different. How many did you collect? [6]

Peter Weston:

At 8 o'clock we filed upstairs for the start of the programme in the con hall. This was dominated by a huge painted backdrop held up on poles, an intricate, twelve foot tableau of some sort of undersea scene, with papier mache rocks and an old sea trunk with a rounded lid. Many years later Ken Slater explained the rationale:

"We 'themed' the two Peterborough cons on books by the Guest of Honour. For Repetercon we based the backdrop on Ted Tubb's *City of No Return*. We had lots of fun painting it on sheets of grey paper intended for carpet underlay, which came in rolls about ten foot long. We did it in the yard behind my shop in Norfolk Street, using tempera colour and bottles of wine as aids. Dave Barber was involved, as was a local semi-fan named Mark Ashby, who was a pretty fair artist." [7]

Since photos clearly show the backdrop on a translucent mesh, it appears that what Ken is describing here is actually the construction of the backdrop for the 1963 convention.

Jim Groves:

There were a lot of new faces at this Con – in fact, I can't remember a convention, even my first, at which I could put a name to so few faces. Previously fans had turned up from the BSFA in ones and twos, now they are coming in large groups. A sign that at least one of the BSFA's original functions was working out all right.

The programme got off to a good start on Friday night with an introductory session run by Ethel and Tony. To help out anyone who might not yet be in the mood, Tony had armed himself with a set of notices which he held up at the appropriate times. These bore slogans such as APPLAUSE and SILENCE PLEASE. Skilful use of these enlivened a performance that could too easily have degenerated into a "Stand up so-and-so".... [4]

Charles Platt:

Friday was a day in which there was little organised, and what there was I found disappointing. In a way this set the tone of the rest of the Convention.

Having spent the afternoon meeting people and talking, at 8:00 p.m. fans congregated in the main hall to be welcomed officially to the Con. Following this welcome was a chaotic and seemingly pointless succession of introductions; one by one members of the audience were brought up front and asked rather pointless questions. The whole thing would have been like a quiz programme apart from the unruly and uninterested audience and the lack of a few well-placed "Well, how about that!" interjections from the interviewer. "And here is... (looks at programme notes)... ah... Peter Weston, from Birmingham. You're from Birmingham, Pete?" "Yes" "And you're a new fan?" "Yes, that's right..." "And you run a fanzine?" "Yes, it's called *Zenith* and it costs only 1/- at the moment, but the sub rates are going up next issue so subscribe to it now." "Well thank you, Pete, and now let's have..." and so on, ad infinitum. So many people were brought up out of the audience I was wondering where it would stop; soon everyone would have been introduced. Unfortunately the answers could not be heard a lot of the time because the audience insisted on cutting in, talking, and shouting funny comments. It was a bemusing first taste of the Con; surely, one felt, it can't all be like this? [8]

Ron Bennett:

The convention was opened a few minutes late on the Friday evening by Tony "I believe in tradition" Walsh who welcomed attendees and introduced his committee. Various notable fans and authors present were interviewed by Ethel Lindsay who found the tables turned when she tried to interview James White. Ken Slater followed by giving an impromptu answer session to snap questions on s-f. This was a little disappointing in that many fans deliberately went out of their merry ways to catch Ken out, though when Ken asked for questions which perhaps posed some problem to the questioners themselves, the session was far more enjoyable and definitely more worthwhile. Ask the young lady who discovered for the first time the title of a memorable story which she had come across in a pocket book lacking a cover and title page, namely *The Puppet Masters*. [6]

Charles Smith:

Lang and I sat through the questions, directed at Ken Slater, on various SF stories, until a rather vociferous lady got up and described the

plot of Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (interjected with snippets of information on how she found the book etc.) when she got to the point of the creatures from outer space settling on the shoulders of the Earth people I could feel her directly behind me settling further and further onto my shoulder, and decided that discretion was the better part of whatever it is, and cut out, dragging Lang with me. I'm no chicken but... I guess I must be over sensitive or something. I heard that the lady went on describing the story of her life after the question had been answered in loud stage whispers to all those in her immediate presence, until George Scithers seized one of the placards that were held up at intervals during the meeting (calling for "Applause" or something) This one read "Silence please", and he marched with this to the back and held it before her. To which she is supposed to have uttered those immortal words: "The story of my life."

While this was going on Lang and I were down in the lounge. Anyway, we went back to the Great Wall amid long discussions on Lang's next issue of Tensor, which was described very well and succinctly as a half-yearly quarterly. Simone and I decided on a snack of egg and chips (snack! – it cost five bob) while the others went off into the realms of exotica by ordering things whose names I couldn't spell, let alone pronounce. The discussion now turned to free-range as opposed to battery eggs, and all the other inhumanities that are practised by our glorious food producers in the name of higher productivity. Here we agreed but soon got off again onto the subject, again, of cancer. I now found myself under attack from Tony Walsh as well. Apparently he had just given up smoking and felt the need to spread the gospel to others; (in other words, he wanted someone else to suffer).

We returned to find strange sounds issuing from the Con hall; Mike Moorcock was there with the "Bellyflops" (as far as I could make out Dick Ellingsworth was on the bongos, Norman Sherlock on second guitar, and Alan Rispin was making strange sounds with a harmonica). Every now and then the particular number they were playing (such good old ones as "Jungle Man" and "Oh didn't he ramble" – they don't write songs like that any more) would collapse into chaos. Mike would turn round and say "Norman!" or "Wouldn't it be better if we all played the same tune?" He did try to extend his repertoire to some of the new hit-tunes of the sixties, but he was much happier with tunes from the old skiffle days – so was I, come to that; I was wallowing in nostalgia and would have loved to have been able to get up and jive, as in the good old days.

Somehow or other the concert (!!!) degenerated into a wrestling match between Max (the French Fiend) Jakubowski and Pat (Mauler)

Kearney. The bout went on with the accompaniment of Norman still playing the guitar, Ava Naguela... I don't think he'd realised they'd finished all that. Anyway, there was a superb improvised commentary on the bout by Mike. Repetitive it might have been, influenced by drink too, but it was the most hilarious thing I've heard in years, and he kept it up for about half an hour non-stop. Fantastic! It's not funny on paper, but if you can get hold of the tape, listen to it. It started as a mildly satirical thing, micky-taking the glorious British public who are able to indulge their own little sadistic and homosexual neuroses by taking in a wrestling match. "If you folks have got the same kind of bent that I have I think you're going to enjoy this. There's going to be blood tonight folks, so you should really enjoy this, and this mass of sweating male flesh...." No, it's not funny on paper, and I can't remember enough of it to do it justice. The whole piece ended up as a moralistic, screaming diatribe against the hypocrisy of our society, which bans *Fanny Hill* because it says it's "evil" and yet finds outlets for its own sick mentalities by watching wrestling, reading James Bond books and Micky Spillane, and watching *The Avengers*. As I said, it was fantastic. [2]

Langdon Jones:

Somehow a spontaneous wrestling match sprung up between Max Jakubowski and Pat Kearney, and one of the high points of the convention began. Mike Moorcock grabbed the microphone and began a commentary. It began quietly enough, but gradually Mike worked himself up to a frenzy. This spontaneous outburst began as a normal wrestling commentary, describing the combat between Maxim "The French Fiend" Jakubowski, and Patrick "Dirty" Kearney. However it gradually began to be a little satirical, then a little more, and ended up as a screamed condemnation of hypocrisy. The main inspiration of this commentary was that wrestling contained elements of sadism, masochism and homosexuality, all of which are condemned publicly, but indulged in in this socially acceptable way by the very people who would most loudly condemn such things. Mike may have been a little drunk, but even if it was a little repetitious, this spontaneous commentary was really brilliant. Down in black and white, I don't suppose it would look so good, for it was the delivery of the thing that made it so. But a couple of quotes that I particularly liked were, "If any of you guys in the audience have the same peculiar bent as mine, I think you're gonna love this fight!", and this, shouted out in a spluttering frenzy, "It's going to be a throw; it's going to be a bloody, sexual throw!" I had to leave halfway through this, because I felt that Mike might spoil it. He didn't though; a tape was made, which I

heard later. Charlie wanted to know why I wanted us to leave, but at the time, in the general atmosphere, I couldn't explain it. [3]

Charles Smith:

Lang was so overcome that we had to go. He said afterwards that he was afraid the taping might spoil it, but it didn't. We heard the whole thing through again on the Sunday. After ten minutes or so I decided to follow Lang into the pro-room, where I found him talking with Wally Weber and Pete White. I'm glad I came in because this was one of the few opportunities that I had to talk to Wally throughout the con. He came across as a highly amusing, mildly spoken American, and endeared himself to everyone who came into contact with him. We talked for some time about future and past cons. I asked him about the worldcon, if the Americans weren't afraid we'd keep it once it got into our hands.

Why, Lang and I were even thinking of putting on a world-con in Ealing, at the Kent Hotel. Then someone suggested we could hold a con on the tube, suggesting the slogan "The Circle Line – In Sixtynine!". A number of slogans seemed to be flashing around the con. I remember Archie Mercer suggesting, at one point, "The Parker Pen in Sixty-ten". From there the conversation turned to universities, as Peter White, from what I could gather, is thinking of going to one. We compared notes on American and English education in general. Once more my conviction that the American system was the better of the two was enforced.

When this broke up I decided to pack it in for the first night. [2]

Langdon Jones:

At about one o'clock the conversation broke up. Charlie decided to go to bed, the yellow-bellied fake-fan, and after bidding him good-night, and solicitously offering to help him up the stairs, I went down to the lounge.

There I found Mike Moorcock and Ivor Mayne, who were talking to another new face, a young girl called Julia Stone. They were doing a superb double-act, telling her how once they were saved from certain death by the skin of their Lappish Alpenstock. Gradually people filtered out of the lounge, until Mike, Ivor and myself decided to go and look for some life.

I was leading the way, and I passed Ron Bennett going upstairs.

"Party in room 31!" he whispered to me as I passed him, I started gaily off down the corridor with a few others in my wake, in the direction of room 31. I suddenly heard a horror-filled, choked cry from behind me. It was the night porter, stumbling down the corridor with a look of absolute terror on his face.

"What are you doing?", he hissed, "that's the manager's room!"

I hate Ron Bennett.

After a hasty retreat from the vicinity of room 31, we eventually arrived in Mike Moorcock's room, adding a couple to our numbers on the way.

By now, the first hint of light had begun to filter into the room, and an atmosphere of lethargy had begun to permeate the place, Alan Rispin was lying longitudinally on the bed, and Mary Reed, Don Geldart and myself were lying across it, resting our heads on various parts of Alan. Julia Stone was sitting on a chair on the other side of the room, and Mike Moorcock was on a chair by the bed. There ensued a tired and rather mad conversation, Then Mike got hold of the Bible.

I hate to say this, but I think that Mike's new job* has gone to his head. In every room there was a Bible, put there for some strange and perverted reason. Well, Mike picked up his copy and started leafing through it, going, "Umm... Aha... Ummm". Then he picked up a pen. "Hmm – sloppy writing," he said, making crossings-out and alterations. "Poor construction... Hmm – 'verily I say unto you'. That's no good; better make it 'listen here you guys'. Hmm... padding."

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* *Moorcock had just taken over as editor of* New Worlds, *his first issue being cover-dated May/June 1964. [Ed.]*

The frightening spectacle of Mike Moorcock editing the Bible was too much for us, and it just about put paid to us for the rest of the night. The conversation began to get more sporadic, Mike moved onto the bed, and this meant drastic rearrangements and even more drastic cramming. I remember us all lying there, packed together uncomfortably, and all laughing at the fact that we'd paid 30/- for a bed that was only a matter of yards away.

Saturday 28th March

Langdon Jones:

And so at about seven, we all began to rise. With the exception that is, of Don Geldart and Julia Stone. I expect Don was exhausted by all the exercise his stomach had put in recently. We all drifted off in various directions, and I ended up with Mike Moorcock and Mary Reed. I had to wake up Charlie and two others, and Mike and Mary came round to help me do it. After thumping on Charlie's door for about ten minutes we were finally satisfied that he was up, and carried on our way. Desmond Squire

and Peter White, we woke in our own particularly sadistic way. We got Mary to stand outside the door, and after knocking, to say, “Early morning tea, sir.” Then Mike minced into the room. A more horrible way of waking someone up, I can’t think of.

On our way back we ordered a pot of tea for us to drink on the landing, then when Charlie had joined us, and the tea was drunk, we made our way down to breakfast.

I ordered poached eggs on toast, and got back two things that, side by side, looked most obscene. What was worse, Mary kept urging me to stick my knife into them, a thing I just could not bring myself to do. Eventually I plucked up courage, and violently stabbed them. The sight of the yellow yolk, oozing slowly out, put me off poached eggs for the rest of my life.

After breakfast, Charlie and I arranged to meet the others at the door to go out shopping. It was strange going out into the open again, and the cold morning air seemed most hostile. We wandered about a bit, not going anywhere in particular. By now Saturday’s programme had begun. The first item was marked in the programme as “Does Fandom need SS?”, but not wishing to know whether or not fandom needs the secret service, we didn’t worry about missing it. [3]

Bob Shaw:

I woke up with a hangover, which obviously had been brought on by the fact that I’d broken all the rules of stomach care the night before by having crispy noodles instead of my usual soft noodles. Sometimes I think I’ll never learn. However I quickly cured the hangover by a trick picked up from a German friend who on these occasions always takes an Alka-Seltzer and an aspirin tablet – typical two-tonic efficiency.

One of the first things to happen that day was that Arthur Thomson turned up and I brought him along to our room and introduced him to Sadie, the one member of Irish Fandom who had so far eluded him. I was pleased at the great interest Arthur took in Sadie. They had almost met on several occasions during the previous ten years or so and he couldn’t seem to get it into his head that at last she was really there in front of him. In fact, at odd moments during the convention, when he thought nobody was looking, Arthur kept putting out his hand and just touching some part of Sadie – her back or her leg, perhaps – as though to convince himself she was real. I had to laugh at old Arthur for being so slow on the up-take.

Now that I think of it, Ian McAulay was another one who was very nice to Sadie. Quite often, when he could have been away talking to faneds or buying prozines, he seemed content to just stay with Sadie on our bed while I selfishly lounged in the room’s only comfortable armchair. Several

times he told me there was absolutely no need for me to miss any of my first British convention for some years, as he wouldn't mind keeping Sadie company for me while she rested. I didn't take advantage of his offer, of course – there are limits even to what one fan should be allowed to do for another. It ought to go on record, though, that it is people like Arthur and Ian who have helped make conventions what they are. [9]

Ron Bennett:

The Saturday morning programme opened at ten with a panel discussion on the topic, "Does Fandom Need Science Fiction?" Surprisingly the panelists themselves, Chairman Ron Bennett, Arthur Thomson, Phil Rogers, Terry Bull and TAFF delegate Wally Weber, showed up as being anything but the experts they are reputed to be and decidedly the majority of speeches came from the floor where also the main points were raised. Phil Rogers felt that fandom does not need sf. Terry Bull pointed out that sf brings fans together but after the initial meeting their interests widen out. Arthur Thomson finds that sf needs fans and fans need sf. Wally Weber said that fandom needs sf as a recruiting device. Ken Bulmer noted that sf editors can run into trouble if they take notice of fans, the shrill minority, which caused Atom to note that if fans are the shrill minority then the authors are the shill minority. George Scithers, who was on the Committee of last year's Washington D.C. Worldcon (the DisCon) and who is now stationed in Germany, noted that fandom has been a source of providing many professional authors to which Ken Bulmer stated "Your innocence has gone forever once you have made a sale." Ron Bennett reminded the audience that one reason for the founding of the BSFA was to recruit fans for fandom. Jeff Cooper from Cambridge noted that present day sf lacks the literary elan of the sf of the late thirties and James White rightly pointed out that there would be no fandom at all were there no sf to begin with. Charles Platt said that fans are boring when they don't talk about sf. Phil Rogers felt that there was more to fandom than this. He enjoys reading westerns but he wouldn't join a western club, therefore he must have joined a sf club for more than sf. Ken Bulmer pointed out that the attitude of a fan who had read much sf is different from that of a neo who is reading sf for the first time. [6]

Charles Platt:

"Does Fandom Need SF?" The more pertinent question of whether sf-reading fans needed fandom was only hinted at. The panel was two-fifths asleep, judging from the small amount Terry Bull and Wally Weber had to say; in fact since Wally Weber openly stated he didn't want to say

anything one wonders why he took on the job. Panel members managed to say the same thing but make it sound different each time, and most of the relevant discussion points raised in the audience (there were many irrelevant points) followed the same theme. High spot in the discussion was when the panel was found to be composed of three people who were not regular readers of sf; and the other two didn't seem too sure about it. After some beautifully incomprehensible remarks from the audience, with no summing up from the chairman or the panel the conclusion was reached that there was no conclusion. [8]

Ron Bennett:

Auctioneer this year was Ted Forsyth of the SFCoL. With the gavel for the first time at a convention, Ted won plaudits for the brisk manner in which he moved the lots. Together the audience realised £32 10s for Convention funds, a percentage of which will most certainly be going to TAFF. [6]

George Locke:

Let me relate what happened to the proof sheets of Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tales of Three Planets*, donated by Dick Lupoff of *Xero* and Carnivorous Press. I was much surprised to see Ethel Lindsay bidding spiritedly for it. Finally she out-bid the other keen ERB fan, Dick Ellingsworth, and secured it, clasping it tenderly to her breast. I asked her afterwards what attraction this item had for her. Swinging gaily on the chandelier, she said: "~~Me Jane~~ I want to send it to Dick Lupoff – he'll just lo-o-ove it." [10]

Ron Bennett:

Saturday afternoon's surprise item took the shape of Mr & Mrs Edmond Hamilton answering questions fired by the audience. Ed Hamilton said that the pace of *Battle for the Stars* was much slower than, say, *The Universe Wrecker* because it had been expanded from a short story. Leigh Brackett – yes, Mrs Edmond Hamilton (we, too, have neo-fan readers) – mentioned that *Planet Stories* was thought to be a poor magazine while it was running; the moment it folded people began to praise it. EH said that the pocket book is taking the place of the magazine. Both EH and LB felt that the pulp would never return. Asked about their first interest in sf, Ed said that he began to imitate Merritt's style through admiration and found that it sold. Leigh said that at school she was good at expressive work, tried pro writing at 13, didn't sell for ten years. Ed felt that more factual work will be written. Jim Groves pointed out that more scientists are now writing sf. Ed answered a question from Ethel Lindsay, that his favourite

self-written story was “What’s It Like Out There?” which was written in 1933 and sold thirty years later. Leigh likes *The Long Tomorrow*. Of each other’s stories, Ed likes Leigh’s *The Fall of the Free Winds** and Leigh likes Ed’s “What’s It Like Out There” and *The Star Kings*. Sid Birchby told of being given a copy of The Star Kings by Ted Carnell only to find that the book was the French edition. He bought a French dictionary so that he could read it and had thoroughly enjoyed it! John Roles asked about a Hamilton anthology which had appeared in the UK, *The Horror on the Asteroid*. Ed said that there was no US edition and that the book must be pretty rare by now. This collection of stories from *Weird Tales* had been his first hard cover book, though the royalties had been so small that he had been paid in postage stamps. [6]

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* *Presumably a mistranscription of her novel title* Follow the Free Wind *(1963). [Ed.]*

Charles Platt:

I wonder whether the “surprise item” at 4 p.m. had been planned in advance, or was simply an unfilled space on the original programme to be filled up with anything that happened to show up. The anythings that showed up turned out to be Edmond Hamilton and Leigh Brackett. It was a pity that the questions posed to them continued for quite so long, but considering it was all unprepared the husband-wife team made some very interesting and absorbing comments. It is strange that this interest and intelligence does not show up in most of the stories they write. [8]

On the matter of John W. Campbell (1976)

BRACKETT: He alienated quite a few of them by getting off onto these kicks. He went off on a psionics kick and there for awhile there it looked like all the stories were cut from the same bolt of cloth. Then he got into the Dianetics thing, with L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology.

HAMILTON: Remember he demonstrated the Heironymous Machine? That’s silly stuff. And so everybody was much pained by this. In fact, at Peterborough in England we were at a convention and some of those who attended were making some bitter remarks about him and this nonsense, and I got kind of angry at this despite the fact that John couldn’t “see” me anymore, so I got up and made a passionate defense of him. And I said, “He’s the trunk of the whole science fiction tree and you’ve kissed his feet for years, and now because he has a momentary aberration on this matter why are you all turning on him?”

It was unfair. It was dirty pool. They went around licking his cuffs all

of the time and then they turned on him. [11]

Charles Platt:

There was a surprisingly large number of good costumes at the Fancy Dress Ball on Saturday evening. Eddie Jones should have got a prize for his: "The Original Kelly Freas", a reconstruction of what Freas used to dress his swashbuckling characters in when he was illustrating *Astounding*. The execution was perfect, and Eddie fitted the part so well... The award for "most beautiful costume" I regret was influenced by the inherent cuteness of a small child; it would have been better if the costume rather than the person involved had been considered. [8]

Ron Bennett:

Saturday evening found a bar erected in the con hall with home made brew provided by the Merseyside Winemakers' Society flowing freely for all comers. The fancy dress competition was judged by Leigh Brackett, Edmond Hamilton and Michael Moorcock against the undersea theme backdrop which had been designed by a highly talented twelve year old, namely Ken Slater's son Michael. [6]

Harry Nadler:

For some reason the Alien crowd decided to get their costumes on about an hour too early. We sat around sweating under tons of make-up, papier-maché and crepe hair. Eventually the room began to fill up and things got under way... but whoever was supposed to have checked the start time in our lot had better keep quiet about it!

Turnout for the competition was a vast improvement on last year, and it looks as though the many appeals in the Con newsletters during the year had had some effect.

Charles *[Partington]* ran into trouble with his make-up, for he had his face built up with nose-putty to cover over his eyes and a pair of mirror-surfaced sunglasses in his guise as a "Selenite". This worked very well in his bedroom lighting, but in the Con hall, where the lighting had been dimmed, he couldn't see a thing... his glasses had misted up on the inside! Oh! well, he'll know for next year.

Ian and Betty Peters of London took the prize for most authentic SF character as Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, Susie Slater for the most beautiful costume as "Princess of Zei", and Harry Nadler for the most bemmish as a B.E.M.! [5]

Langdon Jones:

Tony Walsh was not actually entered in the competition. Still I guess

he deserved something for sweating away inside a six-odd foot replica of a rocket. He gave his prize, a bottle of booze, to the judges. There were many fine costumes there that deserved prizes, even if they didn't get them. Among these was Simone Walsh, who was looking very beautiful in what appeared to be a completely home-made costume. I commented that after seeing Simone like that, Tony would want her to dress like that all the time. She said that he did, and commented that it was strange that people should say she looked so nice, when in fact she was made up like a tart. It is strange when you think about it, that at a fancy dress party, a girl can make herself up like this, and yet if she walked out into the street like it she would probably receive glances of condemnation from most people.

I think one of the most horrifying sights I have ever witnessed in my life was Burgess's naked stomach, as dressed in a pair of nearly knee-length underpants he masqueraded as one of the nudists from *Glory Road*. I had often wondered just why Oscar should have left the sunny pleasantness of Levant to go off on dangerous adventures. If the nudists looked like Burgess did, I am not surprised.

After this, I had a few words with Charles Winstone, and after he left Julia Stone came over. I remember her asking me if I were a Beatles fan. When I said no, she said, "Oh, then you're a Dave Clark fan." When I declined this status she started reeling off a lot of names, with me shaking my head at every one. Finally I admitted I was a fan of Fred Schoenberg and his Frantic Five, and left her to puzzle it over. [3]

Charles Platt:

After the party, probably the most successful social occasion during the whole Convention, cliques gathered in the downstairs lounge, parties started in various rooms, drunkards roamed the corridors, rooms were broken into by a phantom inebriate with a master key. The white glare of flashbulbs successfully blinded several fans. While neofen grumbled morosely about the lack of organisation and the lack of sf interest in older fans, the older ones smoked pipes and played cards on the landing and in the lounge. Michael Moorcock assisted as always by his London group of hangers-on, spent the evening crooning and bellowing into a microphone, revising the bible, climbing over the roofs, and generally making a nuisance of himself.

The parties were fun... yes. But there was a continual feeling that the Fun was a trifle unnatural or forced. I wonder how many people enter fandom as in escape; correspondence can so easily and successfully disguise the social outcast or introvert, enabling him to become whatever sort of person he pleases, until his correspondents meet him – and so often

find that the person they have been writing to is not what his letters sounded like at all. I would guess that in most cases the image of himself that a letter-writer builds up is more glamorous than he really his; consequently it is hardly surprising that the social atmosphere was "forced" on Saturday night, with natural introverts trying hard to be extraverts. There was a slight feeling of "why I am I staying up for this?" and indeed it seemed the main reason was, "because everyone else is". [8]

Bob Shaw:

Arthur had not booked a room in the hotel and was spending the night on the floor of the room occupied by James White and Ian McAulay. It wouldn't have been much of a night for him at the best of times, but on this occasion there were two other factors involved – either of them devastating on its own, the two together being too horrible to contemplate. James had been quite ill before leaving Ireland with the result that his insulin dosage was all haywire and he was rapidly becoming delirious; Ian had tanked up on about ten different varieties of free wine to the point where pink elephants and green rats were running away from him screaming.

Arthur tried to describe it the following morning but I doubt if he could have done so even if he hadn't been mumbling incoherently, twitching and flinging his arms over his face every time a door opened. We can only visualize him sitting bolt upright at the foot of James's bed, his head turning gopher-like as, hour by horrible hour, the night unfolded its vistas of dread. Now, I'm the first to admit that I snore a bit, but my snore is a regular peaceful thing which has even been known to soothe people and give them a feeling that the world mustn't be too bad if a man can so obviously enjoy the sleep of the just. But James and Ian both have frightening, unpredictable snores, sometimes dying down to sibilant whispers which lull the listener to a state of uneasy drowsiness, then with the suddenness of a bomb-burst increasing to thunderous proportions, wringing moans of panic from the listener who, with heart stopped, springs back to full consciousness. As if this were not enough, even when they are snoring at full blast one cannot relax in full submission for, without warning, a tremendous blast will be choked off in its infancy as some nasal passage, driven beyond its natural limits, snaps closed. There is a deathly silence followed by a series of silly clicks as various membranes are tested by the pent-up forces of the snore and finally, after an unendurable wait, it penetrates the original channel with redoubled fury or, baulked of its natural egress, explodes through the mouth in a hideous multiple vibration involving lips, teeth, gums, palate and tonsils. One can only guess how

Arthur must have felt, after hours of this, on making the discovery that the inhuman repertoire was far from exhausted. James began to jerk about in his bed, his gigantic form thrashing in the near-darkness like a harpooned whale while tortured fragments of songs escaped his lips. And who can say what Arthur must have thought when Ian began bounding past him in the dark, looking for the lavatory, all the time swearing in Gaelic, retching raucously and emitting great gouts of mixed banana wine, Tuborg lager and fermented Coca-Cola?

All I know is, he wasn't the same man for the rest of the convention. [9]

Sunday 29th March

Charles Smith:

After breakfast we went back to the lounge, just in time to catch the dying embers of a conversation between two of the residents. The amazing thing was that they sounded just like Moorcock and Taylor the day before, doing their old retired officers routine. The last thing we heard from them was, "Well, they go home again tomorrow, I believe." I talked to Roy Kay about the Round Robin idea he had inaugurated in the BSFA. Soon after this we were joined by Charles Platt, who seemed to get a lot of people's backs up during the con. Apparently at one point he had stated, at some question and answer programme I think; – "Does Fandom Need SF" I think it was called – that fans were unable to speak authoritatively on any subject except SF. This was his reason for wanting fanzines that dealt solely with SF. There was in fact a large group at the con who felt this way, it was unfortunate that this attitude made them seem rather difficult to talk to, if you didn't want to be restricted entirely to talking about SF. This is a rather restricted viewpoint. So Charles Platt, who might be considered the high priest of the new fandom (they have real enthusiasm, which is to be admired, at least) came and talked to us. He told us why he'd decided to quit Cambridge after only two terms, and why he'd decided to go into printing. I can't say whether he's been misquoted at other times as this was the only time I've spoken to him. He didn't live up to his reputation anyway. [2]

Michael Moorcock:

This year was marked for its high proportion of younger BSFA members, many of whom had a Calvinistic zeal to "reform" the SF scene and make sure fans talked about SF and nothing but.

Older members and professional writers were a trifle bewildered by these young reformers who granted them no mercy. In many ways this influx is a good thing – particularly for the BSFA – and the amateur magazines which the newer members are putting out with titles like *Alien*, *Beyond* and *Zenith* are serving as a testing ground for tomorrow's critics and writers. The BSFA can be proud of itself for the speed and ease with which it assimilates the new member. Since its formation, it has done a great deal to broaden the horizons of the SF fan world and produce conventions which are both enjoyable in a social way and stimulating in other ways. [12]

Charles Platt:

Transition from Saturday Night to Sunday Morning passed unnoticed; until the time arrived to get up, followed by the horrible ordeal of breakfast, followed by the Annual General Meeting. Buoyed up by two Alka Seltzers I descended and was one of the few people at the AGM on time. I don't know whether holding the AGM on Sunday morning was a deliberate move directed at cutting down the number of attendees and hence the length of the meeting, but that's certainly how it worked out. Phil Rogers as chairman contributed to the process by cutting short any reports the committee members had to give; and God knows they didn't have much. Librarian Joe Navin said most, and he wasn't even on the Committee. It's all very well to make the meeting informal, but as E.C. "Ted" Tubb pointed out, there were a lot of non-members present, and the BSFA should have had an image to present to them. There was no attempt made in this direction. I personally would have very much liked to hear a full report from each Committee member of what had happened during their term of office, why, and what they hoped would happen in the future.

Ron Bennett had lost his voice, but Ken Slater certainly hadn't, and provided most of the intelligent suggestions. It's a pity he hasn't time to be a Committee member. There was general approval of the idea that more money should be spent on advertising the BSFA, but this was more an agreement in principle than an assurance that everyone would do his best to make it happen. The immediate reaction was that in future advertising would be impossible, since *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*, when they change publishers, will no longer carry advertisements. This spontaneous lack of thought in the face of a difficulty, combined with natural lethargy and pessimism, is to a large extent symptomatic of what is wrong with the BSFA. Ken Slater was immediately able to provide two imaginative alternatives for advertising; and Willing's Press Guide surely should provide some others. There was no justification for defeatism.

Ted Tubb's buffoonery in joining the BSFA and "recruiting" new members has a serious aspect that most people missed. Although his act was in fun, it is, all the same, the attitude that should be prevalent in the BSFA recruiting; people won't join by themselves, they need inducement. The BSFA must have an image to sell, it can't expect people to join just because it is there "Free drinks tonight for all new members!" cried Mr Tubb. He should be taken a bit more seriously! [8]

Ron Bennett:

At the sixth anniversary A.G.M. of the British Science Fiction Association the new Committee for the forthcoming year was elected as Chairman: Ken Cheslin, Vice-Chairman: Roy Kay, Secretary: Rod Milner, Treasurer: Charles Winstone and Publications Officer: Roger Peyton. Thus for the first time since the formation of the Association a Committee is formed entirely from fans who have entered fandom since that very formation. The age for Committee members to hold office was dropped from 21 to 18. Ken Slater proposed a raise in subscription rates and Terry Jeeves asked whether an instalment system for paying dues might be practicable and might at the same time bring in a little extra money if deferred payments were on a slighter higher rate. The advertising situation was reviewed, as Nova, who have in the past donated adverts free, is no longer continuing and Roberts & Vinter are not including interior adverts. Ella Parker mentioned that at one time the BSFA was running a London Underground advert, the cost of which was a penny a day. Ken Slater said that he had had more information on books from one issue of *Zenith* than from a year's supply of *Vector*, a point for the consideration of the new committee. Jim Groves, an ex-publications officer, volunteered to run the new information service and finally, the award was made of the annual BSFA trophy, namely the Doctor Arthur Rose Weir Memorial Award. No one was in the least surprised when the Award winner was announced as the richly deserving *Vector* editor, Archie Mercer, who thanked the audience and spoke of his own and fandom's association with the late "Doc" in a short speech which was probably the weekend's best. [6]

Harry Nadler:

The missing of breakfast wasn't too bad, I don't eat much anyway, and good old Yogi (our nickname for Aub) had his tin of emergency rations at the ready. But Chuck was nowhere to be seen. The Shorrock brew had struck again!

At 2:30 in the afternoon when the Alien Film Festival was to go on show, he was still moaning in his room. Panic! for Chuck was to introduce

the programme. A quick look round and I espied Eric Bentcliffe, who saved the day and introduced the show, and "Professor Herman Dumkopf" who gave an introduction to each of the six films. The prof did resemble Aub Marks to some extent even behind a false beard. Shaking like a leaf I reached out to push the projector switch to launch the first film, expecting it would be met with a deadly hush. It wasn't and all our qualms that the show would flop were subdued.

Modesty aside, we were shocked and delighted at the reaction. The bulk of the audience enjoyed them thoroughly and after the show we were asked to film a similar programme for the World Convention in London in 1965. Criticisms that did get through to us were on the sound synchronisation and "ad-lib" dialogue which crept into a couple of the films. These are points we hope to remedy for the World Con.

Following the Aliens came a very entertaining slide show by Brian Varley and crew of the London SF Club. They showed many shots from last year's Con, which should answer the "what happens to all the photos taken at Cons" type questions. [5]

Charles Platt:

The main reason that the amateur films on Sunday afternoon were so well thought of was that the majority of the audience had never seen any serious amateur films before (and I'm not talking about "home movies" of drooling babies). To someone who had, the programme was rather amateurish; this is hardly surprising since the films were the first venture of the Alien group in the medium, and first ventures are inevitably amateurish. The lampoon of *Frankenstein* was easily the best; the acting was good, and only a little more discriminating film splicing could have made an improvement. The rest of the programme was very bad in comparison. Toy tanks, fireworks, burning paper and whooshing flash powder just do not look like the real thing; *Son of Godzilla* was neither funny nor entertaining; I found it a little embarrassing, as was *I Was a Teenage Birdman*. The take-off of H.G. Wells's *First Men in the Moon* was more amusing; the best part was the animation of the moon creatures. The other film on the subject of a moon rocket launching was unfortunately marred by memory of how well this humour can be put over, by Michael Bentine, or as in the *Running Jumping and Standing Still* film, itself almost in the amateur class, shown the previous afternoon.

In general, the films did not deserve the praise that was showered upon them by some people (Ella Parker in particular). With the exception of *Frankenstein*, judged by standards of serious amateur film making the films were not very good, nor was there any real attempt to make them

serious sf; they were either humorous monster or serious monster films. But to an older fan, unused to seeing invention or initiative in fandom, which is, after all, the same now as it was 20 years ago, the very idea that someone would have shown so much initiative must in itself have been astounding. So the Alien group walked off with one third of the Convention profits and sold vast quantities of their magazines to unsuspecting buyers thinking it would be as funny as the films. In a way, the two were similar.

Why is it that people who are so much concerned with imagination and the future so enjoy re-living the past? We have a continual sentimentalism about the "good old days of stf" (and crud), a continual reminiscing over the work of Walt Willis or John Berry or other Grand Old Fen, and the stories that they wrote which now seem so much better in retrospect. There is a current project to compile a history of fandom; and on Sunday yet another example of looking backwards was the slide show that helped people remember last year's Convention which, of course, a lot of people seemed to think was much better than this year's, just as next year's will not seem so good, when it arrives, as this year's was. Such a glorification of the past and a tendency to look backwards instead of forwards I find depressing; to see the audience happily reliving last year's activities instead of living this year's was sad. I was not among them. [8]

Ron Bennett:

Lan Wright took the chair at the professional authors' "Tribute to Nova" which naturally combined itself with a tribute to Ted Carnell. Wright told the audience of the beginnings of *New Worlds* as a fanzine which later became a prozine under Pendulum Publications which handled the first three issues. Of the pre-Nova authors, only William F. Temple is still writing today. With issue number 3 came the first of the Carnell encouraged writers, namely Francis Rayer. The following issue found Ernest James and Bertram Chandler in print for the first time, being followed in turn shortly afterwards by John Christopher and artist Gerard Quinn. Ted Tubb made his first appearance in *New Worlds* 10 with a 4,000 worder called "No Short Cut". Wright himself had first sold with a story in number 13 and issue number 16 had seen the first *New Worlds* serial, M'Intosh's "The Esp Worlds". Ken Bulmer had first appeared in issue number 23.

Ted Tubb spoke of the manner in which Ted Carnell had gained a reputation for giving encouragement to new writers, by which he had gained the loyalty of those writers. Ken Bulmer supported this, saying that Carnell has done more for British fandom than anyone else. Carnell's

maxim has always been “Give the boy a chance and he’ll improve.” Also grateful to Carnell’s encouragement was E.R. James, who though unable to be present himself, sent a message for the Appreciation. Mike Moorcock, who has taken over Carnell’s *New Worlds* editorial chair after Carnell’s recommendation, spoke of the strong bond between Carnell and his writers, and also of how Carnell had once written to cheer him about a story he had written; Carnell had said how much he had liked and enjoyed the story which had encouraged Mike immensely. Only later had he discovered that in fact Carnell had not liked the story! [6]

Harry Nadler:

By the skin of our teeth we made it and arrived back in the Con hall just in time for the beginning of Ted Tubb’s speech, which turned into an open discussion and became one of the highspots of the Con. Ted presented the diplomas for art and fancy dress awards, which were designed by Ken MacIntyre and used for the first time this year. During the handing over of these awards came a very unexpected announcement. Eddie Jones had presented his art contest winning painting to the Alien group as an appreciation of the film show. The very painting all of us had been saving our pennies in the hope of buying! It now holds pride of place on our club room wall.

Prizes and speeches extinguished, the hall was emptied in readiness for a repeat of the Alien Show... yes some people actually wanted to see it again... Con attendees are gluttons for punishment! [5]

Charles Platt:

Ted Tubb is one of those gifted people who can deliver an unprepared speech and make it as grammatically and structurally perfect as if it were read out of a book. His “guest of honour” speech was marred only by the fact that he forgot the last point he had to make. The questions that followed produced, for me, far more interesting answers than those asked of Edmund Hamilton and his wife.

This was the official end of the Convention; but past 11:00 the Alien films were still being shown again. This was enthusiasm gone mad; a professional film is liable to suffer if shown through twice; amateur films of this class obviously just won’t take it. Devoid of the impact of originality that they possessed on first showing they also lost most of their humorous appeal.

But the spectacle that followed the films in the hall possessed both originality and appeal. Led by Michael Moorcock, E.C. Tubb and Kenneth Bulmer, a humming and swaying session took place. It was, as Mr Tubb

explained, an attempt to reach back into the past, far back to the primitive rites of our ancestors; the free wine was not to get drunk on, it was to be considered a libation. In the dim glow from one ceiling light, the audience hummed and swayed in a circle about mysterious gowned figures, until at the sound of a horn they were commanded to drink. At the climax of the ceremony a "young and virginal girl" was brought forth, slain, and then through the psychic presence of the humming and swaying audience, resurrected. At least, that's what should have happened; in practice the audience was too large and any atmosphere that gathered was repeatedly destroyed by funny comments from people who didn't take it seriously. Mike Moorcock didn't help when he staggered, lurched, slipped and fell over amidst the sound of breaking glass, and E.C. Tubb in shirt sleeves, a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, did not exactly add to the tone of the ceremony. With a smaller and more cooperative audience, and better rehearsed organisation, this could have been a great success. [8]

Langdon Jones:

We were told that only those with glasses would be admitted. After I had rushed downstairs frantically looking for my glass which I had mislaid, I made my way into the – by now – crowded hall. People were sitting round the side of the hall, cross-legged. At the head of the hall were Ted Tubb, Mike Moorcock, Pete Taylor and Ken Bulmer, all dressed in flowing robes. In the body of the hall were Norman Shorrock and Eddie Jones, who were the Cupbearers. After a Tubbesque "explanation" of the ceremony, we began the symbolic movements. These consisted of shutting the eyes, humming, and swaying from side to side. HUMmmm-and-sway, HUMmmm-and-sway, HUMmmm-and-sway, chanted the Priests, and there arose a great sound from the throats of the assembled multitude. Ted explained that as soon as we heard the note of the Ceremonial Horn, we should drink the libations that had been poured into our glasses by the Cupbearers. The Ceremonial Horn sounded, and to cries from the Priests of DRINK! DRINK!, DRINK!, we emptied our glasses. Then after a brief pause, it was HUMmmm-and-sway, HUMmm-and-sway, over again. This went on for what seemed like hours of swaying euphoria. Then the climax of the ceremony came. Nell Goulding was selected as the Sacrificial Virgin, and was laid out on the floor. I think it was Pete Taylor who stood over her, with sword upraised, for about a minute. Then down flashed the sword, out went the lights, and they came on again to reveal an expired Nell, one of the most delectable sacrificial corpses I have ever seen. To resurrect her, we started humming and swaying with redoubled vigour and booze kindly supplied by Norman Shorrock. And with the revival of Nell,

the ceremony drew to an end. By now I was in a state of Enlightenment, and I found I could appreciate the Unity of the Universe. I staggered around for a while, and then joined a drunken group who were screaming inanities into a tape recorder. I think it was this ceremony and the booze, that made this the most happy part of the Con. I saw that Norman Sherlock was in a similar state of religious exultation, as he was stood over his own tape recorder asking, “How do you turn this bloody thing off?” After finishing with the long-suffering taper, I made my way out of the hall, and along to the landing, where I found a party going.

After this, I staggered back to the Con hall, and joined Charlie, Pete Taylor and Mike Moorcock, who were reminiscing about the old days of the London Circle. I am very interested in the history of London fandom, and frantically tried to keep my eyes open. It was no use however. I kept sinking into blackness, and waking with a jolt as I started to fall forward, then immediately going off again. I recognised the inevitable and went to bed. [3]

Monday March 30th

Charles Platt:

I felt sorry for the hotel staff, some of whom stayed up till 4 a.m.; but I felt much sorrier for myself when I awoke on Monday morning at 7:30 to the rhythmic pounding of fists on my door. Had it all been worth it? It had been worth meeting Beryl Henley and Pete Weston two days before the Convention; there had been so much to talk about, then. But somehow when over 100 other fans are present, not just one other, the magic of conversation is lost, and uncertain boredom takes over. This is what happened for me at the Con; perhaps no one enjoys it at first, or perhaps I was somehow at fault. Either way, it was a bit of a disappointment.

But... see you at Birmingham, next Easter? [8]

Walt Willis:

I’ve never wholly enjoyed a convention since I became a celebrity; and at Easter, among all the new BSFA fans at Peterborough, I had the pleasure of being a carefree nonentity again... introducing neofans respectfully to my famous friend James White, no responsibilities, no speeches... I tell you, it’s soft at the bottom.

I must mention what a superb TAFF delegate Wally Weber proved himself. Seattle and American fandom in general can be proud of him. And the professionals can be proud of Leigh Brackett and Ed Hamilton

who registered an immense personal success and whose programme item (their first) was one of the best I've seen at any Convention.

There was also a refreshing outbreak of sanity. For 25 years some members of convention organising fandom has suffered from the delusion that sf conventions should have press coverage. Apparently they have this fixed belief that anyone reading in a newspaper any reference to a Convention will dash madly to the nearest newsstand and buy every promag in sight, pausing on the way home to take out postal subscriptions to the others. Whereas the bitter experience of a quarter of a century should have convinced them that the only purchase likely to be made by anyone reading the average newspaper report of a convention would be a bargepole for not touching fans with. At last it has. On the second day of the Convention word went round that there was a Reporter present, but that it was all right, nobody was talking to him. Sure enough, everyone he approached told him politely but firmly that this was a private function. Not only that but at the next Convention session Chairman Tony Walsh, a young fan who seems to have been born with mutant sensibilities, issued a Public Warning. So the reporter sat alone in the bar writing his piece out of his head. No doubt it was just as accurate as any other newspaper report but it did no harm because it didn't get published. Which just proves what I've always claimed, that what Convention Committees need is not a Publicity Officer but a Security Officer. [13]

Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke shared a London flat between 1949 and 1952, one they dubbed "the Epicentre" and which became a hive of fannish activity....

Bob Shaw:

On the way back to London on the train Irish Fandom and Ken Bulmer got seats together in a compact little group which encompassed only two non-fans, an elderly couple who seemed to be going up for a day's shopping. They were understandably bored by our conversation but I noted a gleam of interest in their eyes when Ken casually remarked, "We'll be able to see The Epicentre from this train." God only knows what sort of vision the word Epicentre conjured up in their minds, but it must have been something good. They got more and more excited as Ken ticked off landmarks leading up to The Epicentre and when he started a count-down in the last few seconds the old boy was slobbering with suspense and nudging his wife so that she wouldn't miss it.

When the row of sooty old houses finally came into view Ken leapt up, gnashing his pipe, and shouted, "There it is! There it is! Look!" He

gazed out for a few seconds in silent rapture, and the old boy's eyes made audible clicks as they bounced from side to side in their sockets in an effort to find something resembling his idea of an Epicentre. Finally he slumped back in his seat with an air of utter misery, and I'm sure to this day he is wondering what he missed. [9]

Wally Weber:

The convention ended far too soon, and early Monday morning ("early" means "before noon") I left with Terry, Val, Pauline and Sandra Jeeves. The trip to Sheffield was an introduction to such interesting subjects as Soggy-approved restaurants, lamb-herding, and expecting car trouble without actually having any.

After leaving a quote card in the menu of a Chinese restaurant in Sheffield – something about crottled greeps I believe (remind me to tell you about the Liverpool Group and their quote-cards someday) – we drove to the Jeeves's home where I met Bonnie (dog-type) and eventually Keith (boy-type). Bonnie stood up to meeting the fabulous TAFF delegate quite well, but Keith left for Europe the next day.

Wednesday, April 1, Terry and his family were starting their vacation to Southport, and they dropped me at Eric Bentcliffe's home near Manchester on their way. In addition to such assets as his wife, Beryl, and girl-child, Lindsay, Eric has some great fannish tapes and much knowledge of British fandom. Yes, there was much enjoyable listening to do at the Bentcliffe home – a new and beautiful home, too – and that night when I went to my room I found two of the many quote cards that were following me around the country since the PeterCon; these said, "PSNEER" and "STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND".

Friday, April 3, Eric managed to overcome my natural talent for getting lost, and I found the right train to Birmingham. From all the construction going on, it looked like Birmingham was just being built. Since I still wasn't convinced that my TAFF trip was real, the thought occurred that the trip really was a hoax and I made the Birmingham set before the scenery had been finished.

Saturday, April 4, a bus delivered me at Ken Cheslin's place in Stourbridge, throwing Ken into his normal state of confusion. Ken had been elected BSFA President at Peterborough, and the 1965 Easter convention was to be held in Birmingham, so Ken was all covered with responsibility and duties. He shrugged them off, however, and spent the next couple days showing me scenery, history, fans, games, Archie Mercer, and a truly magnificent break in billiards. Tony and Simone Walsh miraculously located us in the tavern during the billiards game, and

before the evening was over another ever-present quote card turned up, which happened to have Norm Shorrock's address on the back. We all signed it, Tony found a stamp small enough to fit on the tiny card, and promised to mail it.

Monday, April 6, I was in Liverpool to attend the Monday evening meeting of the Liverpool Group. Their clubroom is absolutely unbelievable, but then so is the Liverpool Group. After a session of wine-tasting to get into the fannish meeting mood, a moderately wild official meeting took place during which I was appointed Seattle Chapter of the Liverpool Group. Little did we know then...

Tuesday, April 7th, I visited with Ron Bennett, who had his voice back and no longer had to communicate with the quote cards, and in the evening we watched a – well, Ron called it football, but I don't know. Football game I mean.

Wednesday, April 8th, I had some weird notion of going to Ipswich, but I didn't want to leave as early as the train did, so about ten o'clock at night (about the time England rolls its streets up and disappears until dawn) I was once again calling Mother Parker to ask for shelter. "Weber, you've got a stinking cold!" she said in her sweet way, and it was all arranged.

There followed a week in London doing indescribable things, like visiting transient managers of Worldcon hotels, attending Friday night sessions at Ella's and meetings of the Science Fiction Club of London, seeing American movies, and buying Beatles records.

Obviously the whole trip was a hoax, just as I suspected all along. [1]

[1] *Cry of the Nameless* #174 (June 1964, ed. Buz & Elinor Busby and Wally Weber)
[2] *Les Spinge* #13 (May 1964, ed. Dave Hale)
[3] *Quotecards Anyone?* (May 1964, ed. Langdon Jones)
[4] *Vector* #26 (May 1964, ed. Roger Peyton)
[5] *Alien* #9 (June 1964, ed. Harry Nadler & co)
[6] *Skyrack* #65 (April 1964, ed. Ron Bennett)
[7] *With Stars in My Eyes* (Peter Weston autobiography, NESFA Press, 2004)
[8] *Beyond* #5 (April 1964, ed. Charles Platt)
[9] *Hyphen* #36 (February 1965, ed. Walt & Madeleine Willis)
[10] *Cry* #173.5 (April 1964, ed. Wally Weber & Ella Parker)
[11] *Tangent* #5 (Summer 1976, ed. Dave Truesdale)
[12] *New Worlds* #147 (July/August 1964, ed. Moorcock)
[13] *Hyphen* #35 (April 1964, ed. Walt & Madeleine Willis)

1965

20. Brumcon 2 Programme

Friday 16th April

6:30 p.m. Booking in, tea, and suchlike activities

8:00 p.m. OFFICIAL OPENING
Meet the Guest of Honour

8:45 p.m. FRIDAY FILM SHOW presents *Forbidden Planet* plus 3 cartoon shorts:
Farm of the Future
House of the Future
Car of the Future

The rest of the evening is FREE... and easy!

Saturday 17th April

Good morning! Get ready for....

10:00 a.m. THE GROUP 65 AUCTION

11:00 a.m. TALK BY G.H. DOHERTY

12:00 p.m. ANOTHER TALK BY GEORGE SCITHERS

12:20 p.m. LUNCH
Sausages anyone?

2:00 p.m. CONFILMS
Conquest of Space
plus
When Worlds Collide
followed by Tea at approx 5:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m. MAD RAVING SATURDAY NIGHT SHINDIG... featuring...
Fancy Dress (8:00) plus Sacrificing Virgins at the Altar etc.

Sunday 18th April

The morning after....

10:00 a.m. B.S.F.A. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
followed by
DOC WEIR AWARD & PRIZEGIVING

12 noon LUNCH

2:00 p.m. GUEST OF HONOUR SPEAKS
Listen to the Stainless Steel Rat himself.

3:00 p.m. PRO PANEL
Questions, please!

4:00 p.m. BRUMCON 2 AUCTION

5:00 p.m. TEA TIME AGAIN!

7:30 p.m. FAN PANEL followed by

OFFICIAL CLOSEDOWN
with a last word from the Chairman.

Rest of the evening is like, free man!

CLEVELAND PARTY – *TRICON*
...and the best of British Luck.

21. Easter Brummies

The 1965 UK National Science Fiction Convention and the seventh to be run under the auspices of the BSFA, took place over the weekend of Friday, April 16th to Monday, April 19th. Called Brumcon 2 in convention literature, if not on the badge, it was held at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham, which later served as the venue for British Fantasycons for a number of years.

Guest of Honour was Harry Harrison, and the committee consisted of Ken Cheslin, Cynthia Grant, Mike Higgs, Rog Peyton and Charlie Winstone. In *Skyrack*, Ron Bennett reported that:

> "About 70 fans and professionals attended the Con at the Midland Hotel, New Street, and whilst it was an enjoyable weekend, it was not the most memorable of conventions. Undoubtedly the attendance, small for recent years, was overshadowed by the forthcoming World Convention in August."

Prologue

Charlie Winstone:

It all started some fifteen months ago. The Brummies, in a fit of derring-do, talked Ken Cheslin into standing up and calling for the 1965 Convention venue to be Birmingham. This he did, not without some misgivings. After all the British Science Fiction Association's Committee was also centred upon Birmingham. Still, there were plenty of Brummies (Easter Brummies, as they were christened by Archie Mercer) around – it was surely not an impossible task to put on a Convention.

As months went by the frenzy grew, as June 1964 came and went, the Hotel was booked. The Film Show programme was suddenly decided upon in September, October and November and the films themselves were ordered at the last minute, in January. After long, two hour debates over the last two months of 1964, the Convention Committee gradually thrashed out a kind of programme. The Convention Committee, incidentally, was made up of the three resident BSFA Committee members ie. Ken Cheslin, Roger Peyton and Charles Winstone plus Mike Higgs (alias MiK) and Cynthia Grant.

(In spite of comments from some quarters – it was upon these five that the Convention Arrangements devolved. At no time were the other Birmingham and Area group members excluded from helping. As it was the five received many valuable hints and suggestions to help in the Convention arranging.)

Anyway, the frantic pace carried on, (in between BSFA meetings) – the convention journal *Brumble* was issued at sporadic intervals. Four of them – each one a fanzine in its own right.

Came the last two months, and it was discovered that the Hotel decorations were not started, neither, except for a few items, was the Convention Booklet. So, MiK's arms were twisted, unravelled, and he was forced into a short spell of slavery. For night after day he slaved, on sketches and stencil. He was dashing from Ken Cheslin, back to his board and back to Ken again. It seemed that the badges etc. would be late for the Convention as well as the programme booklet.

Then on the last Sunday before the Convention, there was a mass meeting of the Brummies at MiK's Mansion. The horde rushed into his house (between three and four o'clock in the afternoon) and waited to be told what to do. Mik arrived and soon got things organised. Soon the Booklets were collated and stapled. In the front bay-window, two figures huddled over a pile of cards, pins and tape. (The badges were being manufactured). An Indian file of figures scuttled around in a circle in the front room, picking up and putting down sheets of paper. Two figures crouched over the infernal machine that is the stapler, taking it in turn to thump it. (Birmingham has the only steel-staple tipped fingered fans in fandom). In the living room and the kitchen stood two or three immobile figures, lost in contemplation of a large sheet of paper pinned to the wall. MiK stood in front of the paper, pondering upon the subject that was to be hung in the Convention Hall. Time passed, with but four days to go to the Convention, it was getting rather urgent that something should be drawn and painted.

Finally, in a burst of bewildering creative frenzy, MiK attacked the tauntingly blank sheet of paper. Gradually, a shape took shape, the outline grew and then the sword was drawn. One of the Brummies *[Cliff Teague]* was persuaded to sit cross-legged on the floor, so that the picture could be drawn from life. MiK delegated the job of painting in the large areas of colour to a Brummie, and then drew some smaller pictures for the other Brummies to work on. Ten o'clock, and the Brummies had gradually drifted away. MiK arranged for one or two to turn up and continue the work the next day, and soon he was alone with Cynthia.

Next day, the work continued on the mural and its associated figures (MiK had apparently been working on 'til 3 o'clock, for it did not look so incomplete in the cold light of day). A major problem was presented by the transporting of this large picture to the Convention Hotel, with no-one seeing the subject of it. (It would have drawn all the Witches and Warlocks, etc, to the scene like flies.)

Fortunately, the thing could be rolled up, and so MiK could get it into his van. Soon it was in the Hotel, and hung in the Hall. (This was done with the aid of the Hotel Management, who, I think were a little perturbed by the whole affair of the Convention. There was one upstairs maid who was most put out...)

Came Thursday, and Friday, and the Brummies trickled into the Hotel and so the decorations continued – splashes of paint on paper all night, then on Friday evening it was all done (nearly) and the stage was set for the Brumcon 2 Convention of 1965. [1]

Friday 16th April

Archie Mercer:

"I told you the stairs would be quicker..."

The Convention really started for me some time between 10 and 11.a.m. on the Friday, when a large vehicle known to its friends as TAK.10 was perceived approaching from the right. This wagon, veteran of several earlier Conventions, was being driven at the time by Simone Walsh. It also contained the persons of Tony Walsh, Sarah Walsh (a maiden of as yet somewhat tender years), and John Berry. Not, of course, the Belfast John Berry. Inasmuch as the latter is himself a Brummie, there was, naturally, not the remotest chance of his attending a Brumcon. The TAK.10 J.B. is from Somerset, and should therefore be dubbed J. Somerset Berry.

TAK.10 delivered its cargo at the Midland Hotel not long after midday. Having registered, the components of said cargo collected Doreen Parker and a couple of other bodies and went to eat. There were eight persons all told, not counting Sarah, so naturally they were allotted tables for two. This gave me the opportunity for an intimate tête-à-tête with Doreen; after the meal, I sought to prolong this pleasant experience by accompanying Doreen to Redditch to collect Beryl. Alas for his hopes – Ted Tubb came too. In fact, Ted drove, as Doreen was not feeling very well. About a week earlier, she'd had an accident resulting in some nasty bruises. (She swears that nobody will ever believe that although she's had

four accidents in that incredible car, every time she's been stationary). In addition to that, she'd had an anti-tetanus injection that had gone wrong, leaving her with a very sore arm and an upset tum.

Once in Redditch Doreen was able to give directions, and piloted her car skilfully round Fearnings to No. 59. At that point the Convention really started for Beryl. [2]

Peter Weston:

The Midland wasn't a particularly welcoming sort of hotel, with a gloomy reception area furnished with padded, purple velvet benches behind a revolving wooden door, which led out into the busy traffic of New Street. I hung around in there for most of the afternoon, anxiously looking out for familiar faces. Sure enough, along came good old Roy Kay, down from Birkenhead on the afternoon train, and Dick Howett from London, carrying a big, black projector case. Mary Reed appeared with her pal Julia Stone, and after a hasty greeting they vanished into the depths of the hotel, not to be seen again for some hours. Suddenly I was startled by a loud "Ta-ta-ta-tarrara!" and looked back to see Mike Moorcock running down the stairs with his pal Langdon Jones, who was wearing a large, floppy Cavalier hat, both of them playing imaginary trombones. The London extroverts had obviously arrived early! [3]

Beryl Henley:

If it were not for the programme booklet, I'm convinced that I wouldn't have the faintest idea of what happened when. Perhaps this confusion results from the fact that this was, after all, my first Con. There were so many people I wanted to meet, people who had until then been only signatures at the bottom of letters. The first of the Great Unmet turned out to be those august personages, Mike Moorcock and Lang Jones, who were introduced to me by my fellow-Tribester the Gt. O'Reed *[i.e. fellow Tribe-X member Mary Reed]*, shortly after my arrival on Friday afternoon. Mike was, he said, suffering from bubonic plague, and expressed a fervent hope that it wouldn't spread. Later that evening he made a brief appearance on TV in the "Midlands News" programme. One concludes that he must have been ashamed of this, because he never told anybody.

Round about the same time, I met Terry Pratchett, Frank Herbert *[*not *the writer]*, Brian Burgess, and Roy Kay. I also renewed acquaintance with several old friends, including Alan Roblin, who informed me: "When I walked up New Street a few minutes ago, I thought everybody was laughing at my badge – until I took it off..."

At the Con registration desk, Ken Cheslin lumbered me with three

badges, Charlie Winstone had his Treasury enriched, and Bob Little asked me, “How do you spell your name?” [2]

Ron Bennett:

The convention opened on the Friday evening with short introductions, appeals to support Great Yarmouth for next year’s consiting, and a brief encounter with a tardy arrival in the shape of Harry Harrison who excused his late coming on the grounds that the opening ceremony had been late, a readily accepted excuse!

Quote cards were also prevalent. Though not in the abundance of last year, they appeared from several different sources. Archie Mercer produced a confetti-like series of “do it yourself” cards. [4]

Mike Higgs:

Round about 8:45 p.m. we got the Friday Film-show under way. Dick Howett very kindly acted as projectionist (he supplied his own film projector, too). The main film was *Forbidden Planet* which was probably one of the corniest space opera films I’ve ever seen. However, it seemed to please everyone present, so maybe my opinion isn’t worth that much. I will admit though, that I thought the “Monster” in it was damned good, but the whole thing simply stank of Hollywood glamorization. Also shown were three (I think) cartoon films. Roger Peyton had insisted to me that they were not “cartoons”, but “documentaries”. I, being of superior intellect in the cartoon line, was proven right, heh heh! [1]

Beryl Henley:

Later that evening, I was hauled off to a room party. This was held in Norman Weedall’s room. Norman himself wasn’t there, of course. Eddie Jones was, though, and so were Ted Tubb and Ken McIntyre. The last-named began upbraiding me for having submitted something to a fanzine instead of to a prozine. I never did find out exactly what, though.

I parted with some money to Phil Rogers, thus registering myself for the 1966 Con in Great Yarmouth. This induced a kind of recklessness in me; I debated whether to stand at the head of the staircase and shower largesse on the heads of the impecunious fen in the lobby. Deciding that this would be a little too ostentatious, I finally went in search of Jim Groves, and brutally forced him to take money from me for Worldcon registration.

After a snack, another group gathered downstairs in the Back Bar. It may have been at this time that Don Geldart and Bette Woodhead turned up, accompanied by a pair of rissful Blispins. Or it may not. At any rate, the two senior Walshes *[Tony and Simone]* were definitely there; so were

Archie and J. Somerset Berry. Possibly Phil Rogers, too – or was that on Saturday?

Tony-in-his-cups is very amusing. He paid me a series of ridiculous compliments, topping them with the glorious line: "You look at least ten years older." Bette chided him about this; Tony turned worriedly to me, laid his hand on my knee, and said he hoped I wasn't offended – which, of course, I wasn't.

"You're embarrassing her," said Bette.

"I'm not," said Tony. "I'm propositioning her."

I distributed some copies of *Link* #3 – even sold a few! – and promptly forgot who'd had 'em and who hadn't. Thus I didn't save as much on postage as I'd hoped to, because the following week I had to send out about 47 postcards saying: "Help! Did I give you *L-3* at the Con?"

At about midnight, the hotel was strangely quiet, the "Aliens" having mysteriously disappeared some time earlier. An hour later, its peace was shattered by the thunder of Mancunian feet, as said "Aliens" galloped around the place, distributing copies of a leaflet which had (so it announced) been produced in a local garage, and which purported to describe the events of the Con's first day. [2]

This appears to have been the first convention newsletter ever produced at a UK con. Harry Nadler took a portable typewriter, stencils, and the Alien Worlds *duplicator with him to the con. On Friday evening, Harry stencilled a one-page report on the opening ceremony, and he and Bill Burns then duplicated it in the back of Harry's car in the multi-story carpark across the street from the con hotel, and distributed copies to attendees. Here is the full text of the report:*

ALIEN WORLDS.

FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. FLASH.

Time: Eleven Forty Five P.M. Friday 16th April 1965.

B.S.F.A. 7th ANNUAL CONVENTION. BIRMINGHAM.

Convention commenced officially at 8:0 p.m. Unofficially, and more correctly, 8:12 p.m. Phil Rogers and Ted Tubb opened proceedings by encouraging those present to enrol for the YARMOUTH 1966 CON! There were no takers, until HARRY HARRISON rolled up, Late Of Course, and registered as

member No. 15 with the help of a Danish penny and the promise of 7/5 sterling to follow. While Ted nipped away for a bottle, Mike Moorcock held the stand by mumbling into the “mike”, which was not unfortunately working at the time

Chairman Ken Cheslin introduced G.O.H. HARRY HARRISON, who was still rather tired from his long journey; began his opening speech. “You are looking at a mere shadow of myself. I’ve had a long hard drive from this Anglo Saxon port of Harwich across all of lower Anglo Saxony over here. I’ll be in better shape tomorrow, but right now all I can do is say, welcome to Birmingham and I’ll be happy to answer any questions you have....” (Loud laughter) The only question forthcoming was from Brian “Pie” Burgess who asked, “Will there be a Convention in Copenhaaaaagen?” “Not!” exclaimed Harrison, “if you pronounce it like that!” Here a battle ensued as to how to pronounce it; and the conclusion was that if Burgess held it, he could have it. Harry went on to say, he’d been attending conventions since the first one in 1939, but this was the first one held in a dry hotel. “Why is this?” he asked, and there was a cry of “It’s built on stilts!” from Ken Cheslin. Harry continued, “Of course, I see a number of young fans here in the convention hall, and I believe you’ve got an age limit for drinking in Britain of 25, finish at 26. You can only drink from nine to nine thirty in the morning! This morning, I came off the M1, which was six lanes wide, and hit the M2 which was (indicating a four inch space with his hands) about THAT wide! We pulled in at a place that sold PETROL – how’s that – not gasoline...!” To the young pump attendant, Harrison said, looking at a mess of shacks, “Are any of those places licensed?” to which came the reply, quick as a flash, “If they were, I wouldn’t be at the bloody pump!!!”

After Harry’s speech, *Forbidden Planet* was shown, a review of which is on page 15 of *Alien Worlds* 15... No room parties visible at 12:40 – GHOD!

Duplicated in Multi-storey garage, BRUM.

Beryl Henley:

It may have been later that same evening (or it may have been on Saturday, but no matter) that a perfectly innocent remark made by Simone led to a heated, though happy political argument between Tony and Phil. Everyone else had long since left the Back Bar, the waiters were switching

off lights and issuing martyred Looks free of charge, but Tony and Phil were having far too good a time to worry about that. [2]

Saturday 17th April

Mike Higgs:

On Saturday morning, round about 10:00 a.m. there was supposed to be an Auction by the Fan Group known as "Group 65". Unfortunately, there was some mix-up and this group didn't have any plans for an auction. In its place, the Committee put on an auction of about half of the stuff that was intended for the official Auction on Sunday. [1]

Beryl Henley:

A trickle of humanity in varying stages of fatigue, hangover, and bleariness of eye began to invade the breakfast room. Archie found himself seated with me, Mike and Lang. I have to take his word for this, since I don't begin to operate on all cylinders until around 11.a.m. For this reason, I wish to apologise to anyone who happened to address me at breakfast and who received no acknowledgement of this courtesy. Try again next time – but later in the day!

Spotted by an eagle-eyed Chairman, I was later roped in to collect money at the first of the auctions, master-minded by Phil. They were doing very well until Archie slipped a handful of foreign coins in among the loose change....

Slater fils persuaded Slater pére to buy him a fistful of fanzines, among which I spotted two copies of *Link* #1. I begged for these – even offered to pay for them – and Ken said, "If they haven't any cartoons in 'em, he'll give them to you." MiK – your Beatle-Unicorns are obviously not classed by this young expert as cartoons – Master Slater handed over the *Link*s without demur.

After the auction, I became brutal again, and dragged Phil off, wild-eyed and protesting, to the bar for liquid refreshment. Money-grabbing is thirsty work. [2]

Peter Weston:

A certain amount of jollity was in evidence during the first auction, in which Phil Rogers tried his hardest to shift huge mountains of fairly worthless magazines and paperbacks. It was another failure of imagination, especially with the amount of professional talent present. This is where the committee's lack of experience showed, because it would have been so easy to have organised a panel discussion or invited

Mike Moorcock to talk about his first year editing *New Worlds*, for instance.

Fortunately, the auction was followed by a talk from Geoff Doherty (a schoolteacher friend of Brian Aldiss) which was solidly interesting although his arguments might have gone over the heads of some of the audience. However, for the afternoon, all the committee had arranged were another two full-length films. [3]

Ron Bennett:

Geoff Doherty, now a training college lecturer, gave the first talk of the convention, citing definitions like “fantasy is non-statistical fact” and coming to the conclusion, via the opinions that the best sf comes from fantasy and that a good story comes only with the authority of experience, that there is no real difference between sf and fantasy.

George Scithers, 1963 DisCon Chairman and Hugo Award winner for his fanzine, *Amra*, then spoke on the reasons behind the TriCon bid for the 1966 Worldcon siting. Ordinarily, the siting of the American worldcons does not play a large part in British fan affairs. This year, however, the British fan is being wooed earnestly for his vote because the voting for the siting of any world con takes place at the previous world con, thus the voting for next year’s siting will take place in London in August. And of course, the audience will undoubtedly be predominantly British. There are two bidders for the 1966 gathering, Syracuse and TriCon. Originally, the TriCon group was made up of rival factions from Cleveland, Detroit and-Cincinnati, all of whom have now amalgamated their interests with a provisional convention hotel in Cleveland and with a guest of honour already lined up. The TriCon argument is basically the Rotation Plan, the system under which the worldcon sitings circulate in the USA. Obviously, in a country the size of the U.S. it would be unfair to hold every convention on say, the east coast. Accordingly, the Rotation Plan has been in operation for a number of years. The 1964 Worldcon was held on the west coast of America and by rights, under the system, this year’s convention should be held somewhere in the centre or “mid-west” area. However, London has stepped in and has accordingly put back the rotation plan by one year. It seems to follow, therefore, that if one agrees with the rotation plan then the TriCon bid is the obvious one. [4]

Mike Higgs:

I returned to the Convention in time for the Saturday Film Show, which featured *Conquest of Space* and *When Worlds Collide*. Still having several things to do, in connection with the Fanzine Display and the Art

Show I missed most of this Film Show. What I did see of *When Worlds Collide* was even worse than *Forbidden Planet*. I guess this was because it was an old film and it showed its age. I've come to the conclusion that most S-F films are pretty poor because a) They're aimed at the General Public and not at S-F enthusiasts alone, and b) They're generally produced by someone who will just as easily make a Western the very next day.

S-F may have "come of age" in book form, but it still has a long way to go in the movies. 90% of S-F films still carry on with the time-worn theme of B.E.M.s and blondes in bathing suits. In fact most S-F films are hard to distinguish from Horror Films, I guess good box-office is better than good S-F. I personally feel that if some enterprising producer with a good fat budget could make an S-F film true to the story it's taken from... choose actors who suit the part and not for their box-office appeal... and also be pretty interested in S-F himself... would still make a good profit at the box-office, because the film would be good in its own right and wouldn't have to sell by the advertising or its stars. Unfortunately, I think this is a long way off.... a pity. [1]

Beryl Henley:

Saturday afternoon found five people sitting on somebody's bed. Doreen, me, Archie, Pete Weston and Jim Groves. Messrs. Moorcock, Jones and Platt or possibly just the first two – were dispensing music across the way. Archie seemed disposed to desert the bed-sitting quintet in favour of the musicians, but when I gave forth with my famous conversational gambit: "Shall we talk about sex or shall we lead up to it?" – he decided to stay. The ensuing discussion seemed to be on a to-be-continued basis, because it was later taken up, with variations, at Jim Groves's room party. Word must have got around, because Jim finally had to refuse admittance to several groups of supplicants on the grounds that about fifteen people were already sitting on the grounds. That wasn't counting those on the bed, the chairs, the wardrobe, and among the bottles on the dressing-table.

It was during this party that Alan Roblin said: "Well, there's physical attraction, and then there's plutonic love...."

Later came the classic remark (the perpetrator of which shall remain mercifully Unidentified): "This conversation is getting mucky – kindly give me my pants and let me go."

Having ascertained that I wouldn't be making a fool of myself alone, I joined the Fancy Dress Parade. This was one of the very few disappointing events of the Con, for only eight people took the trouble to wear costume. The Mancunian Candidates swept the board – or almost –

which is, one, understands, the usual custom. Not that they didn't deserve the prizes. They turned up as all sorts of horrors – Frankenstein and his monster, Dracula, a werewolf, etc. At that, they didn't scare me half as much as the fact that Green Henry was continually dogging my heels... [2]

Ron Bennett:

The traditional Saturday night party this year sported the title of Mad Raving Saturday Night Shindig. The level of ingenuity and originality was well up to the standard of recent conventions, with Beryl Henley as the Scarecrow from *The Wizard of Oz* and Brian Burgess as a meat pie. Rumour has it that Alan Dodd was present, disguised as a quote card. Once again the honours went to the Delta group, with Peter Day and Bill Burns taking first prize as – to quote the spokesman for the panel of judges, Ted Tubb – "The Mad Scientist and his Tame Assistant." Chuck Partington was second as "The Man with the Head and the Teeth" and Harry Nadler was third as "The Atrocious Monster with a Gun in his Mitt!" By some sort of mutual consent, the party left the con hall to its own devices and moved on to Jimmy Groves's bedroom where it continued well into the early hours, one of the weekend's undoubted highlights. [4]

Beryl Henley:

A gang of bods went in search of a room party. It was a properly conducted search, i.e. the group was armed with suitable bottles. (Not empty ones!) The "Aliens" had said something about a party in 127, so, having tried someone else's room and found it unresponsive, we duly adjourned to 127. Somebody attacked the door, which was opened by about two inches; Brian Aldiss's voice politely invited the would-be invaders to go away, because those inside were filming or summoning-up demons or something. So they went. [2]

Peter Weston:

Surprisingly, they really were filming in there. The Manchester group were making a film for the London Worldcon and Peter Day had scripted *Breathworld*, a spoof on Harry Harrison's *Deathworld*. In one scene, the hero is schooled by an inept instructor who manages to shoot himself in the foot with an automated weapon, and the opportunity of having Harry himself play the part of the instructor was just too good to miss. The Delta crew turned up with camera, lights, and props and shot Harry's scenes inside his hotel room, with prompting and assistance from Messrs. Aldiss, Boardman and Moorcock, and special effects scratched onto the film later.

Once the filming was over the whole thing turned into a room party,

and when around midnight Charles Platt unwisely appeared on the scene, I was among the select company privileged to see him seized and stuffed into a large oak wardrobe, the door locked, and the wardrobe tipped-over, face-down. If only Harry Nadler had kept his camera running a little longer this great fannish moment might have been preserved for posterity!

Harry Harrison later explained what happened:

Charles hadn't booked at the hotel and he'd talked Mike Moorcock into letting him sleep on Mike's floor. Then Charles came into the room party and kept whining at Mike to "give him the key to our room". Mike was unimpressed. When Charles kept on, Brian and Mike pushed him into the wardrobe and we all helped turn it face down – then sat on it. I do remember Brian, Tom Boardman and I were on it. He banged feebly to be let out. We laughed, and enjoyed it when someone managed to let loose a fart. Everything gets dim after that. [3]

Mike Higgs:

After the fancy dress parade, most fans seemed to split up into groups and head for room parties, or to some distant Pub, for a good booze-up. In the Convention Hall, several fans were sitting round talking, getting drunk or just singing. It was with the tune of a bawdy song that I left to take Cynthia home. When I arrived back at the Hotel I ended up at a rather small room party held by Ken Cheslin. Ella Parker, Doreen Parker, Mr and Mrs James White and a few others were there. Later on, other people joined in and we finally had a pretty crowded affair. This carried on until the wee small hours until only four of us were left. Doreen Parker, Rog Peyton, Ed James and myself left Ken to dream of power and we tramped off to Doreen's room. After nattering away for some time, Mike Moorcock came in and prolonged the conversation for another hour or so. Finally, poor old Doreen was nearly asleep and so we quietly piled out of the room and headed for Mike's room. However, once there we found the twin beds were occupied by Julia Stone sprawled out on one and what looked like Gray Hall on the other.

When I first saw Mike Moorcock at the Convention, he'd been running down the stairs with Lang Jones – both of them were playing on imaginary trombones. Suddenly, he roared out a loud "TA-TA-TA-TARARA!" at the top of his voice, raising Julia about one foot off the bed – but not affecting Gray Hall. Looking at us rather sleepily, through one eye, Julia muttered "Oh, Ghod", and promptly went back to sleep again. Looking rather dejected, Mike and the rest of us left his room and proceeded towards Rog Peyton's.

Upon arrival there it was discovered that someone was already in

Rog's room. Foaming at the mouth Rog finally got in and found that his bed was occupied also. By none less than Charles Platt!* The floor was also occupied by some other fan. Needless to say, both were evicted immediately and the last I saw of Chas. Platt was in pyjamas, staggering down the corridor with shoes in one hand and clothes in the other.

** Charles had apparently used his lock-picking skills to gain entry having chosen the room at random. Bad choice. [Ed.]*

Bloody free-loaders! If all the free-loaders at our Convention had paid for their rooms, we'd have got our full reduction in cost – as it was we had to make do with a much lesser discount.

Anyway, we sat talking for hours in Roger's room and finally the sun came up and the birds began to sing. Mike Moorcock signed my copies of *The Stealer of Souls* and *Stormbringer [at the time the only two Elric books],* and then disappeared to await breakfast. We also decided to wait for breakfast, because if we'd gone to sleep then we'd no doubt have missed dinner *[i.e. lunch]* let alone breakfast. I refused bluntly to miss breakfast this time because I'd missed it on Saturday morning due to the fact that the Hotel didn't start catering until 8:00 a.m. I thought this was pretty bad. [1]

Sunday 18th April

Ron Bennett:

At the Annual General Meeting of the BSFA on the Sunday morning it was announced that the association had a paid membership of 269. Roy Kay took over the Chair from the retiring Chairman Ken Cheslin, and Librarian Joe Navin was elected Vice-Chairman, beating Charles Platt in a straight vote. Graham Bullock resigned as Secretary and Doreen Parker agreed to step into the breach. Charles Winstone continues as Treasurer and Roger Peyton as Publications Officer.

Joe Navin announced that he would shortly have to surrender his post as Librarian and that the whole Library, the largest purely sf library in the world, would be transferred to the hands of John Nash. Mike Turner agreed to look after the fanzine side of the Library. [4]

Beryl Henley:

Sunday morning – the A.G.M. I can't, even now, recall who was eventually elected to the Vice-Chairmanship. I was too absorbed in trying to figure out Ella Parker's motives for nominating Charles Platt for the

post. (I hope that both Ella and Charles will excuse me for mentioning this fact).

Ken Slater enjoyed himself enormously; every time the meeting threatened to swing away from its officially-appointed course, Ken firmly steered it back again. Appreciating this elegant performance, I afterwards went to buy books from him. And had a natter with Joyce, who deserves full marks and a jelly-baby for putting in an appearance in spite of poor health. [2]

Archie Mercer:

My main recollection of the AGM is that I found it disappointing as AGMs go. There was plenty of meat around for consideration, but it seemed mostly to get itself bogged down in unnecessary cross-purposiveness. There was a faction – one forgets precisely whom it comprised – that seemed to want to tie down the Committee to a hitherto unprecedented degree, by having the meeting issue a directive that the fiction magazine *Tangent* should be dropped in favour of an improved *Vector*. One would have thought that such a matter should be left to the Committee's discretion in the light of the current availability of such things as finance, equipment and volunteer labour. After what I consider to have been an excess of argument and counter-argument, this particular move was defeated. The tenor of the meeting seemed to indicate a general desire to see *Vector* produced by an offset process rather than duplicated, the "Alien/Delta" group from Manchester and environs (particularly Salford) being a visible object-lesson that such production methods are entirely feasible on a do-it-yourself basis.

Another lesson of this AGM is that once again there is too little continuity from year to year – not so much of policy, but of comprehension of what has gone before. I was in on the ground floor and have been closely connected with the administration on and off ever since, and can claim as a consequence to have a good perspective on the Association's affairs that does not, somehow, seem to be easily transmissible. Since, however, I declined nomination as Vice-Chairman, I suppose that it's my own fault if this state of affairs continues into the future.

Since (as a consequence of me declining nomination) there was no constitutional nominee for the Vice-Chairmanship, the matter was passed to the AGM, and Joe Navin of Liverpool (who has been in charge of most of the library for several years) was elected in his absence – and unopposed, if memory serves. Roger Peyton kept the editorship of *Vector* by defeating Charles Platt in a postal vote; Charlie Winstone kept the

Treasury, unopposed; and Roy Kay as last year's Vice-Chairman succeeded to the Chair. The most bizarre aspect of the committee Changes was that Graham Bullock, having defeated Doreen Parker in a postal vote for the Secretaryship, decided that he didn't want the job after all, and Doreen wasn't exactly nominated to replace him – she simply took the job and that was that. Doreen even stood in at the AGM, traditionally conducted by the outgoing committee. This tickles Beryl and me pink, of course, because from what we know of Doreen we have reason to suppose that as a Secretary she could hardly be bettered. [2]

Ron Bennett:

Vector's sister magazine *Tangent* was discussed at length, editor Roger Peyton mentioning that he had had over 70 responses to the first issue. It was generally agreed, however, that before a second magazine is consolidated then *Vector* itself should be put on a more professional basis. Comparisons were drawn between *Vector* and the Delta Group's fanzine *Alien Worlds*, which is now produced in photo-litho. It was pointed out that the expense would probably be prohibitive (it might also have been pointed out that an abortive attempt to produce *Vector* by this method had been made in the past) and the editors were asked whether they would agree to producing *Vector*. They regretfully refused because of other commitments.

Yarmouth in '66. At Peterborough last Easter it was proposed that the 1966 Con be held at Great Yarmouth and now Phil Rogers confirmed that the hotel had been booked (inclusive price £3 per day). A Guest of Honour had been approached and had accepted the invitation. Registrations are being accepted. Watch this space for further details. Suggestions were made for the 1967 consiting, these causing some amusement until Phil Rogers pointed out that it had taken a full year to finalise the great Yarmouth arrangements (It's taken most people a year to find Great Yarmouth on a map). Brian Burgess proposed that the '67 con be held in Leeds as this would properly mark the 30th anniversary of the first British convention. Neither Mike Rosenblum nor Ron Bennett was present to boggle at the suggestion, but in any case the suggestion drew no seconder and Tony Walsh, mentioning that he and Simone would soon be moving to Bristol, suggested that Bath might be a suitable site. Somewhere in the West country certainly met with the meeting's favour and the motion was carried.

The Guest of Honour's speech has been widely reported in the national press, an unusual achievement in itself for conventions. But Harry Harrison is an unusual person, a man who lives as distinct from existing,

and who is the author of many recent and enjoyable works, such as *The Stainless Steel Rat*, *Deathworld*, *The Ethical Engineer* (*Deathworld II*) and *Planet of the Damned*. The Manchester *Guardian* described the talk thus: "This performance goes on for an hour during which he barracks the Salvation Army band playing outside, throws a meat pie at a friend in the back row, ignores a boy playing with a large, black toy spider in the third row and makes a few esoteric asides to one or two fellow professional authors." Harry actually began his talk, "SF Confidential" by awarding an original manuscript to Mike Beard for naming the Tom Boardman-published crime series, the Boardman "Bloodhounds" (ah, shades of Brown, Boland and Dewey). He mentioned that various American professionals would be attending the London Worldcon in August and took it upon himself to warn his audience of what they might expect. Poul Anderson, he said, had a name which is consistently mispronounced. He then asked his son to step up and pronounce it correctly. He spoke of Fred Pohl in agenting difficulties and owing a well known professional about $1,000. The author went to see Pohl about the money and ended up by lending Pohl a further thousand. Talking of his own editing career with *Rocket Stories*, Harry demonstrated the standard of batches of manuscripts he would receive in bulk from a West Coast agent. Eventually the state was reached where Harry was merely bundling up the manuscripts unread and returning them. Few authors escaped these revelations of the previously best kept secrets of American prodom. Blish, Kyle, Shaw, Campbell, Gernsback, Silverberg, Moskowitz, Knight and Ackerman were all attacked and the laws of libel obviously prevent an enlarged report.

The Professional Panel, consisting of Tom Boardman, Ted Tubb, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss, Chairman Harry Harrison and James White, spoke on the difference between American and British sf, agreeing generally that there was a difference in authors' rates but not necessarily that the best SF came from America. On the length of time it takes one to write a story the panel agreed that this depended on the story; one might take weeks, another years. Ted Tubb spoke of being under contract and writing a novel in a week. On reviewing, Tom Boardman felt that a review should be limited to publication facts and a general synopsis, whilst Brian Aldiss went a little further, pointing out that whilst there was possibly a difference between a review and a criticism it was not the reviewer's place to make personal attacks upon the author. [4]

Peter Weston:

Somehow the panel turned into an auction, with Harry, Brian, Mike and Ted stoking up a frenzied atmosphere of compulsive buying. They

sold the same books several times over to different bidders, hopeless rejects from the previous auction were boosted to extortionate prices, and Mike Moorcock knocked down an empty whisky bottle, allegedly autographed by famous authors, for four shillings and sixpence. When Harry Harrison finally ran out of breath and adjectives to damn the books he was selling, Brian took over in style. “I’ll sign this C.S. Lewis trilogy;” he said, “since the author isn’t around any more to do it himself.”

The madness was infectious and it was reported that an auctioned copy of *Starship Troopers* bore a “Robert Heinlein” autograph strangely reminiscent of Michael Moorcock’s writing. And Ted Tubb appealed to our instincts for self-preservation as he held up a 2-inch-thick fantasy novel and assured us that paper was the best shield against gamma rays. “Protect your unborn family from harmful radiation,” he solemnly advised.

I put in a bid for a piece of artwork by British artist Jim Cawthorn, and was surprised and pleased to get it for only three shillings and sixpence. Titled “Entry to Dragonsguard”, it was a two-foot piece of white art-board upon which Jim had sketched a fantasy scene in what looked like blue fountain-pen ink. A real bargain, I thought, though I had no idea what I was going to do with it.

Afterwards, Archie Mercer stood to present the Doc Weir Award, an event originally scheduled for the morning session but postponed because of the non-availability of the silver goblet. [3]

Archie Mercer:

I have one of the least functional memories in captivity – I refer to it as “an eidetic sieve”. However, I did remember to bring along the Doc Weir Award goblet. Newly-polished, too. Little Did I Know... it would probably have been easier all round if I had forgotten it.

On registering at the hotel, I asked for the goblet to be deposited in the safe. The girl went away, came back again and asked me to return later because she couldn’t find the receipt book. I trotted off obediently, innocently assuming that nobody would get around to stealing the thing in the twenty minutes specified. Nobody, in fact, did, and I breathed easily again as I walked away with the receipt, having been assured that the article would be available when required on the Sunday.

Thus passed Friday. And Saturday. And Sunday arrived. I ascertained from my programme when the Award would be required, and checked with the Con committee. Then I went to the desk, displayed my receipt (I hadn’t even lost that), and asked for the goblet.

But I couldn’t have it.

The hotel staff were very apologetic, really, Friday’s receptionist was

not then available, and nobody knew which compartment of the safe she'd locked it in. Everybody did their nuts, trying various keys in various compartments, while I cooled my heels at the desk. Eventually it was announced that the goblet must be in the head receptionist's special safe. So far, so good. However, said H.R. would not be on duty again until the afternoon. So that was that. Pro tem, like.

Two o'clock approached. I sat in the Con hall not quite listening to the programme (I'd rather read an article than hear a speech any day), waiting for a summons from the nether regions. Word failed to come, so I went to seek it. No, the head ~~decep~~ receptionist was later than had been supposed, and wouldn't be in until about three. Back I went to the programme. Three o'clock came and went. Down I went again. Yes, the H.R. had arrived – unfortunately the goblet was not in her safe. The entire staff were extremely apologetic. They had the matter completely under control, however. The goblet was in a particular compartment of which one of the under-managers held the only key. Said U.M. was week-ending in Bradford, Yorks., and said key would be arriving by passenger train at 8 p.m. The staff were abjectly apologetic, like.

It was decided to go ahead with the presentation in the goblet's absence. There was no more need for me to hang around the Con hall – the auction was on at the time, and was not to be interrupted because it was making money. I would be Sent For when required. So down I went again to find somebody to talk to. (Probably Beryl.)

And, in the fullness of time, sent for I was. The auction was still on, but due to close at any moment. The auction staff didn't know this, mind, and lot after lot was being stacked up alongside the table where the professionals were taking it in turn to conduct the proceedings. By this time I was beginning to get somewhat annoyed with the way things were going, and prevailed upon somebody to call the auction to a halt. Quelling the non-existent storm of imaginary internal butterflies, I began to speak.

I called attention to the state of the hotel's security, comparing it to that thing by A.A. Milne about the king, the queen and the dairymaid. (There was a cow in it as well, but I overlooked that.) Having (dairy) made my point, I launched into a fulsome eulogy of the qualities of the Award's new holder. This worthy had, I said, been prominent in fandom for approximately twenty years – certainly longer than I had myself. He had published fanzines, written for fanzines, and illustrated them – with both serious artwork and cartoons. He had attended just about every Convention available, and numerous lesser fannish occasions. He had served on the BSFA Committee in a number of capacities, including that of Chairman.

"He must be a fannish paragon," put in somebody from the back of the hall.

"He is a fannish paragon," I agreed, modestly forgetting to add that all holders of the Doc Weir Award are ex-officio fannish paragons. I then drifted into bathos by saying that the individual in question was not actually present to receive the award, ill-health being understood to be the cause.

By this time everybody (except for those who'd counted the votes) were beginning to wonder who, if anybody, the new holder was, and I let slip that it was Terry Jeeves. The crowd went appropriately wild – an ovation which Terry richly deserves. I handed the certificate to Phil Rogers, who was to convey it and the goblet to Sheffield in the near future, with the final message that if Terry was to have as much trouble getting rid of the thing as I was having, he had my sincerest sympathies.

Incidentally, just in case anybody's wondering, the missing key was eventually produced, and the goblet duly disinterred. So a hearty congratulation to Terry. [2]

Peter Weston:

Then the convention plunged from its high to an absolute low as a tall thin man with a crewcut and red blazer stood up and talked slowly and deliberately about the Rotation Plan, which governed U.S. Worldcons, and why he thought it should be set aside. It was Dave Kyle, who had come all the way from Upper New York State to lecture us about the merits of his Syracuse bid against the opposing, and more legitimate, Tri-con.

We didn't have the slightest interest in American fan affairs, but this year British fans were being wooed because voting for the 1966 site selection would take place at the London Worldcon in August. However, Dave's presentation was counter-productive; he had chosen his time very badly, and all he achieved was to bore everyone rigid, and generate a lingering resentment that he had spoiled our party. Not for many years afterwards did I get past that initial impression to find Dave was really a fun person when he wasn't talking fan-politics.

The programme had scheduled a fan panel for seven-thirty, but it never happened. After a very brief closing ceremony in the Main Hall we went next door into a party sponsored by Tri-con's George Scithers, who appeared in a very loud check-jacket and spoke at mercifully brief length. It was here I discovered he edited a fanzine called *Amra*. I had no real interest in Conan or heroic fantasy, but was so impressed by its appearance that I subscribed on the spot.

The Tri-con people had kindly donated £25 for drinks all round and

the con-committee had thoughtfully spent it on a mixture of beer, sherry, gin, and a few mixers, dispensed by Ted Tubb with his usual enthusiasm. It was here that Charles Platt had several drinks too many, and while doubtless already being somewhat tired after the previous night's exertions, he now became highly emotional as well. After many adventures, which included falling off a step-ladder in the convention hall and nearly braining Ivor Latto in the process, and after having put his fist through Lang Jones's door, Charles finally sank into merciful oblivion in Harry Nadler's room. [3]

Mike Higgs:

At tea-time most of the Brummies headed for the "Fleur de Lys" café at the top of New Street, and spent a mad hour there. I spent most of the time coaxing the waitress into giving me more custard on my apple pie. Finally we went back to the Hotel and staged the official close-down. After the final speeches had been made, we heard a talk by George Scithers on behalf of the Syracuse Convention.After this, booze was provided by the Tricon Committee. As the drink sank over the horizon, many fans drifted away to the inevitable room parties or sat around in groups talking and singing etc. Cynthia and myself circulated round for a bit and then headed for my room. It was when we got there that we met the G.O.H. Harry *Deathworld* Harrison and his charming wife. They were in the next set of rooms to mine. Harry very kindly invited Cynth and me in for a drink, we duly accepted (me always being ready for a free drink) and sat there for a long time talking about anything and everything. Arthur Pottersman from the *Sun* was also there... and later Brian Aldiss. (How's *that* for name dropping!)

Harry had us in stitches with his conversation and so did his wife, who was one of the liveliest people we'd met. I was delighted to learn that Harry was once a comic strip artist and then a strip writer. He related many interesting stories from his comic-book days, and both of them expressed a certain gratitude to *Flash Gordon* who served as "bread and butter" to Harry in his early days of writing.

What struck me as being pretty nice was the fact that they were interested in me and listened attentively while I rattled on about my hopes and dreams. Many pro's only go on about themselves and never think about anyone else. Rather reluctantly, I decided it was time to hightail it outta there, when several of Harry's personal friends showed up. I hate to hog anyone's evening. Cynth and I bade them all goodnight and left them, about 10:00 p.m. [1]

Arthur Pottersman in *The Sun*:

I have been spending the weekend with the nearest thing I know to an international literary conspiracy.

It is "fandom," or the world of science fiction enthusiasts as represented at the British Science Fiction Association's seventh annual convention held this year in Birmingham.

About 70 fans out of Britain's few hundred (in America there are thousands) met at the convention.

The critics and writers attacked the way the fans go nostalgic. It is ironic, they say, that science fiction fans don't like change but hanker after the early days when the simple idea of space rocketry evoked such a sense of wonder.

The fans for their part watched films like *When Worlds Collide* but maintained that these things are just for fun. The kind of science fiction they take seriously is something else again, they say.

[...]

Of one thing I am certain: There is no other kind of convention in the world at which an invitation to join a poker school would be put in these terms:

"A unique opportunity to test Extra Sensory Perception in action, coupled with a working examination of the laws of chance."

For the full Pottersman report published in The Sun, *see efanzines.com/1965Brumcon/.*

Beryl Henley:

On Sunday night, Archie and I found ourselves members of a circle sitting in the middle of a half-stripped Con hall which had a rather mournful, the-party's-over air. Perhaps it was in an effort to dispel this that the circle started a sing-song. Ken Ches. was in good form and voice, and only by supplying second to whatever melody was being belted out I was able to make it apparent that there was a female voice in that otherwise male choir. I also provided solo entertainment by singing (?) "The Bold Aviator" – except for the final two lines which might have shocked the assembled company. (The things they taught in the Wrens!! No wonder Gordon Smith was chuckling...) Various old songs were "murdered", including "Show Me the Way to Go Home" – and then Bob Little, on my left, saw his chance, grabbed it, and enjoyed his Great Moment. Entirely without self-consciousness, he delivered a hilariously pedantic version of it, the shining perfection of which was only slightly marred for Archie by its obstinate failure to rhyme. Whereupon I decided that this lad was

definitely fun, and they would have to work out a duet for the Worldcon.

Alan Roblin, on my right, demonstrated his fan-worship of Elvis Presley; Ed James, though not participating, seemed to be enjoying the proceedings; and his friend Terry Pratchett was doing something incredibly funny in a corner, only I can't quite remember what. Archie and Ken had a go at "Harrison, oh Harrison", to the tune of "Maryland". (Or "The Red Flag" if you're a Trade Unionist. Or "Der Tannenbaum", if you're Dr. Karl Blomeyer. Or "McDonough, Let the Trombones Blow" if you're a Duke of Dixieland. Or just barely possibly – "Gaudeamus Igitur" if they actually used the right tune...) But the incantation didn't work; neither Bill nor Harry appeared in our midst. Pity.

Having heard about the hole in Lang's door, off went the gaggle to inspect it. There was a short flight of shallow stairs outside this door, on which the group sat down to have a gloom about the apparent no-party situation. A hotel liftman came along the corridor and carefully stepped over them. Feeling restless, I muttered to myself the famous Doddyism *[from comedian Ken Dodd]*: "Let's see – whose wick can I go and get on now?" and went in search of mischief and devilry. I considered having a slide down the banisters, but the U-turns on them were a bit narrow, and I haven't lost that much weight. It was just as well I didn't, though, because on the next floor down we came upon Archie and Ella, sitting on the stairs and conversing quietly. [2]

Mike Higgs:

I took Cynth home and returned an hour or so later to find the Hotel terribly quiet for the last night of a Convention. Apparently, there were a lot of room parties going on, but you couldn't hear them.

I finally located Ted Tubb's room and sat in at a rather "after the ball is over" type of room party. Ted livened things up a bit by organising a final night march through the dim corridors of the Hotel. There was about 20 or 30 fans there and all of them were chanting "Go back to your wives"... with Brian Burgess out in front clanking time on a bottle.

Being a member of the Committee I didn't fancy being seen in such a position, so I held back – next minute the hotel staff pounced and everyone made a mad dash up the stairs back to their own rooms. I wandered on, finally I came across Ken's room and by bending down and placing my ear against the keyhole, I could hear voices from inside. Knocking loudly, I was admitted to find Ella Parker, Ken Cheslin and some other soul, whose name escapes me at the present, sitting talking. Placing myself in a comfortable position, we proceeded to dissect the Convention, and sort things into their proper perspective. It got later and later. Finally, Ella left

and the three of us carried on talking. The next thing I remember was waking up to see a Brumfan's face glaring down at me, saying that it was 10:00 a.m., on Monday morning, and time to get up.

Finally, pulling myself together, I managed to stagger downstairs to the multitude. Ken informed me that I had dropped off to sleep the night before... suddenly waking, I'd staggered to my feet, looking as though I was at death's door and stumbled out into the corridor mumbling my goodnights to all and sundry. The last they saw of me was when I disappeared round the end of the corridor. Somehow, my glorious sense of direction got me to my room, where I must have crumpled into bed. [1]

Monday 19th April

Archie Mercer:

One of the delights of regular Convention-going is that one can each year meet new faces, and make new friends. The latter don't have to be drawn from amongst the former, necessarily – a Convention sometimes provides the atmosphere in which one really gets to know, for the first time, friends of several years' standing. And so far as the brand-new faces are concerned, I derive a sort of double-benefit from this because I never remembers anybody – well, hardly anybody – at first acquaintance, and have to meet new faces all over again the second time. This happened with Jim Grant of Christchurch, Hants., for instance – Jim swears he was at some previous Con and met me there, but I hadn't the slightest recollection. Anyway, I remember Jim from this occasion all right – a large, bland young man who thinks that fandom along the south coast should be more aware of its corporate existence. Naturally, I agree – fandom everywhere should be so aware.

For the first time in more years than I care to remember, some genuine Scottish-domiciled Scots had travelled to the Con. There were three of these – each of whom, furthermore, had travelled separately from a different point of origin. Ivor Latto was one of them. A quiet, bespectacled young man with a short ginger beard, Ivor gave the impression that he wasn't quite sure if he wanted to be classed as one of "this mad lot" or not. After reading his brilliantly funny "Uncle Ivor's Neo-Fans' Guide" in *Beyond* #8 (distributed by Charles Platt at the Con), it is quite clear that, like it or not, Ivor is "One Of Us". And I wish I'd been able to have more conversation with him.

Another was Richard Gordon, a youngster whose main claim to fame is that he does not write books about doctors – or even about one doctor.

(In any case, you were probably thinking of James White). The third was David Marwick, somewhat older than the other two and of more serious mien. His definition of J.G. Ballard as “a very capable writer of unintelligible stuff” endears him to Beryl and me.

Curiously enough, a number of the local Brummie-fen never showed up at all. A pity, because I’ve never met either Janet or Margaret. (I’m not so concerned about the male absentees). [2]

Beryl Henley:

One hitherto-unheard-of Brummie who did show up was Gordon Smith. Gordon sports a sort of Norfolk jacket, a full beard not unlike Archie’s own, an attractive wife called Jane, and a mind of decidedly fannish potential. He’s a teacher at a Birmingham school – a popular one, we’d guess – and has three small children of his own. I was interested to discover that he had served in the (post-war) Fleet Air Arm as a radar-man, and hope that the future will provide an opportunity for mutual Service reminiscences.

He was one of my best customers at the Saturday auction, and turned up at the Fancy Dress Do in a very ingenious costume, in which he looked like a cross between Yuri Gagarin and Davy Crockett. A young meerschaum added to the happy incongruity of his outfit. And I think he won one of the prizes – in which case, good for Gordon!

After breakfast on Monday (during which a blizzard raged outside), some preliminary packing, bill-paying seemed to be in order. In the lobby, Ella was telling Archie how relieved she was to have handed over (pro tem) the OMPA Presidency to him. “I’m now an ex-President,” she added, “and I’m looking forward to being an ex-everything.” I wondered if that included being an X certificate....

Eddie Jones took some last-minute photographs, and with a gallant bow presented a spent flash-bulb to me as a souvenir. I accepted it, swore and dropped it. It was still hot.

Having seen off a number of fairly early departers, including Doreen and the Slaters (still travelling in convoy), the original TAK.10 party sat on the stairs (opposite the erstwhile Slatershop) in company with me, a couple of Normans, and a few others. Ken Cheslin appeared: Archie thanked him for a great Con, which brought forth applause and cries of “Speech!” He made one, too. In spite of his aching heart – his Wendy had been unable to attend after all – he had maintained a brave front, and had done a Grand Job.

Mike Moorcock and Lang Jones paused in their stately exit to bid farewell. Referring to an apparently barkless dog which is at present a

member of the Moorcock household, Archie said “Give my regards to the basenji.” Mike said he would, adding: “As a matter of fact, I’m returning to London by basenji train....”

In twos and threes – e.g., Mary, Julia and Pete – the fen stole away, returning to their respective wildernesses. Simone bewailed the fact that there wasn’t a Con every week, or at least every month.

Some nine or ten people dashed through spatters of icy rain to the “Clover” for a final Brumeal. At least, most of them did the dashing – Sarah was carried by her Dad. [2]

Mike Higgs:

Monday morning, the end of the Convention. Fans were crowding about making final arrangements to leave. I paid my bill and went upstairs to pack. Most of the people had drifted away by the time I came down again.

I left to get my van, to take my stuff home. When I got back to the Hotel, everyone had gone, the hotel seemed strangely empty and silent... The staff looked relieved though. I got my luggage and walked out into the mid-day sunshine.

On the way over to Cynthia’s, for lunch, I got to thinking that maybe this hadn’t been the best Convention out, but it had had its moments. I reckon that if the Brum Group hold another Convention, it’ll be a real swinger. We’ve made mistakes, but I think we’ve learned by those mistakes and this is surely the best way... see you at Brumcon 3? [1]

Epilogue

Archie Mercer:

The Guardian, surprisingly enough, presented very much the kind of report that one has, over the years, come to expect from low-quality papers – a generally mickey-taking air of “look at them all showing-off how different they are”. The wearing of “long beards or long manes” (and how long is a long beard, anyway? None of those in evidence at the Brumcon was outstanding for its length) is not necessarily done to demonstrate one’s “apartness”. In my case, far from it – I happen to be an introvert, and would far rather be unrecognisable in a crowd. “As a demonstration of apartness,” the report continues, harping on the same theme, “one member wore a cardboard placard of hedges (=sic=) and mottoes...” That sounds like me again, but no reporter asked me why I wore such a placard. The answer, if requested, would have been in two parts. I wore the badges

(with a couple of small exceptions) because various people had either asked me to, or expected me to, and I had them all pinned on the cardboard to save myself several minutes of unpinning or repinning every time I left or re-entered the hotel.

Both the other reports, however, showed a surprising understanding of fandom that would not normally have been expected of any paper except *The Tewkesbury Register* or *The Oxford Mail*. One of them even dealt sympathetically with Harry's much-reported meat-pie missile.

The *Sun* did slip up when it commented on the very poor attendance among the feminine element which, it said, consisted only of some six wives and girl-friends. Whilst the relative proportions of the sexes remain indeed considerably out of balance, with the males in a large majority, the situation isn't quite that bad. [2]

[1] *Brumble* #5 (June 1965, ed. Charlie Winstone)
[2] *A Conrep from B'ham* (June 1965, ed. Beryl Henley & Archie Mercer)
[3] *With Stars in My Eyes* (Peter Weston autobiography, NESFA Press, 2004)
[4] *Skyrack* #78 (May 1965, ed. Ron Bennett)

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Birth of the BSFA

According to its Wikipedia page, at the time of writing:

> The British Science Fiction Association Limited is an organisation founded in 1958 by a group of British academics, science fiction fans, authors, publishers and booksellers in order to promote the writing, criticism, and study of science fiction in every form.

This is ahistorical nonsense. There were no academics, publishers, or booksellers involved in its founding and the only author present – Ted Tubb – was there not as a writer but in his capacity as a fan. What follows is a contemporary account that lists all those who were present.

Dave Newman:

At the annual Cytricon at Kettering this year a series of meetings were held to discuss the present parlous state of fandom and science-fiction in the United Kingdom....

It was universally agreed that what fandom needed was a return to its root source – science fiction – and what SF needed was more support from its fans. As a result of all this the British Science Fiction Association was born.

As far as the aims and ideals of this new society are concerned, we can do no better than to quote from the constitution. The appropriate portion reads:

The Association shall exist for the benefit of those interested in science-fiction and allied branches of imaginative literature. It shall encourage the reading, writing and publishing of good literature of this class, shall assist and encourage contact between enthusiasts, shall provide liaison between its members and the science-fiction profession, shall endeavour to present science-fiction and associated art forms to the Press and general public in an advantageous manner and shall provide such amenities as may prove desirable for the use of members.

An initial mailing is being prepared giving details and, if you are in receipt of this fanzine, you will receive a copy in due course.

Just for the record, those present at the Inaugural Meeting were the following:

Gillian Adams, Ron Bennett, Eric Bentcliffe, Sid Birchby, Brian Burgess, Pete Chappell, Dave Cohen, Cyril Evans, Audrey Eversfield, Barry Hall, Sandra Hall, John Humphries, Terry Jeeves, Eddie Jones, Eric Jones, Margaret Jones, Ivor Mayne, Ken McIntyre, Archie Mercer, David Newman, Ella Parker, Bob Richardson, Phil Rogers, John Roles, Ina Shorrock, Norman Shorrock, Frank Simpson, Phil Sless, Ken Smith, Iris Tubb, Ted Tubb, Jeanne Vallis, Norman Wansborough, Norman Weedall, Bryan Welham, Bobbie Wild, Jack Wilson.

The committee elected at the meetings comprises Dave Newman (Chairman), Eric Bentcliffe (Secretary), Terry Jeeves (Asst. Secretary), Archie Mercer (Treasurer), and Ted Tubb (Editor of the Official Organ).

You'll be hearing from them....

– *Space Diversions* #10 (1958, ed. John Roles)

Appendix 2: Memberships, Tickets and Badges – Part 2

By the time the 1960s opened the national convention was no longer a ticketed event, but membership cards were still issued until at least 1968 despite membership badges becoming firmly established over that same period.

In 1961 UK fandom got its first printed convention badge as we think of them today, one displaying artwork, the official designation of the convention, and having space for the attendee's name and membership number. The "official designation" being the "British Science Fiction Convention" and not the names we know those cons by today meant the badge could be reused, and it was. The next three Eastercons used the same design, a cardboard disc a few inches in diameter displaying an image of a space-suited figure drawn by Eddie Jones. The only difference between them lay in their colour: the first two were red, the third blue, and the fourth orange. Sadly it was a bad design, one which left very little room for the name of the attendee. This is a recurring problem. A badge now functions as both I.D. and proof of membership, but a name should be readable from several feet away. You should not have to lean in and squint to discover who it is you're talking to. From 1961 to 1966 (possibly 1967 – that one has not been located) badges identified the annual event as the BSFA Convention. From 1965 onwards they also included the more familiar names by which we know those Eastercons.

Between 1961 and 1980 (except for 1972) Eastercon badges were cardboard and rectangular save for the 1976 Eastercon, the first in more than a decade to opt for a cardboard badge that was circular. The 1980 badge was unusual in having a plastic sheath, but all were secured by a safety pin taped to the rear.

In 1972 and from 1981 to 2002 (except for 2000) badges were round and machine-made. The 1972 badge was an outlier, the trend actually starting not at Eastercon but at a Novacon. There were a couple of badge-making machines in use during this period. According to **Mark Plummer**:

> *Ansible* 14 said of Novacon 1980 "Good use this year was made of a badge machine, producing permanent metal con badges which for a UKcon, must be an all-time best."
>
> Albacon II's post-con report includes: expenditure: Badge

Machine £450.39

A footnote adds: “Channelcon provided £300 for the purchase of a badge making machine. The machine cost £273.70 and 5000 badge parts were purchased for use by future conventions”

I can’t find accounts for Channelcon but based on that it seems pretty clear that Channelcon didn’t buy a badge machine themselves.

The Channelcon programme book includes accounts from Yorcon II and there’s a line in there:

Expenditure: Badges £103

That would seem too low to be the purchase of a badge machine, given one cost £273 two years later. So either Yorcon II or Channelcon borrowed a badge machine from somewhere or they bought in their badges. I think in the case of Yorcon it must be the latter. Albacon II bought 5,000 badge parts for under £200 so if Yorcon II spent £103 on badges then I conclude they must have bought them in.

Bill Burns notes that:

> The reverse of the machine-made badges reveals that initially they were metal (1981-1993 and 1995), then plastic (1994, 1996-99, 2001, 2002), The only maker’s mark is on the back of a few of the plastic ones: “LE PLC”. I’m assuming that the 1981/82 badges were the same as 1983.

In 2000, and from 2003 onward, we returned to rectangular cardboard badges, only these were now mostly laminated and had a punched hole for a lanyard or clip. This development was in response both to lamination becoming more affordable and to complaints – particularly from female fans – that badge pins could damage delicate fabrics. In the era of the metal badges many many dealt with the problem by putting the pin around either the strap of a shoulder bag or a belt loop on their trousers after the manner of detectives on American cop shows. The latter led to some ludicrous complaints that the wearer was forcing people to look at their crotch. No, if after glancing at someone’s belt you then drop your eyes to their crotch that’s surely on you, not them.

Oddly, the Eddie Jones badges used from 1961 to 1964 anticipated the possible problem with pins and so had a punched hole at top centre to provide an alternative means of affixing them with a loop of cotton or cord, which some did. This could then be dropped over a button or the

like. At the 1961 Eastercon, Eric Jones cleverly pushed the back of a cufflink through from the inside of his cardigan to hang it off.

Something was tried in 2015 that didn't really catch on. That year the organiser gave members the choice of either a laminated badge or an unlaminated one you wore in a plastic-fronted pouch around your neck that hung as low as a lanyard. Since these had "EASTERCON" prominently printed on their black fabric it was clearly hoped they would see use at subsequent conventions, but I'm not aware that they did to any significant extent. Reuse of lanyards is encouraged, to which end 2018 having a special lanyard made featuring the convention name may have been counter-productive.

Many of the laminated Eastercon badges were made by Alan Bellingham and Colette Reap. According to **Colette**:

> In the very early 2000s we went to a PloktaCon and were introduced to the concept of double-sided, laminated badges, which we enthusiastically adopted and have used for every convention we have made badges for since. It helped that by then laminators had become affordable for mere mortals – I seem to recall that they used to be very expensive and only found in offices or schools.
>
> So far we have made badges for: 13 Discworld Conventions; 15 BristolCon conventions; 1 Eurocon – 2014 (Shamrokon); 1 Diana Wynne Jones Conference in 2019; Jo Walton and Emmet O'Brien's wedding, which was billed as a relaxacon; and 9 Eastercons – 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024.

And finally there was the 2025 Eastercon. **Mark** notes that:

> 2025 is the same general format as the others with the usual rectangular hole for clip or lanyard but *isn't* laminated. I think it's a heavier card-stock as a consequence. I believe this was a conscious environmental decision. While it's trivial it is likely the first "development" in convention badge design in over 20 years.

Part 1 appeared in volume 2 (1952-1957). My thanks to Mark Plummer for his extensive research help with this piece.

Appendix 3: Sci-Fi – What's in a Name?

In 1973 the UK publisher New English Library announced through ads in their own paperbacks that they would launch a new science fiction magazine in January 1974: *Sci-Fi*. However, after various people from the SF community had a quiet word with them it eventually appeared as the tabloid-sized *Science Fiction Monthly*. Why the change? Well....

From *Fancyclopedia 2*, 1959:

(Ackerman) 4e is trying to popularize this expression as an equivalent for stf, ie a contraction for science-fiction. So far it has attached chiefly to several professional movie-fan magazines and other Hollywood-level stuff.

Ted White:

In the late fifties long-time stfan Forrest J Ackerman created a new neologism for science fiction: "sci-fi". It was a time when "high fidelity" had been shortened to "hi-fi" by the makers of lo-fi record-playing equipment, and the phrase, "hi-fi", was to be found everywhere in our culture. To Ackerman the impulse to coin "sci-fi" must have been irresistible – but many of us who have otherwise only the kindest thoughts for the man continue to curse the day when he brought forth his new creation and "sci-fi" was born.

Harlan Ellison speaks eloquently for us on this topic. In a letter to the rock paper *Zoo World* he says, "...the use of that vomitous neologism 'sci-fi'. Among people in the sf world, the phrase is bullshit journalese on the same emotional and intellectual par with n****r, broad, draft-dodger or kike. We hate it, and when any sf reader sees it in a headline, slug-line or body-copy, he knows the chances of what he's about to read being uninformed, superficial, over-familiar and dilettante rise geometrically. It is a dumb phrase, and you should deep-six it forever at the risk of being called idiots."

Or, to put it in other words, when *Newsweek* refers to "sci-fi", you know it will be in conjunction with a put-down of our field. These are not the connotations Forry intended for the phrase, I'm sure, but not only are they the connotations we must contend with, they seem to me to grow inescapably out of the roots of the origin of "sci-fi": a schlock sell-phrase.

[1]

Mike Glyer:

Forry Ackerman popularized sci-fi in his movie magazine, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, the first issue of which hit newsstands in February 1958, and it was applied widely in ads and by media critics to *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*, which premiered in May of that year.

This connection did not appeal to the sercon fans of the era, who shunned the nickname and, much to 4SJ's chagrin, applied it within fandom to denote only low-quality science fiction, especially the kind of schlocky B-movies and TV shows often covered in *Famous Monsters* – "Hollywood-level stuff", as Dick Eney disdainfully referred to it. (Even Forry's wife, Wendayne, had warned him it would never catch on.)

As indiscriminate use of the term to describe all SF gained popularity in mundania (along with science fiction itself), fans began to use sf vs. sci-fi as an "us vs. them" shibboleth. "We never call it 'sci-fi'" was among the first lessons taught to neofen. By the 1980s, many fans considered it such a slur that they couldn't bring themselves to use the term even in a derogatory sense and began to pronounce it "skiffy". ("Hoi polloi pronounce it psi phi, but we cognoscenti call it skiffy", as the catchphrase put it.)

The fan organization formed in the early 1980s to run L.A.con II and other conventions in Forry's hometown, the Southern California Institute for Fan Interests (SCIFI), deliberately picked its name for the initials, which they also pronounced "skiffy".

Fannish distaste for sci-fi continues, but the advent of the SyFy cable-TV channel (originally the Sci-Fi Channel) has made the term so ubiquitous in the macrocosm and among media buffs, that many newer fans can't grok the objections. [2]

Ted White:

I don't want to digress here about the ugliness of the phrase, "sci-fi", nor the disgust which most people in science fiction feel when they hear that phrase. Rather, as I've said here recently, "sci-fi" epitomizes to me the dichotomy between science fiction as it really is and the popular image of science fiction as held by the masses and the mass media.

The image is winning over the substance. [3]

At this point the battle has been lost, but please spare a thought for us older fans who still wince every time the term is applied to written SF.

[1] *Amazing Stories* vol 48 #6 (May 1975)

[2] *File 770* #54 (August 1985, ed. Mike Glyer)
[3] *Amazing Stories* vol 52 #1 (November 1978)

The End

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