

The GUFF Chronicles

Volume I: 1979

**Stranger
in
Stranger
Lands**

Stranger in Stranger Lands

1987 GUFF Trip Report

John Foyster

Published by

Ansible Editions

94 London Road, Reading, England, RG1 5AU

ae.ansible.uk

Copyright © 1996, 2003 The Estate of John Foyster.

This Ansible Editions ebook published November 2024.

For previous editions see [Publisher's Note](#).

Ebook ISBN 978-1-916508-30-9

The right of John Foyster to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the British Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This free ebook is exclusive to the unofficial TAFF website at taff.org.uk. If you enjoy it, a donation to GUFF is a fine way to express your appreciation.

Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Getting There Isn't Anything Like Half The Fun](#)

[Two Daze in London](#)

[Seek On! Seek On!](#)

[Why Fanzines?](#)

[Travellin' Fan](#)

[Round England](#)

[Post-GUFF](#)

[Round the World](#)

[AfterGuff: Three Unordinary Years, With Footnotes](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

Getting There Isn't Anything Like Half The Fun

The Introduction

The Get Up-and-over Fan Fund (GUFF) was the idea of Chris Priest and Leigh Edmonds, at least so far as I understood it. A lineal descendant of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF) and the Down Under Fan Fund (DUFF), GUFF must have been conceived during Chris Priest's visit to Australia in January 1977, or possibly soon thereafter. TAFF had by then been running for almost a quarter of a century, and although it had experienced occasional vicissitudes it has assisted the transatlantic passage of many science fiction fans in the Northern Hemisphere.

In the early days these fan-financed trips were written up extensively – partly because the winners felt an obligation of sorts, but rather more because the winners were, by nature, fan writers. TAFF tended to be won by fan writers simply because most fans then were fan writers, one way or another, and nothing was more natural than for a winner to turn around and immediately document her/his travels.

Most of the trip reports are eminently readable today, if you can find them, but the greatest of trip reports, John Berry's *The Goon Goes West*, wasn't a consequence of Berry's winning TAFF at all, but rather of his losing. *The Goon Goes West* will be discussed again in several chapters' time.

In the early 1970s I was heavily involved in Australia's bid for the world science fiction convention in 1975. One of the notions we had then for spreading information about Australia was to establish a fan fund to transport fans across the Pacific on a regular basis (a couple of Japanese fans were helped across the Pacific to American worldcons in earlier decades). Like many of the developments of the 'seventies, this was a realization of a notion from the 'sixties, for such a fan fund had been occasionally tossed around as an idea by fans in Melbourne and Sydney in 1961 and 1962. In a similar way ANZAPA, which wasn't founded until October 1968, had forerunners in joint mailings of fanzines of John Baxter, Bob Smith, and myself, and in round-robin letters in which Bert Weaver was also involved.

DUFF was born when I found someone in the United States dedicated

enough to help us out – Fred Patten, who has done so much for Australian science fiction and comic fandom both before and after his involvement in DUFF. By dint of Fred’s hard work and my occasional assistance we managed to organize a fund which resulted in Lesleigh Luttrell coming to Australia for the 1972 SYNCON.

Lesleigh wasn’t the first US fan visitor to Australia by any means – in recent years Hank Davis and Mike Horvat had both made contact with Australian fandom while on R–R from Vietnam, and by coincidence Bruce Townley was in Australia at the same time as SYNCON ’72 – but Lesleigh was a genuine fanzine fan who, though not as rowdy as some later visitors, made a very great impression on the Australian fans she met. Afterwards she wrote a delightful trip report – *Lesleigh’s Adventures Down Under* – which helped keep the idea of DUFF alive.

In 1974 Leigh Edmonds won the reverse trip and his report – *Emus Over America* (published as an issue of *Boys’ Own Fanzine*) – was of the same high quality. And DUFF was off and running.

DUFF has financed a transPacific trip almost every year since then, but the winners have not been trip-report writers, much to my own disappointment, and probably to the disappointment of some of those who voted for them.

Contact between Australian and English fans was less substantial. John Baxter and I had been members of OMPA (the Off-trail Magazine Publishers Association had better be identified as such right here) at one time or another during the ’sixties, and of course plenty of fanzines were traded. The most extended contact was probably the Bangsund-Lindsay-Porter Co-Prosperity Sphere, with each of the principals acting as agent for the others’ (prominent) fanzines. But the strongest contact in the 1970s, partly due to DUFF perhaps, was with fans in the United States.

In early 1977 Chris Priest was invited to take part in a writers’ workshop in Melbourne, along with Vonda McIntyre and George Turner. This was a follow-up to the very successful writers’ workshop held in conjunction with AUSSIECON, and was organized largely by one of the AUSSIECON workshop participants, Kitty Vigo. The workshop itself seems to have been a success, but a major side effect was the development of a strong bond of friendship between Priest, who managed to combine professional and fan writing uncommonly well, and a fair number of Australian fans. One of the by-products of that workshop was GUFF.

GUFF took me to SEACON in 1979, and this report is one product of that trip. I should say a few words here about the organization of the report, since it does not follow the time-honoured pattern. The report

differs from other in just one substantial way – it extends for three years, so cover the longer-term consequences.

Getting Organized

Trip reports, for fairly obvious reasons, are usually presented chronologically – almost in diary form. That’s often the best way to do it, I suppose, but it doesn’t suit me too well. If I am to write about my perceptions of and my reactions to that trip I need to organize my thought in a way which certainly acknowledges the usefulness of the diary format, but also diverges from that style substantially.

This opening chapter provides background – obviously. In the second chapter I’ll deal with my initial reactions to England by describing the first two days of the visit. Thereafter matters will be less chronological. I’ll write about SEACON – the convention and the people. And I’ll write about the fanzines I was given or which I bought: as a fanzine fan I feel an obligation to do that. Since I read a few books (including some science fiction) and have occasionally written book reviews, I expect there may be some of that kind of stuff as well.

I’ll also write about aspects of my trip other than fannish ones. Much of this might become tedious for some, but I do hope that there are occasional patches of light for everyone.

The existence of DUFF was something which I was pleased about, but I didn’t think it likely that I’d ever stand for DUFF or, were I ever to enter the race, win it.

It wasn’t that I had no interest in meeting fans in the United States – over the years I had probably built up as extensive a network of acquaintances and friends in the United States as any Australian fan ever has, and only a fraction of them came over to AUSSIECON in 1975. But on the one hand, having been involved in the founding of DUFF I wasn’t anxious to turn around and make use of it for my own benefit. And on the other hand my job and income were such as to give me a chance to go under my own steam – and indeed in 1976 I managed to wangle three weeks of work in the United States out of my employers which led – entirely by chance, you understand – to my being in Boston on the weekend of that year’s BOSKONE. Unfortunately I couldn’t manage to be there all weekend – just long enough to sneak out with Bill Bowers and Andy Porter for a hamburger and, on the way back to the hotel, receive the offer of a good time from a most solicitous young lady in Boylston Street.

At any rate, I wasn't too interested in standing for DUFF because I didn't think I needed it. (The lie to my claim to being able to visit fans in the United States any time I liked is given by the fact that I had bought attending memberships in most recent Worldcons but had never managed to get to one of them.)

Another reason for not standing was that I doubted I'd have much chance of winning. I'm not one to go out of my way to curry favour, as will be noted from time to time below, and there's not much point in entering a race you're certain to lose.

And so when Leigh Edmonds announced in *Fanew Sletter* in early 1978 that he and Dave Langford were administrators of this GUFF thing which was going to take an Australian fan to England for SEACON I had little personal interest, other than trying to work out what the letters stood for. But there was someone I wanted to see nominated for GUFF.

By the time GUFF was thought of John Bangsund had been around fandom for fifteen years, although his fanzine publishing career had begun only in 1966. Like many of the most noted fan writers John achieved success because he was able to put so much of himself into his fanzine – to read him was to know him.

John was very popular with almost everyone, but although he had once stood for DUFF he had withdrawn rather late in the campaign. John's problem was simple – money. John shared Mr. Micawber's economic theories but not his optimism. More serious than this was the fact that John was self-employed, and holiday pay for self-employed people is rather too low – especially for someone with regular bills to meet. A fan fund might pay for travel and accommodation, but it couldn't handle his creditors.

By 1978 I felt that John might have been able to see his way clear to making such a trip, especially since it would be possible for him to make side trips to two countries which are important to him – Norway and Eire. So I suggested to John that he stand. He wasn't sure. We would talk about it again. We did – for a couple of weeks. Eventually John came to the conclusion I feared he would.

No, he couldn't even consider it. The money just couldn't be found.

But, he said, why don't *you* stand?

I'm not sure now what my reaction was. I suspect it was along the lines of 'No, er, wait a minute.' The hesitation resulted from the simple fact that at that time I shared John's plight – self-employment and little money.

SEACON, the target for GUFF, was a convention I really wanted to go to, but there was no financial prospect of it. I said I would think about

it, but not for long.

I didn't have much time, since nominations closed at Easter '78, and John's suggestion came only a few weeks before closing time.

Eventually I said yes, and asked John about nominators: specifically if he would agree to be one of my nominators. His answer was also affirmative, so we got down to talking about the other nominators.

John suggested Ethel Lindsay, and I had in mind a couple of others in the UK as well. We agreed, given the little time available, to follow the maxim that there was safety in numbers and go for some kind of overkill. Even then people would only just have time to reply.

My other Australian nominators would be Carey Handfield and Robin Johnson. I drafted a platform* and waited for 'interesting mail' from the United Kingdom.

* See [Publisher's Note](#).

Easter '78 was also to be the time for a 'big' convention in Melbourne – UNICON IV – with Brian Aldiss and Roger Zelazny as Guests of Honour, so there were plenty of other things to think about. Nevertheless by Easter I had heard from Peter Nicholls and Chris Priest, both of them agreeing to be nominators. (Ethel Lindsay had been on holiday, and her letter didn't arrive until after the closing date.)

By Easter I had also done some calculations. I now saw with great clarity the extent of John Bangsund's predicament.

It isn't just that you can't earn while you are making the trip: you also lose income because you have to refuse work that would run into the holiday period and you aren't around to pick up jobs while you are away. The penalty is thus much more than forgone income during the trip period, at least in my kind of business.

I tried to develop a strategy to cope with the financial needs. If I won I would have to be in England around Easter 1979 (thus we note with the benefit of hindsight that things were so rushed that I hadn't actually checked on the dates of SEACON) so probably that should be taken as a central date.

There seemed to be three possibilities. Since I preferred to work on contracts of around a year, if I were to get a one-year contract in April or May then I should be able to get through the job in time to travel in April 1979 – if I won. Not only that: if I lost, I would know in time that I had lost, and the next job could be lined up smoothly.

On the other hand, if I couldn't get a year-long job in April-May 1978 then I would have to take a series of smaller jobs – usually a month or less

– for a year. This would be annoying if I won (and maddening if I lost) because I would have to continue knocking back the long-term jobs I preferred in favour of short-term ones right through to the beginning of 1979.

The third possibility was to get a regular job.

All of these possibilities and difficulties were surging through my mind as the 1978 Australian convention drew near.

Other people had other problems. The 1978 convention had some publicity problems and Leigh Edmonds, as editor of *Fanew Sletter*, found himself either reporting these or having them reported to him. The growing animosity of the convention committee towards Leigh made him distinctly uncomfortable, and his friends came to share his feelings.

By the time Easter came many people were expecting a disaster. It's almost surprising to look back now and realize that so little actually did go wrong.

Nevertheless that Easter convention was the most amateurishly-organized Australian convention in years, and visitors such as Brian Thurogood and Deb Knapp from New Zealand were probably encouraged to think of Australian fandom in those terms rather than AUSSIECON terms.

[There were other consequences, the most painful of which was Leigh Edmonds's decision not to continue publishing *Fanew Sletter*. Australian fandom had come to rely upon *Fanew Sletter* over the years, and a replacement, several people felt, would be necessary. When the dust settled I wound up as editor of a replacement newsletter.]

But back at the convention the GUFF race was beginning to sort itself out. There was a bit of a tug-of-war about who would stand and who would nominate but in the end the candidates were John Alderson, Eric Lindsay, and me. We were a very mixed bunch, but we were all fanzine fans. In some ways it seemed to me that either John or Eric would make a better choice than me. By comparison with them I am rather shy, and for a trip of this kind the ideal traveller is someone who makes new friends quickly.

On the other hand I had been around longer in fandom than either of them and had been able slowly to build up some friendships. Perhaps long-term performance might be desirable. (I don't suggest that either John or Eric is flash-in-the-pan, by the way. That's obviously false.)

So by the end of the convention the race was on, there was no regular newszine in Australia and, er, perhaps I had better look around quickly at

the job market.

This last took precedence, for the moment. I had been 'offered' a half-year job, to the extent of 'for Christ's sake don't take anything else. I'll just get the paperwork done and contact you by the end of the month', but more than a month had passed by. This wasn't encouraging.

Next on the list was a job running for about a year which looked as though it was in my line. The pay was a bit low, but I figured I could do the job in four days a week and use the spare time for other jobs. The interview went well and a discreet inquiry next day suggested that it was only a formality. I didn't ever hear from them again either.

Now the crunch came: I would seriously have to consider being an employee, after eighteen months of being my own boss. A worthwhile opportunity did come along, but the pay was about 15% below what I was used to. On the other side of the ledger lay paid holidays, the lack of which had always effectively prevented John Bangsund from ever trying seriously to go overseas.

I figured it would probably be worth the risk, but to cover myself I started working towards another one-year contract. By coincidence the two interviews were held on the same day, and I almost walked out on one to get to the other. The regular job came through with the first offer, and I was stuck with a regular job, paid holidays, and a private assurance that my drop in pay would be 'looked after'. (It never was.)

That solved one problem. Oh, there was still the minor problem of winning the GUFF race. And the death of *Fanew Sletter*.

Back in 1970 Leigh and I had started *Norstrilian News* as the first fortnightly Australian newszine in years. Later on it passed through the hands of David Grigg, Bruce Gillespie, and Robin Johnson, before finally dying quietly.

Fanew Sletter was Leigh's replacement. *Fanew Sletter* had a most distinguished career over five years due to Leigh's hard work and could not readily be copied by anyone. But in 1972-3 I had published half a dozen issues of *Chunder!*, a news magazine rather than a newszine, and a revival of that might be possible.

Chunder! had not been a sweetness-and-light magazine like *Fanew Sletter*. But I didn't have to imitate Leigh, and *Chunder!*, I reckoned, was about what I could publish. So on Anzac Day 1978, volume 2 number 0 of *Chunder!* appeared.

So far as GUFF was concerned this would produce pluses and minuses. I was likely to offend quite a few people, if my previous track record was any guide, which might lose votes. But publicity is never bad,

and at least people would spell my name correctly.

In the end publishing *Chunder!* was more important to me than winning or losing a GUFF race. One interesting side effect of the first few months of publishing *Chunder!* was that I got a quite undeserved reputation as a knocker of Sydney fandom.

It was certainly the case that my criticism of fannish doings, whether in *Chunder!* or elsewhere, wasn't exactly inhibited, but neither was it directed towards any one geographical region. I wonder whether the Sydney fans have yet realized that the reason they were rubbished so often in *Chunder!* was that they were the only fan group in Australia doing anything of much interest at all?

As it turned out the rest of 1978 was devoted to publishing *Chunder!* (there were 12 issues of *Chunder!* totalling 68 foolscap pages in that time) and getting used to working nine-to-five again. GUFF wasn't thought about too often, except for one glorious moment when the ballot appeared and, on reading it, I discovered that SEACON was in August, not at Easter.

My fannish interests definitely lay with *Chunder!*, which came out every two or three weeks, published an occasional interesting item, and won a Ditmar as best Australian fanzine of that year.

More important than this, for me, was the fact that it got me interested in reporting on SF conventions, and I wrote quite a few convention reports over the next twelve months. (SEACON defeated me at the time, putting a definite end to my run of successes.)

In many ways the most interesting of these conventions to report on was the first – a *Star Trek* convention in Melbourne. I was keen to report on it, but I was also invited to speak there. I am probably the only person in the universe who has ever addressed a gathering of *Star Trek* fans on the political thought of George Allan England.

I enjoyed producing *Chunder!* during 1978 and 1979. But by the end of 1979 the greatest interest in *Chunder!* was shown outside Australia, although *Chunder!* was supposedly produced for Australian fans. Somewhere I had gotten off the track, or Australian fandom had changed.] Producing a fortnightly or even monthly fanzine on one's own is rather time-consuming, and I didn't find myself thinking much about GUFF at all, except when Leigh produced a flyer, and that was annoying because it meant I had to recalculate the pages or else go into a higher postage bracket.

The real impact came when Leigh telephoned me one night a couple of days after voting closed. 'How would you like the money?' is about the

way he put it. (The way I put it, on the cover of *Chunder!*, was a rubber-stamped DEPORTED.)

Now I'd done it! The problems and the planning, once theoretical, now became matters of real urgency.

There were of course minor problems like getting away from work, but also what to do about the trip – who, where, and what to see. And there was the house problem.

Well, getting away from work wasn't difficult at all. I arranged to take all the paid leave I had, plus a couple of days of unpaid leave, giving a total of just six weeks. Robin Johnson agreed to make all the travel arrangements, but there would be some minor matters to deal with.

House problem. Jennifer Bryce and I lived in a flat overlooking the sea, in an area in which one simply can't leave a place empty for long. She was going to be able to travel with me. That meant leaving the flat empty – was there someone who could flat-sit?

Lee Harding and Irene Pagram were interested in flat-minding, so that one was solved.

What remained? The dates of travel, I guess. However this was an area in which there was relatively little freedom of choice, and in fact Robin Johnson very soon announced that we were leaving on Sunday, 19 August. There were no stopovers, but we didn't want any.

This left only the question of who, what, and where. It was obviously essential to make some accommodation to Jennifer's interests, but in the end I believe that there were only two things we deliberately chose to do because of her interests – visiting Europe, which she had done back in 1976 and was determined that I should at least briefly see (assisted by funds from my mother), and visiting some friends and relations in England, one part of which would prove to be necessary anyway.

Two other matters now began to influence the who-what-where question. In a letter Chris Priest noted that British fans were not, in general, outgoing. He reminded me that I shared this characteristic.

Since one of my major aims was to establish some long-term relationships with fans in the United Kingdom I resolved to spend as much time as possible at SEACON talking to people I didn't already know. This might nevertheless not necessarily serve the intended purpose, since I would almost certainly be acquainted with many more Americans at SEACON than locals.

And then there was the question of the Europeans. I was anxious to talk to some of them, and where would they fit into the picture? After the convention I would do the usual thing and try to visit as many people as

possible.

Once again Chris Priest did some of my thinking for me. Generally speaking fans in England would not be able to offer vast accommodation. They might be able to put up one person, but two people would overstretch available resources. Then there was the fact that there would almost literally be hundreds of fans doing exactly what I was proposing to do. All of this had to be kept at the back of my mind, since *Chunder!* was now a 20-page monthly fanzine.

There was one other factor: my mother gave me a few hundred dollars to help with the trip. This made it possible to consider spending some time in Europe – to go to Munich to see Albrecht Altdorfer's *Battle of Issus*, for example. What she gave me also covered the purchase of a fair amount of slide film. So I put these two notions together. I felt that the best approach would be to go to Europe soon after SEACON – there was a convention in Germany the following weekend which I could get to by doing this – and return to Britain later.

Thus while most of the overseas visitors were traipsing around British fan residences I would be out of the way. I could then do my visiting after they had gone home. This would also mean that plans made at SEACON could be relatively far in advance.

That seemed to complete the preliminaries, but there was one more. Jennifer plays the oboe semi-professionally – for money but not for a living.

A couple of months before we left, her teacher pointed out to Jennifer that there was a Master Class at the Festival Theatre complex during the time we would be in England. She would undoubtedly benefit from playing in that, she was of the right standard, and he, the teacher, was sure that Neil Black would be pleased to accept her.

The negotiations which followed were tortuous, but are condensed here to the remark that there was a furious exchange of letters and a tape, and even considerable uncertainty about what piece was to be played at the Master Class. But eventually all was settled; Jennifer would play in the Master Class three days after we arrived in England – the first day of SEACON! The problems of what to do when we got there were now all dealt with – at least so far as it was possible to do this in advance. All that remained was the trip itself. Both of us had been overseas before, so there was not likely to be anything dazzlingly new.

There was just one Major Problem: what would I read on the flight? When I had gone to the United States in 1976 the trip had been about 18 hours and although I had been alone, reading, watching movies and

sleeping filled in the time quite well and even arrival at San Francisco late on a Sunday night wasn't too unpleasant.

Maybe one novel would get me through – and there was even a last-minute opportunity to pick up something sfnal – the weekend before we departed was the time for the 1979 Australian National convention in Sydney.

Just whether or not we should go to the Sydney convention was a subject for considerable debate.

Reasons for included the fact that I would be presenting a bid for the 1981 National convention in Melbourne.

Reasons against were the obvious one that we were about to travel (though in fact many people did go direct from SYNCON to SEACON). And then, at the last minute, I developed a severe cold. On balance, however, it seemed important enough that I go.

I had a miserable time.

SYNCON '79

We had intended to spend only the Saturday and Sunday at the convention, Friday and Monday being working days but when, on the Friday morning I felt a queasy stomach coming on, I began to suspect that things would not be sharp and sweet. Slowly I felt worse and worse, with first my eyesight and my head taking the brunt of whatever the malevolent spirit was, and then the rest of the body aching its eager response.

By Friday night I was no longer sure I could make it. At least not sleeping on the Friday night meant that I had had a preparation much the same as many of the convention attendees who, when we eventually did arrive, didn't seem to be in the finest condition either.

Somehow I managed to crawl onto a 7.45 a.m. flight from Melbourne and arrived at the New Crest Hotel at Kings Cross at around 9.30 a.m. There was to be a preliminary business session at 10 a.m. – if there was any preliminary business – and I was anxious to be there for it. Motions had to be in writing, and with the chair, Jack Herman, by the start of the meeting.

As I learned immediately, until I arrived there was no need for a meeting. I scribbled out a couple of motions for Jack while Jenny tried to check into our room. The technical matters taken care of, I was able to think about the site of the convention.

My initial impression was favourable, and this impression remained

with me for the two days. Kings Cross may have some disadvantages, but they were not apparent during the two days I was there.

Most important, I suppose, was the round-the-clock availability of food and drink (of a kind) outside the hotel. If one did want a decent meal, that too was not too hard to find (from that convention I could recommend Satay House, in particular, and the convention committee had extensive lists of other recommended eating places).

The convention facilities were adequate, though perhaps a little small, the lifts were no more annoying than those at any other multi-storey hotel, and the hotel staff didn't seem any more in the way than anywhere else, and at times were distinctly helpful.

The two major disadvantages were, so far as I could make out, slightly unsuitable facilities for showing movies (not that this worried me in the slightest), and a lighting system that was dark; most of the time the people speaking were less well illuminated than was the audience! I'm not quite sure what the point of this was, but as an available-light photographer I found it extremely disappointing...

Overall, the convention committee must get high marks for its efforts in securing those facilities. And they are probably entitled to a reasonable assessment on their general organization.

I did find it annoying that the program was always running late, because this usually meant that the following item was cut short to make sure that it 'finished on time'.

It seemed as though the committee could handle the problem of getting people off-stage on time, but had much more trouble getting them on-stage. Thus an item would be closed on schedule (but abbreviated because of a late start) and the audience would sit around waiting for fifteen minutes while the next item got itself together (or else the audience wandered away).

The single item of this kind which annoyed me most was the auction.

For many fans – I'm no longer one of them, by the way – the auction is the high point of a convention, and I feel strongly that things shouldn't be allowed to get out of hand from an organizational point of view. This time they did.

Three hours of auction were scheduled for the two days of the convention I was at. Two hours of auction were actually held. The first session started half an hour late, the second twenty minutes late. On neither occasion was there any obvious reason for this – for example, the previous item did not run over time in either case. The auctioneer (Keith Curtis, who is in fact a very good auctioneer) had an army of helpers who

just didn't seem to be able to Do Their Thing.

Now, firstly, picky people like me began to get mad. If we are so short of time, I'd mutter to myself, why does Keith spend so much time (at most five minutes, a later, more rational Foyster inserts) carefully arranging the material for auction just so, in neatly ordered piles, when he conducts the auction by choosing stuff seemingly at random from the different piles? Why not just pile them on the table and take them as they come?

Secondly, my more mundane side notes that loss of time means loss of income – for the convention itself, for various fan charities and, increasingly and much to my dislike of this use of convention time, for various individuals who use conventions to make money for themselves.

[There was a much more general difficulty with this auction, I thought. The selection of items to be auctioned can be very important. The way it is done can easily lead to dissatisfaction of some customers – like me, to take a non-random example.

[I'm not trifficly excited by the prospect of buying a Darth Vader mask or a Robert A Heinlein paperback, but I could be interested in buying fanzines like *Habakkuk* or *À Bas* or *Innuendo* – all of which happened to be up for auction at SYNCON '79 but weren't auctioned publicly because the people in charge thought it more important to sell *Doctor Who* paperbacks and masks and similar stuff.

[I don't claim the right to determine what should be chosen to auction when a choice must be made, but I suspect that too few realize what effect the choice of items for auction does have. If you sell only *Doctor Who* paperbacks then you encourage *Doctor Who* fans – perfectly acceptable people in their own right – but actively discourage others.

[Of course, the same argument applies to any identifiable subgroup (including fanzine collectors). Nevertheless science fiction conventions are public events which are selective with respect to the audiences they are capable of attracting: organizers choose and lose their memberships by the way they promote and run their conventions.]

Meanwhile, back at SYNCON '79, the convention under discussion, there was actually a program, and the reader may recall a reference to a preliminary business session. This was actually held, and at it a couple of silly ideas – the notion that Australia needs to have bidding completed two

years in advance, and the idea of Awards subcommittees – were knocked on the head.

The second revived itself on the very next day, but the first took a whole year to come round. After lunch on the Saturday we had the Guest of Honour speech by Gordon R. Dickson. I listened to this for a while, but had to leave to arrange the next item with Marc Ortlieb and Rob McGough.

At the end of his speech, on his way to the bar, Gordon R. Dickson stood on my foot.

The panelists mentioned above formed a strange group to talk about Cordwainer Smith, but that's what we did, and there were a few questions, at the end of which I felt decidedly woozy from the cold and went off to lie down for an hour; I was anxious, nevertheless, to return for the auction, where some pretty good fanzine items – but you've already read about this.

The fanzines weren't auctioned, but I did add one more to my collection of Marilyn Pride rocks. Someone else bought a set of *Chunder!* for 1978 for \$3. Their taste was admirable, but a subscription would have been cheaper.

I think now that I should have rested again at this point, but instead was tempted by (and fell for) the notion of eating oneself out of one's infirmity. Jennifer and Lee and Irene and I wandered off to the Satay House which I have mentioned above. I have to say that the company was better than the food.

We arrived back at the convention in time for me to take murky photographs of costumes and people inside them.

John Straede as a Hoka was very good, in my view, but so were the costumes of Marilyn Pride, Nick Stathopoulos, and Rob McGough.

I was actually supposed to be involved in this costume competition, because some Adelaide fans had asked me to help with their presentation. I went up to their room and was confronted with the horrific sight of Jeff Harris, Paul Stokes, John McPharlin, and Helen Swift togged out as Foyster clones.

They might have been very impressive if they hadn't been so overweight and had long hair. They nevertheless won a group prize. But after that I really needed to quit.

The day had been very long indeed. I got two hours of sleep.

Before going to the business session next morning I watched a couple of Betty Boop cartoons on TV, which set the scene appropriately.

There was some monkeying around with awards and stuff, as I've

mentioned above, and then Perth got the '80 National Convention. And in the voting for the '81 National Convention Adelaide rolled Melbourne approximately 15 zillion to 3. I didn't appreciate this too much. After that there was an Australia in '83 discussion whose banality we can ignore.

The DUFF item almost qualified for the same sort of dismissal, but the presence of Ken Fletcher and Linda Lounsbury as DUFFERS boosted it a little. (Koichi Yamamoto, by the way, didn't feature in any program items while I was there, but he was certainly present and busy.)

A funny (?) quiz was held after lunch, following a Gordon R. Dickson interview. People threw ping-pong balls at one another. Marilyn Pride painted hers before throwing it.

Then the second part of the auction: boring – no fanzines. Eventually I went out to dinner with Jennifer, Carey Handfield, Helen Swift, and Damien Broderick. We got back just in time for the awards (DITMARs): *Beloved Son*, *The White Dragon*, Marc Ortlieb, and *Chunder!* Susan Wood won the Atheling.

Then it was time for the Paul Stevens Show – scripted this time, so it can't have been quite as bad as usual. One first was that Paul Stevens took a swipe at Paul Stevens (he didn't check the script he was reading closely enough).

Partway through the show Jennifer and I had to leave. We grabbed our bags, then a taxi, and thus reached the airport in time to catch the last 'plane to Melbourne.

We arrived home by 1 a.m. That night I slept. Perhaps *this* would be a good preparation for SEACON.

But before that, a few days in Melbourne. One very good thing about SYNCON had been meeting Ken Fletcher and Linda Lounsbury, the DUFF winners. Like all DUFF winners to date they were wonderful guests.

They were coming to Melbourne this very week, and there was a slight change from their previous plan. In the previous plan they were to stay with Christine and Derrick Ashby somewhat later in their trip, and the Ashbys were taking the opportunity to get some plumbing overhauled – making it rather difficult to make comfortable their guests.

Jennifer and I offered to put up Ken and Linda for a few days, and we were very glad that they accepted, even though we couldn't take much time off to escort them around Melbourne. Fortunately the Melbourne fans were able to look after that end of it.

By the Saturday morning we were rather reluctant to say goodbye to Ken and Linda but Christine Ashby, her eyes a-gleam with their usual

steely glint, came to take them away to Healesville. We could then return to the serious business of packing for travelling on the next day – and the equally serious business of preparing for my mother’s early and surprise 70th birthday party.

She would actually be 70 during SEACON, but the rest of the family had agreed upon this earlier celebration. Early in the afternoon my parents arrived – and so did the rest of the family.

It was the first time we had all been together for many years. Eventually we finished celebrating, threw them all out, and collapsed into bed, not exactly well-prepared to fly around the world.

We were due to depart from the airport at 1 p.m. There was the usual vast crowd to farewell us. It was a cloudy day, but the winds were moderate for Melbourne and at least there was no rain. The ’plane glittered fairly impressively on the tarmac.

We wandered through the various checkpoints, with no one showing much interest in our baggage. We sat for a while in the transit lounge talking about what would become of us during the trip. We had never been away together before (discounting two conventions in Sydney, one of which you’ve just read about), and it was going to be a giant adventure.

The Australian Tourist Commission was conducting a survey of passengers returning from overseas, so we watched a couple of these interviews. Then at last it was sensible to get aboard the ’plane.

We took our seats on QF 1 – a 747 of course – and set off for Sydney. About an hour later we arrived in Sydney.

I had by now finished my planned in-flight reading material. This was a serious business. There was still an hour of sitting around in Sydney before we took off again – an hour in which to worry about how I was going to get through the next 24 hours with virtually nothing to read.

The problem was that my reading speed is very variable, and apparently accelerates when bored on aeroplanes. The only possible solution was massive overkill.

My kind of reading matter, however, is rarely to be found at airport news-stands. I prowled up and down. I glanced at all sorts of insignificant and irrelevant books. I bought and read a Sunday newspaper. Finally I decided upon the only strategy which would minimize my discomfort – I bought the longest book in sight. I do not think I would have bought or read David Bergamini’s *Imperial Japanese War Conspiracy* under any other circumstances, but its 1300+ pages had a certain appeal.

I took some photos partly for my own interest and partly in case Leigh Edmonds cared. Finally, at 3.30 p.m., we left on the *City Of*

Elizabeth for London via Singapore and Bahrein. At 4.30 p.m., I noticed as we passed under a sign, a UTA flight was leaving for Paris via Jakarta, Bahrein, and Athens. Another time, I thought, that will be the one for me.

When I travel by aeroplane I like to concentrate my energies on getting from A to B. So there is no worrying, for me, about getting window seats, no disembarking at refuelling stops (no matter how interesting).

I like to imagine myself to be in an oversized autobus or train, admittedly with movies and food and other amenities, but basically just a cylinder for travelling in.

Jennifer, however, is more daring. So when we arrived at Singapore in the middle of the night she got off with all the other passengers to look around. I gathered from Jennifer that it wasn't too interesting.

A couple of minutes after we took off for Bahrein Jennifer drew attention to herself by fainting.

I am not too good with people who faint. In this case there wasn't much to be done so I went looking for a stewardess.

By the time we got back Jennifer was coming around slowly. We never worked out what caused her to faint, but it was unnerving, since she had never done it before.

Otherwise the trip was uneventful. I read the Bergamini, and actually found parts of it interesting. There were aspects of it which, it seemed to me, could be incorporated in science fiction novels, so when we arrived in Britain I gave it to Chris Priest.

We watched the two movies, and that's how I came to see *Superman – The Movie* on the small screen. And the music programs included a Mahler symphony which I listened to a couple of times.

But really it was all rather uneventful until we touched down at Heathrow. It was a grey, foggy day as we walked along the various concourses, avoiding the moving walkway (due to my dislike of Robert A. Heinlein), but eventually struggled up to the customs and immigration lines. As former colonials, we had to have our own line, of course.

Two Daze in London

Arrival

The 'plane touched down on Airstrip One just about on time – 7 a.m. It took an hour to get through all the formalities at the airport, but 55 minutes of that time were spent waiting for the luggage to appear.

I had thoughtfully donned shirt and tie in an attempt to minimize any delays with customs or immigration, but this sartorial elegance had no effect on the 'slow luggage' problem at all. I have thought about the reasons for this quite a bit since and, in the manner of those inclined to self-criticism, have decided that I did not try hard enough. Perhaps, I now think, if I had worn a *polka-dotted* tie with a *striped* shirt...

The otherwise aimless moments were enlivened by the mounting prospect of substantial damage to our bags. As we looked on forlornly a seemingly endless parade of once-proud travel equipment, now reduced to odd-shaped pieces of cloth, leather, and plastic streamed by, looking for all the world like the output from an FAQ mincing machine.

I felt things were not going to be too pleasant when our remnants appeared, for with my now-all-too-obviously unjustified optimism I had bought cheap and lightweight pseudo-leather (but real plastic) overnight bags. When eventually our bags did appear it seemed at first sight that we might not have done so badly, for the only damage appeared to be that one handle on one bag had torn loose.

However, as I picked up that bag by the remaining handle the quiet of Heathrow was shattered by the roar of that poor handle tearing loose from the bag, leaving an unsightly pile of plastic and clothing to be dragged past the smiling customs officials.

No more tragedies – just a parade past the hordes of onlookers, until a strangely short-haired Chris Priest strode forward from the end of the tunnel of flesh to grasp my hand.

Then he turned to Jenny and grappled with her enthusiastically.

He took us back to the other people who were waiting – Randal Flynn and Robert Sheckley.

Randal Flynn was the first in a longish list of Australians with whom I renewed acquaintance on this trip. I hadn't known Randal at all well in Australia, but I was to see him fairly frequently on this trip. He had

thoughtfully written to me about my visit, and what to expect, especially in terms of the cost of living. ‘Think of pounds as being dollars and you won’t go far wrong,’ he suggested. His predictions proved to be remarkably accurate.

Robert Sheckley!

Robert Sheckley! Here was an encounter with a hero of my youth: indeed, Sheckley had had a story in the very first science fiction magazine I ever read (the January 1955 *Galaxy* – in the British edition [number 27] of course). I still remember that story in a vaguely warm way.

More than that: he was the author of some rather deft and very funny short stories in the middle fifties which I admired, if anything, a little too much. As a matter of fact I recall with horror that late in my secondary school education, faced with a rather cretinous series of essay topics in an examination, I had rather desperately knocked out a thousand-word Sheckley pastiche which, so far as the markers were concerned, was more than passable. What else can you do with a subject like ‘The Happiest Day’?

But late in the fifties – perhaps around the time of *The Journey of Joenes* – Sheckley lost me.

To be a little more honest about it, I suppose I lost him, since that was the time when my interest in science fiction first hit a trough.

Since then I’ve not been able to get back to his writing. People have suggested to me that I’m missing something.

Sheckley, it soon became clear, was not well. He had just arrived from New York and was really tired. He sat with us while we had a light breakfast and then headed off for his club to sleep.

That breakfast was an occasion at which I should have been listening rather more carefully than I did.

Chris and Randal provided a briefing on organizations of such worldshaking importance as the Astral League and the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society.

The main message I could make sense of was that some of the British fans most worth meeting and knowing were not exactly outgoing. This should have been taken as helpful advice on which I would act, since I am myself a founding member of the Anti-Gregarious Society.

But the best I could do was come up with the suggestion that I should pretend to be talking to computer salesmen, a class of people I regard as

marginally more socially desirable than insurance salesmen – but far above politicians, of course. (This is a Woody Allen reference.)

For some reason Chris was mildly amused by, but not at all enthusiastic about, this suggestion. The breakfast proved to be about as expensive as Randal's model of international finance predicted.

We were a little relieved to be escorted out to Chris's Morris Clubman – an excellent car, but not overly capacious for four people as they begin to exchange and read fanzines. (Even the driver!)

We set off down what proved to be, after some signs of uncertainty on the part of the driver, the correct motorway.

By now Chris was relaxed enough to begin to unburden himself on more serious matters, such as his great ambition to play as an honorary Australian in the UK vs Australia cricket match which had been scheduled for some unspecified time at Brighton.

Cricket, Etc.

Since someone had muttered that I was supposed to be captain of the Australian team I took it upon myself to explain to him that, apart from the difficulties in connection with establishing residence for the required period, he would have to turn out for all practice sessions, pass a fitness test, and then face the selection panel.

(Given what actually happened in this match, this appears to have been a highly fantastic discussion. Most of the Australians at Brighton failed the fitness test – getting out of bed in time to play – and Chris need not have spent so much time sulking in the bar.)

He was rather crestfallen, but I could not honestly have encouraged his hopes of an easy fannish immortality.

I don't remember much of the drive to London. Views from motorways are rarely inspiring, but what we could see was sufficiently different from the Australian countryside to keep us awake.

It was at about this point on the trip, I feel sure, that I first became aware that my travels were going to have an unexpected focus – upon architecture. From the car I spotted an odd pair of two-storeyed houses – odd to me because, for the upper storey, in place of the conventional sort of windows used on the lower floor, was a vast, almost frameless, window consisting of a square surmounted by a semi-circle, with the semi-circle rearing up above the ceiling level. The light inside must have been magnificent.

But there were also more practical matters to be considered. Randal and I got into a discussion on the availability of Vegemite in the UK and this sparked off in Chris the notion that we should see Earls Court, or at least pass through it.

As it turned out, Randal hadn't yet been there either. It was possible that there we might come upon a fugitive jar or two of the ambrosial yeast-derivative. No luck, but Randal thought he knew where some lurked.

Thereafter we were driven along the Thames past such architectural splendors as the Battersea Power Station, where the intellectuals in the car began talking about art deco, while all I could think of was *Things to Come*, a film I had not actually seen.

The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey were the last delights we saw before Chris got serious about Destinations. We managed to take a couple of photos there, and were enchanted by a sign placed at one entrance to the Houses of Parliament which read 'Peers Only', leaving itself open to more interpretations than I have time or space for here.

Then we dropped Randal off near his place of employment, and headed for Great Russell Street, the address Robin Johnson had given us for the quaintly (but we hoped appropriately) named hotel into which he had booked us – the Economy Hotel.

Where to Stay?

There is no Economy Hotel in Great Russell Street.

This we established in the hardest and most empirical possible way, that is, driving along peering anxiously at strange looming buildings which reminded me of Paul Anderson or Bruce Gillespie turned to stone.

My agile mind quickly produced a solution to our problem – we would park the car, find a telephone, and I would ring QANTAS who, since they had actually made the booking on Robin's instructions, would immediately direct us to the accommodation which had been arranged.

This chain of thought might make sense in Australia, but it did not work out quite so well in London, and this was perhaps my first charge of culture shock.

In the first place, parking a car is not quite so straightforward in London as it is in Melbourne. Chris did manage it, however. He also explained the complicated rigmarole through which we must go with our luggage so that no suspicious bomb-like objects would be apparent to passers-by.

In the second place, while finding a telephone wasn't terribly difficult, thanks to the ingenuity and savvy of Chris Priest, finding one which worked was. The third one I tried did provide my fumbling fingers with only minor mechanical problems before I/we got through to QANTAS. ('We' because this was a joint endeavour, involving trying telephones on several levels in one building.)

In the third place – well, the bare facts of the matter are that after only five minutes QANTAS was able to establish to its own satisfaction and mine that we existed, and what is more, that we had flight bookings somewhere on their computer files.

Then, only a minute or two later, I was assured that a booking for us had been made at the Mitre Hotel in Great Russell Street.

You can be sure that our studies of Great Russell Street in the search for the 'Economy Hotel' had not been wasted, and we thought ourselves to be pretty expert on the subject of what hotels are and are not in Great Russell Street. You will also be unsurprised at our tentative decision. There is no Mitre Hotel in Great Russell Street.

That being the consensus, I thought it was pretty fair to ask QANTAS the exact address of the Mitre Hotel into which we had been booked. For a further two minutes the entire efforts of a mighty international airline were directed towards solving that problem.

In the same period we made some progress as well. Telephone directories being even rarer than functioning telephones in London, it took a great deal of running about, but we found one, and from it established what you will have already guessed – the London Telephone Directory did not list any Mitre Hotel in Great Russell Street.

The two minutes ended with the voice of the QANTAS lady solemnly informing me that while they in London did not actually have the address of this London hotel, if I had any difficulty – any difficulty whatsoever – in locating it I should ring again and they would be only too pleased to telephone Sydney, Australia, where the details would certainly be available. I thanked her and replaced the telephone handpiece. Calmly.

Clearly it was time for a cortico-thalamic pause – or something of similar efficacy – and one of the advantages of having a science fiction writer in the room is that as a class science fiction writers are even faster on these things than are fans: Chris Priest had looked very hard for the Mitre Hotel, Great Russell Street, so this made it relatively easy for him to urge on me the fact that there was, in Sussex Gardens, an area of London renowned for its cheap accommodation, a Mitre House Hotel which would be worth trying.

I rang and, although they did not have a booking for us (last, fond hope!), they did have rooms available.

Chris drove us out to Sussex Gardens where we were almost booked into a double room with breakfast and bath for £15 plus VAT. Indeed, just as soon as the room had been cleaned we would be able to put our bags in the room. But for now we could leave them in the foyer, and if we would come back in a couple of hours...

At Chris's instigation the three of us went for a walk in the park – which happened to be Hyde Park.

We loitered palely by the Serpentine. Once again there was a new experience for me. The overcast sky was associated with a kind of weather we simply don't have in Melbourne. There, that particular combination of temperature and cloud would have been accompanied by an unpleasant humidity, but here one could only describe the atmosphere as 'light'.

The Serpentine itself, with a few boats skating on its mirrored surface as a result of the apparently effortless strokes of casual rowers, reminded me of several Northern Hemisphere paintings (both European and North American) in which the morning light, with contrasts so low that shadows only flicker occasionally into one's perceptions, makes everything still, contrary to the obvious motion of the boats. And there is an impression of intense, suffused light, yet the light-level is actually quite low.

I suppose that the lack of contrast multiplies the effect, but whatever the explanation I did have the feeling that I was looking at a vast fluorescent screen. Only someone who has experienced the morning light in a typical Australian environment, whether city or country, with its strong contrasts, can appreciate just how alien it all was.

Tax

This charming scene was disturbed only by two people arguing about the relative merits of sales tax and income tax.

Actually Chris and I were agreed that VAT, as a consumer tax, was probably a good thing, or at least a better thing than almost all of the alternatives. My objection was only, as it had been in the United States a few years earlier, to the way in which prices are publicly represented to potential customers (i.e. before VAT).

As the person about to reach into the pocket, I am little interested in knowing how much of the money I pay goes direct to the government as a consumer tax, at least in comparison with knowing how much to give the

seller. There isn't a universal rule about this sort of thing, naturally, with the result that the buyer not only has to be prepared for the usual range of scams, but also for whether or not tax has already been paid.

We had drinks in a cafe by the Serpentine, paying prices most appropriately described as overwhelming. To tell the truth I didn't have to worry too much as, for some reason, Jennifer and Chris split the bill between them.

The extended and wandering conversation had by now descended from the heights of VAT and touched upon many matters including, I seem to recall, science fiction.

Now Chris had some other matters to attend to that afternoon, so he escorted us back to our hotel via Speakers' Corner, passing as many attractive buildings as he could recall lay between us and our destination. We placed our bags in the room and looked around. Hmm.

My travelling experience is pretty limited – especially with respect to any range of accommodation. Outside of science fiction conventions I've only ever had to choose accommodation in a far-off place once or twice.

Science fiction conventions in Australia tend to be in middle-of-the-road hotels (which can be awkward at times), and my various employers have tended to make my accommodation decisions for me simply by the amount of money they allocate for that purpose.

On this occasion both choice and finance were our own responsibility, and I had been a little apprehensive as to how it would all turn out. This wasn't a bad start.

It was more than we were to pay anywhere else, but it had the essentials – a couple of beds, cupboards, lights that worked most of the time. The fire alarms didn't go off very often, and the fact that the room was very dark didn't matter too much, though I suppose that had I been the sort of person who uses a razor I would have had trouble picking out which spots to shave.

There was a lightwell which provided some illumination, but the view could not be recommended. Yet it was towards the back of the hotel, making it pleasantly quiet.

Food

By now it was around 12.30 pm and Chris thought he might as well have some lunch with us before leaving. He knew a small restaurant in the area, and guided us past the cafe/milk bar where we'd briefly refreshed

ourselves on the way to the park, past a newsagent laden with all sorts of goodies and most especially street atlases (see below), to a corner from which we could see Paddington Station, and around the corner to the entrance to an Italian restaurant which seemed, so far as quality and price were concerned, parallel with those in Lygon Street, Carlton, back in Australia.

It was delightful (lasagne of monumental size) and I even remembered to work out what the price was in dollars (later I neglected to do this, and so lost track of what the trip was costing), but by this time Jennifer was looking quite tired, and I wasn't in much better shape myself.

Chris returned to Harrow, and Jennifer and I walked back to our hotel. She went to bed (she had arranged to go to a concert that night) and I thought for a bit and then telephoned Mervyn Binns at his hotel (which had been the site of the 1965 Worldcon: poor Mervyn – his first day in London and already he was 14 years behind the times).

Mervyn sounded a bit tired too, but said he wouldn't mind seeing me.

He also mentioned that Robin Johnson would be calling around shortly. Well, I felt that I wouldn't mind discussing the theory and practice of the art of reservation of hotel rooms with Robin, so I decided to drop around to the Mount Royal.

Walking, London, More Walking

But first, a necessary purchase. As intimated above, I collect street atlases. One reason for this is that I like to know where I'm going. More honestly, I have to admit that back in 1974, on my first overseas trip, I found myself having to travel a considerable distance in a strange city (Wellington, New Zealand) without any map at all, and I have always recalled that experience as being thrilling but somewhat uncomfortable. (I remedied the situation quickly in 1974, and still have a Wellington Street Atlas.)

The newsagent we had passed had had a fair selection of the things, but not the one Chris had kindly recommended. The hell with perfection – I needed one to find Merv Binns. Having bought one I quickly checked where Chris Priest lived. Bloody Hell! Chris lived on the edge of the map.

To the Mount Royal, where Mervyn Binns was Not Happy.

Somehow, while in the United States, he had managed to do so much walking that his feet were now much more blistered and sore than anyone facing a world science fiction convention and a second trip through the United States would like. He wasn't looking forward to it all, to put it

mildly.

Robin Johnson had arrived and then stepped out for a while, so I sat talking to Mervyn for a while (or rather, to be honest, listening to his Tales of Sore Feet) and taking notes on how the other half lives – television set and refrigerator, no less. We talked about our respective adventures so far: we were both tired and by no means sure we would be in good shape for SEACON.

Mervyn had been able to do some work for the shop (the late lamented Space Age Books) on his way through the United States, but there was still a great deal to be done on the way back, as well as another convention to attend.

The other problem was that unless his feet healed quickly he wouldn't be able to get around London to all the places he felt he should visit. We also discussed Robin Johnson's prowess as an organizer of hotel rooms, with both of us looking forward to the confrontation with the swine, and to his grovelling explanation of his villainous performance on behalf of Bryce and Foyster.

At last Robin appeared, and was not at all nonplussed by my tale of woe about non-existent hotels. 'Oh,' he said, 'I suspect the hotel in Sussex Gardens was the one I wanted you booked into.' Somehow the fact that the Mitre House Hotel had no booking for us had escaped his attention.

We talked for a while about our immediate plans in the vague desultory fashion for which Melbourne fans are well-known. Robin produced his latest toy, picked up in Singapore – a calculator with an inbuilt timer/alarm, the alarm consisting of a tune of half a dozen notes. Robin played a couple of tunes for us, but we really couldn't see how the available variations could fill in the whole afternoon. Some other form of entertainment was called for.

Robin eventually proposed, and Mervyn and I accepted, that we should accept a lift with Robin in 'his' car and check out the stfnal bookshops. I hadn't seen these before, so my interest in FORBIDDEN PLANET and DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN-EYED was probably much greater than that of either Robin or Mervyn.

I didn't buy anything in either of these shops on that first day, but I was to spend a pretty penny in them before the trip was over. As I might have expected the basic stock in these shops wasn't too exciting: in each case it was the specialities of the house which made the visits interesting – back issues of magazines, French comic books, and so on.

It was the sort of stuff SPACE AGE BOOKS used to have – but rather more of it. FORBIDDEN PLANET was the smaller of the two

shops, and was located in Denmark Street near the edge of Soho. The neat window display gave considerable emphasis to forthcoming autographing sessions by Famous Science Fiction Authors such as J.G. Ballard.

DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN-EYED I visited quite often while I was in London. The stock, spread over two levels, was better than that of FORBIDDEN PLANET, though there were rather too many comic books for my liking (...taking up valuable space...).

Our other interests that afternoon were food and costumes. The Australian fans, or at least some of them, were doing a group thing at the convention, based on various characters out of Cordwainer Smith, and we had spent a lot of time during the last weeks in Australia trying on the costumes which John Breden had designed and Minnie Hands had made.

Most of us had had to cart our costumes around the world, but there were still bits and pieces to be hired in London. As well as that, Robin Johnson was to-ing and fro-ing on the question of a costume for himself. In the long run, although he investigated two shops fairly thoroughly, Robin did not take a costume.

As for Mervyn, he had ordered a couple of sets of centurion's gear from a particular shop, and that was where we started the afternoon's work. There were rather more hemmings and hawings than I would have expected when a captain of industry like Mervyn is negotiating, but eventually we tore ourselves from the Miss Piggy masks and other detritus of television and shuffled out onto the streets of Soho.

At this point neither Mervyn nor Robin had stilled their perverse interests in costumes, so we mooched around the area looking for alternative sources. There were a few such shops, but none which interested me.

On the other hand there was a shop which sold second-hand magazines of a pseudo-scientific nature, and I spent quite some time there with either Mervyn or Robin in attendance while the other member of the trio continued in search of costumery.

Now this was the kind of shop which only displays prices on the items you don't want, like British reprint editions of *Planet Stories*. Mervyn's comments about the prices on the old fillum magazines suggested to me that the prices on the unlabelled items would be rather high.

Our interest now turned to food. Food itself was not a problem, but drink was. Mervyn and Robin both wanted alcohol with their light snacks, but we had chosen – as is all too easy to do in the UK – to eat at one of those times of the day when, according to the sensible, but

incomprehensible to Australians, customs of the land, the pubs are closed. And the cafes don't serve booze then either.

We did pay, however, a fortune for the healthily warm Coca-Colas we did get. Sitting down then did give us a chance to talk seriously about what we would be doing over the next few days.

Robin seemed determined to fit in an immense amount of activity before SEACON, while Mervyn and I were more modest.

It was now quite late in the afternoon, and Jennifer was going out to her concert fairly early that evening – and my job was to wake her in time for it. So I was rather anxious to get back to Sussex Gardens to make sure that she got on her way in time.

Robin offered to drive us back to our respective hotels. Now in my GUFF platform I had included a line to the effect that I loathed motor cars. This was no joke.

I genuinely do not like motor cars, and travelling in one is even more painful. So travelling back with Robin would be a slow and excruciating experience.

I am never happy in cars, and here I was in a strange city being driven about by someone whose driving style I had not previously experienced!

The traffic was heavy. Eventually I was to learn that in London everything on the road moves slowly – that's why they have an underground – but this first exposure was a shock. (Our morning arrival had been so early that there had been no sign of anything untoward – beyond the usual...)

Robin, as always, was far more patient than I could ever be, and after following a tangled path we reached Sussex Gardens and the Mitre House Hotel.

Jennifer was only just awake, but I managed to hustle her off to her concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

'Now,' I thought, 'I shall get on with the business of making notes and preparing drafts for my trip report.'

'On second thought,' I added almost as an afterthought, 'I've been on my feet for a long time and it is now 6.30 p.m. I shall follow a prudent course and lie down on this bed for a few seconds.'

I woke at 3 a.m. on Tuesday morning. Fortunately or unfortunately Jennifer woke at the same time, so we had breakfast or dinner – something – and went back to sleep.

As it turned out, Tuesday turned out to be the day we really did a lot of walking.

Our major responsibility, if we could be said to have had one, was to

try to recover from the air travel. But we were also meeting Jennifer's sister, who worked in Lime Street, for lunch, and in the evening we would be going out to meet a few people.

The *first* responsibility, however, was to become acquainted with breakfast, and breakfast rooms. Neither of us usually pays much attention to this particular custom, but over the next few weeks breakfast became an important ritual.

In the Mitre House Hotel the breakfast room is in a basement (and basements are things we don't have too many of in Australia) and it took us quite a while to find our way into it.

Our fellow guests seemed to fall into two groups, I thought. There were foreigners like us who either could not afford a fancy expensive hotel or preferred not to put up with one, and there were the visitors to London from the surrounding countryside who apparently also couldn't afford the big splurge and didn't have any friends or relatives they could stay with in the big smoke.

Organization and service at the hotel were pretty minimal but nevertheless friendly, and I feel we could have survived there quite happily during a lengthy stay in London, except for the bills. I suppose that by UK standards the bills weren't high, but the amount of competition in the area might have been expected to force them down a notch or two.

Because we were relatively unfamiliar with breakfast, we were able to treat such commonplaces as eggs and bacon and toast as genuine novelties. I suspect that I may even have drunk some of the coffee – though not much of it, and that heavily charged with sugar.

After breakfast we did have to solve another small problem – that of Jennifer's oboe practice. On the previous day it had seemed to both of us that it would be appropriate and sensible to try Hyde Park as a practice room, so after I had walked around the corner to buy a newspaper or two we set off for the short walk to the park.

The morning traffic was heavy as Londoners were in various stages of arriving at work, but there were also many people walking – I suspect on their way to work rather than for pleasure, if the briskness of the gait is any measure.

Finding a satisfactory spot in Hyde Park proved more difficult than we had expected, probably because we were seeking a compromise between an understandable desire to be seated and an equally understandable desire to be somewhere relatively private. Eventually we settled for a wooden seat in rickety condition and some twenty metres from the nearest path.

We had passed, on the way, some horses being exercised on a tan, but now the nearest living beings were sufficiently far away to neither disturb nor be disturbed. An occasional briefcase-clutching, white-shirted office worker did stride past on the path, but neither gaze nor attention was distracted by the strange noises. Now oboes are sensitive instruments. It is by no means impossible for the wood from which they are made to crack as a consequence of the kind of temperature change we had experienced in travelling to the Northern Hemisphere. And Jennifer's reeds were rather dried out.

But after a few minutes' work she was able to begin practising. I took a couple of photographs of her and then began reading the newspapers.

The photographs confirm my memory of that morning.

It was less hazy than the previous day had been, but although there is blue in the sky it isn't the intense blue I can see in Australia just by looking out the window. And the grass is certainly greener – or differently green – than would be the case in Australia towards the end of summer, and although everyone knows about these things, it is still a shock to see trees whose green doesn't have that touch of blue-grey so characteristic of Australian trees.

We can manage, I think, the large changes in a new environment because we expect such things: it is the minor ones, at first unnoticed, which prove most unsettling. (Another example: I didn't find traffic in the United States nearly as odd as traffic in the United Kingdom.)

Jennifer practised for about three-quarters of an hour, but the wind was a little strong, and perhaps she was a little too ambitious anyway, expecting to do so much straight away, so we packed up and went back to the hotel.

I thought we could walk to Lime Street, so we set off along Sussex Gardens to Edgware Road, then down to Oxford Street, and so eventually to Soho and Charing Cross Road. I showed Jennifer **DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN-EYED**, and then we went to Foyle's, where I hoped to pursue my interest in travel books – in particular Nagel's Guides.

Fortunately Foyle's didn't have in stock any that I wanted, but we did buy a couple of maps, including one I especially wanted: the FALK plan of Vienna. The FALK style, which delicately compromises between utility and ungainliness, is the most useful I've ever seen: you can convert it from a pocket-size reference to a wall map with great ease.

We now pressed on towards Lime Street, but two things began to dawn on us. First, we had committed ourselves to a lot of walking. It hadn't looked very far on the map, but in reality...

Second, everyone else in London seemed to be out walking too.

After the shock of the motor traffic the previous day the crowded pavements probably should not have been a surprise, but they were. I don't believe that either of us ever got used to the number and density of the pedestrians in London. We didn't just get tired from all this – it began to look as though we wouldn't be able to meet sister Barbara on time, and she had a short lunch break. Both of us were pleased to be able to take the tube from Holborn to Bank – my first ride on the London underground!

The London underground is at once frustrating and facilitating, expensive and indispensable. No single characterization is suitable. There were times when we found travel on it fast and efficient. At other times it was maddeningly slow. Often crowded, but sometimes almost deserted, it became of major importance to us strangers as the fastest way around in a new city.

What was consistent was the high price. But if the price was high it was also – most of the time – reasonable in terms of the kind of service it provided.

But on this particular occasion it got us there on time and so, clutching maps and a couple of fanzines I just happened to have bought on the way, we met up with Barbara and went to a crowded pub, The Bull's Head, for lunch.

It was at this point that the differences in the ways living spaces may be used began to be brought home to us very strongly. Visitors to Melbourne remark upon the wide streets: now we felt quite the opposite.

It is true that the area around Bank is rather old and crowded, but at times we now felt rather as though we were in a doll's house. This impression was strengthened in The Bull's Head which, though it served reasonable food, wasn't exactly palatial.

It was spread over several floors but none of the rooms seemed capable of holding much more than a dozen people.

Standing up.

Some people might see that as cosy, but not me.

We sat near a window and while I ate some rather ordinary pâté. I thought back to the lunch on the previous day which could have taken place in Melbourne. How thoughtful Chris had been to break it to us gently!

Eventually Barbara had to get back to work, and we had to return to our hotel. This we did by the usual combination – now – of foot and underground.

We called in at Selfridge's because I needed a ribbon for the

Norstrilia group costumes and they had, as predicted, a huge range which made selection almost an embarrassment.

When we got back to the hotel Jennifer arranged to do some more oboe practice in the hotel's breakfast room and I, with my eye quite obviously straining to detect what remained of the original plan for that day instead of concentrating on recovering from the trip, decided to walk around the neighbourhood again.

Sussex Gardens is itself a street full of hotels. Starting just south of Paddington Station, it curves around to the north-east until, crossing Edgware Road, it becomes Old Marylebone Road and then terminates at Marylebone. The street 'Sussex Gardens' actually acquires that name only as it crosses Westbourne Terrace, where its origin is marked by a small wrought-iron fenced park, triangular in shape and useful only in providing a concentration of green and a break from the relentless colonnade of hotel facades which bears down upon the pedestrian brave enough to walk the length of the street.

If you stand at the beginning, on the south side, and look along the pavement to the north-east, the contrast of impressions is quite overwhelming. If you consider any single building on that southern side it has, by comparison with buildings in Australia, considerable elegance. Well-kept, it typically has white-painted ornamentation which is neither ostentatious nor modest.

But the word which hurts is 'typically'.

For as you stand on the pavement you see a line of identical buildings, so far as the eye can distinguish them – perhaps fifteen or twenty in all. Outside them, on the pavement, small cars are parked on both sides of a narrow service road after which, crossing a plantation of English trees I didn't recognize then and am equally incompetent to handle now, you come to the road proper.

Singly those buildings are fine, but in a mass they seem to lose whatever charm they may have had. Further along Sussex Gardens, especially on the northern side, they weren't even individually attractive. But even early in the walk (before London Street, say) the buildings are less elegant on the northern side – lacking pillars, for example.

The Mitre House Hotel is on the northern side. As you go north and east the buildings become almost stark. When we moved around the Sussex Gardens area, though, it was far more often a matter of heading towards Paddington Station and Praed Street, either along London Street or along Spring Street.

Spring Street had the Post Office in it – and telephones outside it – so

we went that way reasonably often. But London Street has its attractions, too, as a way to walk along, such as a branch of the National Westminster Bank – which we also needed to visit.

The buildings in Spring Street were probably slightly more elegant – fewer shops – but there wasn't really much to choose between them. And by the time you got to Praed Street, you were effectively in a shopping centre anyway.

At either junction, of course, the roof of Paddington Station dominated the scene. It was here that I went to buy a copy of the British Rail timetable. (Yes, timetables as well as street atlases.)

I've always felt more comfortable, when arguing with ticket sellers or others, when I have had a timetable in my hands, but the BritRail job is not exactly portable. (I wonder what Chris Priest did with it after we left? Use it to schedule his toy train?)

Praed Street is a curious *mélange* of shops, mostly seedy – such as the Indonesian restaurant where we ate some satays that evening.

But if you walk north-east along Praed Street then on the northern side you do eventually reach The Grand Junction Arms, a delicate-looking pub on a triangular block of land. It's tiny, and probably not much to get excited about on the inside, but to anyone walking along Praed Street its striking contrast with its surroundings is a pleasant relief.

This particular afternoon I walked along Praed Street to Edgware Road – just getting a feel for the neighbourhood, which I suppose seems rather strange, given that in just over twenty-four hours we would be leaving the area. But perhaps the neighbourhood I was trying to get a feel for was England, rather than just a few streets.

As I walked along I checked the price of film for my camera: I kept hoping for a bargain but I didn't find, I have to confess, even one. But it was on this walk that I learned that 'turf accountant' is not just a product of Bill Tidy's fertile imagination.

At the Edgware Road intersection, which appears to have been blessed with every inconvenience town planners can dream up for large intersections, I came as close as I ever expect to do to entering a Marks and Spencer Store, for one lay on the corner opposite the one on which I stood. I took a couple of photos to remind myself that I had been there, and set off down Edgware Road to Sussex Gardens, a walk which is wholly unremarkable, and turned for home along Sussex Gardens, where the monotony of that boring parade of hotels was occasionally broken on the southern side by something I didn't understand. Blocks of flats I did recognize and understand, and it was while walking along here that I first

consciously noticed a London bus.

And then there was the pub at the corner of Southwick Street labelled 'Monkey Puzzle', which had me puzzled until much later, back in Australia, I realized that the name must have come from a tree growing in the area, a variety of *Araucaria*.

At the end of the walk I was slightly tired, but felt comfortable with the neighbourhood. The day had been pleasantly warm, and I looked forward to the evening out.

Douglas Adams

At 7.30 p.m. Chris Priest picked us up in his car, and drove us over to Chris Evans's place in Chiswick, with just that touch of uncertainty in his navigation which disconcerts but does not alarm. Randal Flynn was staying with Chris at the time, and we were all going to meet Douglas Adams at a pub by the Thames.

Randal is well-known to many Australian fans, but Chris Evans (not the Late Doctor) couldn't be described adequately by anyone other than Chris Evans himself. His first novel, *Capella's Golden Eyes*, was published by Faber in 1980, and it may give readers some idea of what Chris is like, but it will be a poor substitute for an evening with Chris Evans. Several times in England we were lucky enough to spend some time with Chris, and his sparkling conversation was always a startling joy. No matter how much we felt we had come to know him he always managed to unfold something new and inventive. In writing so much about Evans I might seem to be slighting the others, but it is rare to find someone whose imagination is so dominating. (People who try to dominate by force of personality are dime a dozen – and a different matter altogether.)

The plan was for us to walk to The Black Lion. Everyone else, in this balmy weather, put on sweaters. I knew better, of course. Unaccustomed to English evenings, and only just recovered from a cold in Australia, I knew that I would not need a sweater as we walked along beside the river... It was a pleasant walk, too, for the five of us. The river was very low, making it almost possible to compare it unfavourably with Melbourne's Yarra, and the twilight encouraged a good deal of loitering. Chris Priest speculated on whether or not we would see the Concorde later that evening, since it passed almost directly overhead at a particular time most nights.

In a desultory fashion we agreed to watch out for it, but I believe that

no one did. So much for the sense of wonder.

When we reached The Black Lion we went straight in and got down to the business at hand, completely forgetting the Concorde.

Inside we talked about lots of things. It was one of those 'getting to know you' evenings when anything goes, but at a fairly superficial level. It is helpful, later on, to have this sort of background information, but of itself it has little value.

Partway through the evening the deceptively tall Douglas Adams arrived. I write 'deceptively tall' because, until he stands up, Adams doesn't seem tall – to have any of those facial characteristics, or the bearing, that we usually associate with the tall. He was to be interviewed, at SEACON, by Chris Priest, and they spent most of the evening chatting to one another.

Since I'm not a great absorber of popular culture, I doubt I'd have much to say to the script editor of *Doctor Who* and author of *Hitchhiker's Guide* etc.

Afterwards we walked slowly back to Chris Evans's place. It was now chilly. In fact it was damned cold, and I was envious of those who'd been thoughtful enough to wear sweaters.

Back at Chris's we talked again about all sorts of stuff. I remember particularly defending the proposition that any writer worth the salt ought, as an exercise, to be able to imitate the style of any given writer (well, at least from amongst those who might be said to have a style). Chris Priest was not enthusiastic about this viewpoint, but he was unable to change my attitude.

Eventually he drove us back to Sussex Gardens. It was 12.30 a.m. and I had, by carefully planned stupidity, managed to catch the cold which was to lay me low for the next day and keep me very quiet through the early days of SEACON.

(The next day – not to be chronicled here or elsewhere – was the day of the cold, the fish and chips, and the Tate. Going to the Tate Gallery late on the Wednesday afternoon was sufficiently mentally stimulating to keep me going for a week, and all I can now say in summary is that in consequence of that visit I now reject utterly the proposition contained in Bob Shaw's memorable line 'He who has a Tate's is lost'.)

Seek On! Seek On!

What images evoke most accurately the spirit of SEACON, I wonder? Is it, as my chapter title hints, drawing its inspiration from Philip José Farmer's tiny gem, best to imagine SEACON as a voyage to the edge of the Earth, to a point at which some travellers at least toppled over into the infinite depths of space and were lost for ever? Perhaps, rather, it's more appropriate to think of the doggerel associated with that demmed elusive Pimpernel? And then, having at last found the object of our search, we might beat swords against shields and, with Xenophon's troops shout 'Thalassa! Thalassa!'

When I began the journey down to Brighton from London with Chris Priest, such lit'r'y images were far from my mind. It was, after all, early in the morning.

And the traffic south from London, though less dense than I had experienced when being piloted around by Robin Johnson, was still formidable. (Although I didn't take the lit'r'y opportunity to do some Bunburying then, I did so later in the convention.) And though the traffic was easier for Chris to drive through (no comparison of driving skills is intended) it did seem to go on for ever.

Before we reached the stage of driving in the countryside (which I, in my naïveté, had thought we would be doing most of the time, but which in fact, subjectively, seemed to begin only when we were halfway to Brighton) it seemed to me that Chris had to deal with every possible obstruction to normal automotion (and some which, if not impossible, were at least highly unlikely – such as the middle-aged cove on the penny-farthing bicycle who weaved elegantly past us before we were much south of the Thames).

If we move to the entirely subjective – and this is, after all, a report about a science fiction convention, so one must begin to practise early – it seems to me now that after emerging from the last shrouds of London we passed through one small village – about which Chris made some laudatory remark – and then, rocketting down the sort of highway which can be found almost anywhere in the Western world (although the landscape, where it could be glimpsed, was unAustralianly green) for a few minutes, we arrived in Brighton.

There was at least one moment of choice, I recall, when a highway sign under the forbidding instruction 'Get In Lane' offered the choice of

Brighton or Pease Pottage; hot or cold was not specified.

It cannot have been so swift, and were there really grey clouds, as my failing memory insists? Brighton itself, so much a mixture of light and shadow, cast so much of a spell over me that I find myself almost able to contemplate going through London to get there (but fortunately this is not necessary, since one may go direct from Gatwick).

Brighton seemed then a wonderful site for a convention, and still does. While the centres of large metropolises have more facilities – perhaps more than one wants – the fact is that a holiday resort is (at least in theory and sometimes in practice) better prepared overall to look after the interests of visitors. But Brighton was also very much like St Kilda, Melbourne, then my home town, and perhaps that helped a lot.

Meanwhile, back in Chris's car, we drew up at the Metropole.

Well, we would have if there had been room to do so. In fact Chris slowed somewhat, looking for a place to park, and as we passed the entrance, he took one hand off the steering-wheel (I'm sensitive about this sort of thing, you may recall) and, gesturing at a crowd of about 70 people entering the hotel, said with some awe, 'Look! There's Norman Spinrad.'

I didn't feel I was in a position to argue.

When we did park – not very far from that entrance, to tell the truth – Chris unloaded his baggage from the boot (er, trunk) while I left mine for later dropping off. Entering the hotel was easy – and excellent practice for those times later in the convention (around say 3 a.m.) when the person-traffic density dropped to a similar level.

I think Chris had no trouble registering. I think I did. I know there was some hesitation about some aspect of it all, but it wasn't at all serious. That was the last peaceful moment of the convention, except for those moments when I was asleep standing up.

For although I wasn't yet to know it, I had not arrived in England sufficiently early to have recovered by the time of the convention. But we shall leave this disgraceful episode for its proper (or improper) place.

So then, late on this Thursday morning (just to tie things down a little), I went around to check into the hotel arranged for me and Jennifer by Dave Langford.

Dave had done a masterful job: located on a little square behind the Metropole, the Churchill was small, practical, and not expensive. It was so close to the convention facilities that I believe it was quicker to move from there than from hotel rooms within the Metropole.

Other minds almost as great as Dave's had come to the same conclusion with respect to suitability; Mike Glicksohn and Bob Tucker

also stayed there, as their appearance one morning at breakfast forthrightly testified.

As for the convention itself – well, like all modern science fiction conventions, this was a gathering to which you go to meet friends and then can't find them. With 3200 fans running loose in several confined spaces – several? there were convention items in at least eight rooms, and the bars – it was obviously very difficult to find, at any given instant, any given individual (unless she or he happened to be on a program item, in which case all you had to do was find the right room).

Looking for a given individual is only one approach to the problem, and plenty of people adopted the alternative of lying back and enjoying it, waiting for people to float past. However, I was, from time to time, definitely interested in meeting particular people, so let me give a couple of examples of what happened.

First, I was on the lookout for Ethel Lindsay from the start of the convention (Thursday afternoon): I finally found Ethel in the Fan Room on the Monday morning.

Second, I was told early on Friday morning that Annemarie Kindt, a fan from Holland, was looking out for me (to talk about my then-current fanzine, *Chunder!*), and we finally met up at a dead-dog party on the Monday night. Those were my success stories; there were many people I hoped to meet and talk with, who were there, but who simply escaped my clutches.

You can use a simple rule to minimize agonizing about missed opportunities like this, and I would formulate it as a resolution never to say 'see you later' to anyone: grab them immediately and talk fast. I believe that in this way you can meet many people and enjoy yourself. I stress this because, immediately after returning from SEACON, I heard reports from both Australia and overseas that some attendees hadn't liked SEACON too well because they hadn't been able to meet all the people they wanted to, or because they missed out on some program item they had rather fancied.

For me the point was not to meet 'em all, but to enjoy the ones you did meet.

Let's also set out clearly what won't be found in this description.

No one looks for news in a report like this, and there'll be no news here.

Nor will there be statistics about how many people attended what: well, almost – I've already mentioned that there were 3200 fans at the convention, and my other statistic is that the advertised gathering of gay fans drew just five attendees.

Difficult to believe, isn't it? Why, at the Melbourne Science Fiction Club on any rainy winter's night in 196 ... but I digress.

Since there don't seem to have been any Terrible Incidents, there won't be any reporting of these. Instead this report will focus on ordinary everyday goings-on – the cricket match, the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society, and me attending a convention banquet.

But first, some remarkable stuff: something about the program. I saw quite a bit of the program (not heard, saw). I'm not capable of integrating what was going on within the program with what went on outside it, but I'll tie together the bits I can.

PROGRAMMED CONVENTION

By Way of Introduction

At Australian conventions the average passerby would be quite justified in believing me to be omnipresent. I attend convention programs in Australia for no reason I can discern – they bore me almost unceasingly – and the only things which can drive me away are the umpteenth repetition of a panel or speech on 'Comics and Science Fiction' or any panel whatsoever on 'media'. There's no explanation for this that I can think of, other than habit, but in that case it is a bad habit I should like to shed.

With such a background, and given that fandom had subscribed to get me to the convention, I should be able to present, in vast and almost certainly boring detail, a report on the SEACON program so accurate in its description of the minutiae of the event that no reader could help but wonder whether anything at all had been omitted. I am unable to report, alas (or perhaps, cheers), in that manner.

Of the several reasons for this the most compelling is that I simply did not attend very much of the convention programming. It's necessary at this point to take the trouble to mention that most of the time there were at least three separate program items running, and that when I write that I did not attend much of the 'convention programming' I mean that most of the time I wasn't at any of the program items at all.

In the next section – rather chronological in structure – I shall describe what I was doing during most of the convention.

In this section I shall write more generally, starting by reporting my own bewilderment at my failure to turn up for so many program items.

No one could reasonably accuse me of being inordinately fond of

reading science fiction nowadays; to put it bluntly, I read very little science fiction indeed. (This high resolve, I hasten to add, wasn't enough to prevent me quickly reading a Bob Tucker story in *Analog* while drafting this section, but *in general...*)

But I *am* interested in learning something about why I used to read science fiction, and about why other people read it. Amongst the most valuable sources for that information, obviously enough, are science fiction writers themselves, when they speak or write generally rather than particularly.

I admit that by and large they seem to prefer the latter, which I find extremely tedious, but there are occasions when a writer looks a little further and tries to describe her or his work in a wider context.

At SEACON there were many writers who might be likely to do this, and amongst the writers were several whose works I particularly admired – writers of some of the first science fiction stories I ever read, for example, such as Pohl and Bester and Sheckley and Sturgeon.

Yet I made no real attempt to hear what they had to say, and there was only one writer whose contribution to the convention I made a point of attending (and I've never read any of his fiction).

This convention was not, in other words, one at which I advanced my understanding of science fiction or its contexts.

So what did I do?

Let's start with a list of the convention items which I attended – a rough list, admittedly.

Opening, two or three 'business meetings' (who counts when you're having fun?), two fan panels, one author's speech, one banquet and Hugo Awards ceremony.

(The attendance at the banquet will be staggering to Australian readers, since I have not attended a convention banquet in Australia since 1972 – and that one with great reluctance. But I have photographic evidence of this indiscretion – Helena Roberts has thoughtfully passed on to me a shot of Anne McCaffrey's back just after I had presented her with a Ditmar for *The White Dragon*. You can tell that the award was designed and executed by Sydney fans because the Southern Cross is upside down. I've only seen one other photograph of myself in regular gear at SEACON – a Linda Bushyager candid of Susan Wood, Eric Bentcliffe and me exhibiting exceptional quantities of international camaraderie and goodwill.)

Oh yes, I did attend part of the closing ceremony, but I left partway through owing to a sudden attack of boredom. A description of the

opening is useful as an introduction to the kind of thing we all had to endure.

I had actually been warned about the opening – the rumours referred to a pipe band. This didn't seem very likely, but it was. The main room for the convention, identified in various places as 'Hall 1', had seats for about 1200 people, and there were very few occasions on which every seat was filled.

The opening ceremony was close to being one of them.

There was a gallery above this hall, and that is where I found myself lurking – by choice. This enabled me to take closer pictures without getting in other people's way.

Not too many other fans followed this pattern of behaviour, I noted. The lights went down over the main room, and there was a slide show reprise of the logos of recent worldcons, unsurprisingly followed by the SEACON logo. Chairman Pete Weston ran the show so far as the opening was concerned, and I thought he handled it well, up to a point.

He said a few words, introduced a Guest of Honour (Brian Aldiss), said a few more words, introduced another Guest (Fritz Leiber), said a few more words, introduced another Guest (Harry Bell), said a few more words, introduced a Toastmaster (Bob Shaw) – and at this point I began to wonder where it was all going to end, if at all.

I'm not sure how the Honourees felt either. They seemed happy enough at the time. But most of my photographs show Peter R. Weston with his mouth open.

The SEACON committee had worked out how to end it all; they had arranged to have the Guests escorted from the stage by some nineteenth-century bathing beauties, which was about as good a finale as any under the circumstances.

Somewhere in all this the highland band did wander in, made noises which might with some imagination be called 'tunes', and generally played at being toy soldiers. As you might gather from the foregoing I am a subscriber to the view that 'military' and 'music' are words which sit together uneasily – about as uneasily as sitting next to Filthy Pierre with his squeezebox.

Having mentioned the Guests of Honour, who really are the important people at the convention, I ought to comment now on their activities during the convention. I'll start with Brian Aldiss because I have most to say about him.

He was, along with those I've already mentioned, an author of some of the first science fiction stories I read which I recognized as sf. At any

rate, I had very much liked Aldiss when he visited Australia in 1978, and I looked forward to seeing him again.

As it turned out, we did little more than say ‘hullo’ to each other at SEACON, and while I regret this I have to report that this was mainly because of Aldiss’s immense success as a Guest of Honour.

As I’ve indicated above, I didn’t sit through all of any GoH speeches, so I can’t overwhelm you with titbits from a magnificent speech by Brian Aldiss. What I can say is that, as many readers of these words will know, Brian Aldiss is very gregarious, and in a Guest of Honour at a large convention this is a marvellous trait.

Aldiss was everywhere and always seeking to meet people, and often he was to be seen surrounded by eager listeners (he’s not afraid to bend an ear, but he doesn’t mind listening occasionally), in halls, in passages, in bars, and even on the floor (admittedly in the bar, but seated on the floor, not lying on it).

I gather that his GoH speech was splendid, and his banquet endeavours were certainly tolerable. In short he seemed to me, and here I think back to my own efforts as a convention organizer, to be the kind of guest of honour one *wants* to have, independent of fame or fortune as a writer. He was an excellent choice, from all points of view.

I did not meet Fritz Lieber, but from second-hand reports I gather he acquitted himself well as a GoH. Harry Bell was rather quieter (at least to this observer) but he was also very busy, and was often to be found in the fan room.

Bob Shaw’s greatest performance was probably neither as Toastmaster nor as MC for the Hugo presentations, but as a speaker in his own right. He filled the main hall, which is more than any of the panels of famous science fiction writers could do.

But now the convention in more detail.

Thursday

Along with many others I attended the opening ceremonies.

I have described these above, but not the fact that everything fizzled out, leaving the audience sitting around waiting for something to happen and eventually wandering off uncertainly. This was hardly encouraging, and I did the same thing.

In fact, I didn’t attend any more of the afternoon program, unless I attended the preliminary business session. That evening there was an

‘advance presentation’ of *The Empire Strikes Back* and, from the back of the balcony, I could see that Gary Kurtz answered questions afterwards.

(What I call the balcony [and the hotel called the gallery] will be mentioned often in this report. The simple explanation for this is that it was adjacent to the fan room, where I spent most of my time.)

I don’t recall anything striking being said...

Friday

This was a big day for me. Time has thoughtfully wiped from my data storage banks any details of what Terry Hughes and I might have said at a panel on TAFF and GUFF at noon in the fan room.

I must have taken time out to eat after that, because I then went to two items in a row. Well, they were in the same room.

‘Call My Bluff’ was an only average panel game with pros vs. fans; it filled in time rather than standing up by itself.

The following item, R. Lionel Fanthorpe talking about ‘How To Write 150 SF Books in 8 Years in your Spare Time’, would have been the highlight of any convention, I think. But while the Norfolk Room was modestly full, it was a very small room, and not many people were there to share my delight. Some, I realize, do not warm to Fanthorpe’s story anyway.

Fanthorpe

Fanthorpe is a forceful speaker who is rather modest about the quality of the science fiction he produced as a hack in his earlier days. Hiding under a blanket, Fanthorpe would dictate his novels into a tape recorder, pausing only to change tapes and pass the completed tape across to one member of his small army of typists.

As he thus had to keep in mind all the plot elements, and was unable to check easily when he wasn’t sure of a detail, there were occasional plot hiccups, such as a killed-off character reappearing late in a novel because the author had forgotten about his earlier demise.

Such an arrangement can lead to considerable productivity (as Fanthorpe’s talk’s title indicates), but such blatantly hack-like activity could easily affront those concerned to maintain skiffy’s lit’r’y image. Distanced as I am from such obsessions, it was easy for me to enjoy Fanthorpe’s frankness about his intentions and problems in writing so

much.

Alas, however, he later talked about his current S&S work, which he was flogging unmercifully at the convention.

This was, he averred, quite unlike his earlier work – painstakingly written, carefully plotted. Chocka with literary merit you might say. Except if you happened to read it, I suspect.

This late-discovered pretension ruined the whole effect for me.

Saturday

Awful day. Dominated by the Fancy Dress Parade.

Dressing up is not a major part of my life, and getting into fancy gear for a science fiction convention must be just about the bottom on my list of priorities. But it was part of paying my dues, in this case.

I'll write about the early part of the day later, when I get away from the convention program. Not that I got to much of the convention program anyway.

I wanted to go to several items that day, mostly in the Fan Room, where all sorts of wonderful people were scheduled to talk about fannish things between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

But I only passed briefly through there, usually searching for missing members of the Australian group for the accursed Fancy Dress Parade.

I was able to listen to enough of GoH Brian Aldiss's speech to recognize it as a worked-up revision of his 1978 UNICON IV speech in Melbourne. It was good in 1979, just as it had been the previous year.

The early afternoon was spent trying to help Sue Pagram get all the Australians into a small hotel room to do some planning, and even to try to get most of the costumes there as well. When that was completed, Mervyn Binns and I went off to the infamous Gollancz party – of which more later.

But afterwards, back at the convention, we spent a lot of time 'during' the Fancy Dress Parade standing around in confined spaces (almost, one might say, one confined space) with far too many people as garishly costumed as we were.

In some cases costumes assured that the wearers would not become overheated, but more rather than fewer SEACON costumes required wearing stuff that got bloody hot after the first couple of hours, so that wilting was very much in favour by the time some of us got out there and strutted our stuff.

The Australian group (Justin Ackroyd, Alex Wasiliew, Mervyn

Binns, George Turner, Cherry Wilder, Bruce Barnes, Chris Johnston, Jeff Harris, Sue Pagram, David Grigg and your modest – and in this case long-suffering – reporter) wore an assortment of costumes from Cordwainer Smith’s Instrumentality stories and were basically there to plug Sydney’s bid for the 1983 Worldcon, which was done at the end of the presentation.

Cherry had come across from West Germany, while Jeff Harris, from Adelaide, was the only other non-Melburnian in the group.

(The bidders from Sydney seemed to believe that actually fronting to promote their own bid was beneath their dignity, and their bid was accordingly rewarded.)

As it happened, the Scandinavians were mounting one of their perennial hapless bids at the same time, and they scrounged up an anti-Australian promo at the end of the parade which succeeded in alienating a few more potential supporters of their own bid.

Anyway, the costumed ones I saw later that night were all thoroughly exhausted by it. (Good old RLF took part in the fancy dress parade with the same sort of good humour he had shown the previous day when discussing his writing career – at least in the early stages. But then armour does get warm faster than some other kinds of costume.)

Sunday

Despite the efforts of the previous day, I managed to get to the business meeting the next morning at 9.30, although good sense should have warned me that nothing good would come of it.

Nothing did.

The rest of the earlier part of the day was spent lounging around in the fan program room, listening as much as possible to people like Harry Bell and Peter Roberts and Joseph Nicholas and Mike Glicksohn explaining more about fandom than one would really want to hear on a Sunday, but in an entertaining way, every now and then making use of that delightful propinquity of convention arrangements which allowed one to sneak back into the mundane world of Serious Science Fiction and listen – ever so briefly from the balcony – to heavyweight panels with titles like ‘A Literature of Imagination’ or heavyweight speeches (for example Alfred Bester on ‘The Failures of Science Fiction’ – the poor man was only given an hour).

But Sunday was also the day of the Banquet, and I don’t have many opportunities to report on banquets. I’m not a fan of banquets, and suspect

that I never will be.

But one of the punishments inflicted on people like GUFF winners is recognition at things like banquets. Thus I was offered a free meal (provided I sat at the top table) and, having paid £7.50 for fish and chips the night I went out with Nils Dalgaard, Ellen Pederson, and Erik Swiatek, I accepted gratefully.

(I realize that I've now introduced a non-program element, but I shall return to the further adventures of this group later: in fact much later, in 1982, Nils formed part of an international rat pack that drifted around the Eurocon at Mönchengladbach...)

The alternative, after all, was to go out and enjoy myself, or perhaps to attend the banquet as a paying member and have to sit at the Australian table with boring conversationalists like Bill Rotsler.

You'll note, from the copy of the menu reproduced opposite [below], that rubber chicken was not available. This didn't mean that there was no discussion of the food.

SEACON '79

37th World Science Fiction Convention

BANQUET

6.30 for 7.00 pm, Sunday 26 August 1979

Winter Gardens Ballroom, Hotel Metropole, Brighton

MENU

Cornets de Saumon Fumé Joinville

(Cornet of Smoked Salmon with Prawns)

•

Queue de Boeuf Claire au Madère

(Clear Ox Tailk Soup with Madeira)

Paillettes au Chester

Cheese Straws

•

Aloyau de Beouf Mexicaine

(Sirloin of Beef with Onions, Capsicums and Mushrooms in a rich red wine sauce)

Petit Pois à la Menthe

(Minted Garden Peas)

Pommes Olivette

(Small Olive-shaped Roast Potatoes)

•

Vacherin au Framboises
(Meringue and Cream Gateau with Raspberries)

•
Café
Coffee

From the Australian/Rotsler table, for example, a celebratory and somewhat gaudy shard of criticism was rescued. For my part, I was seated between Roy Kettle and Peter Roberts, two of the funniest people in British fandom, in my opinion, and certainly just what one needs to keep one's mind off what one is eating.

As it happens, we somehow got the idea of rating each course on a 1-10 scale. This disease spread along the table to Bob Tucker, who communicated it (in a manner I'd rather not describe) to the group table in front of him (junior *Omni* executives, I believe).

Overall, I think our ratings would have been quite objective had it not been for Peter Roberts being a vegetarian and insisting on his ratings for plates of grass-like courses being included in the overall scheme.

Peter wasn't the only person eating grass-like substances at the banquet, as we discovered when, after having waited more than a few moments after the omnivores had been fed, Peter discreetly inquired about the arrangements for vegetarians.

'Don't worry, sir. there are 43 similar gentlemen here tonight,' the waiter whispered loudly. Those within hearing distance chuckled and looked around for another 43 orange-suited longhairs...

Of course, when Peter's 'food' arrived it was of the grass-like nature referred to above. But at least we were able, all through the evening, as one after another of these culinary disasters was served up to Peter, to reassure him that 43 others were going through similar agonies.

The virtues associated with collective suffering didn't seem to appeal to him at all.

The interesting conversations were – for me at least – just within earshot, but they were regularly interrupted by speeches (none of them too long or too bad).

In addition, Robin Johnson had arranged for some Australian stfnal awards to be presented during the banquet, and I had to make a short speech myself while presenting a Ditmar to Anne McCaffrey.

To ensure that banquetees didn't burn their mouths while eating, the meal had been designed so that the waiters and waitresses marched in and out at regular intervals, a regularity not disturbed by even the dropping of a tray of plates.

It seemed like eternity, but the banquet was eventually over and we were ushered into our R*E*S*E*R*V*E*D S*E*A*T*S almost close up for the Hugo Awards.

Not even Bob Shaw could pump much life into this dreary parade. So far as I was concerned, the big deal was seeing some people I would not otherwise have recognized, although by this time some judicious peeking at the formal program items had given me the chance to see and hear most of the professional writers at SEACON. Who got Hugo Awards in 1979 is now only an interesting bit of history.

Monday

Praise Be!

Apart from being scheduled to appear on a fan panel at 11 a.m. to discuss a generality of fannish things, I could forget about the formal program and concentrate on the other aspects of SEACON, the ones I'm about to describe – people, parties, and Brighton itself.

It's a natural enough progression, since the convention slowly wound down during the day, through an extended dead-dog party that night to a late-morning return to London on the train which truly was part of the convention since Ellen Pederson and Nils Dalgaard were on the same train and the convention finally ended for us when we parted from them near Carnaby Street in the early afternoon of 28th August.

(In a sense it kept going for a couple of days for, much to our surprise in a city as big as London, later that week we talked briefly and separately on street corners with Susan Wood and Bert Chandler.)

UNPROGRAMMED CONVENTION

One takes away such a variety of impressions from a convention that it is truly difficult to order, in any rational way, the encounters which occur.

It's for this reason, I believe, that so many writers about conventions fall back on a diary form, or else settle for an approach much more akin to random impressions than they would willingly admit.

I know that as soon as I contemplate imposing an order I shy away from almost every possibility. The people I visited after the convention – the Langfords, Pam Boal, Peter Roberts, and Eric Bentcliffe (and the various London-based fans) – I can, I think, safely deal with in a later chapter.

But as soon as I write that I realize how much fun it was to spend most of a night wandering from party to party with Eric Bentcliffe.

Eric was one of my first contacts with British fandom, and the issues of *Triode* I received were fanzines which impressed me with the quality of their reproduction as much as with the quality of illustrations and articles.

I believe that *Triode* was unexcelled anywhere in the world of mimeo fanzines for the former, and amongst the contenders for the latter.

But that's not what I really expected to write about here; it's just one of those things which happens when I start to think about Eric. I'll write about my visit to his home later.

I talked briefly with some other old fans from the past: Ken Slater, who sold me sf magazines as long ago as 1957, and Ron Bennett, whose crime was much greater, for he sold me old fanzines.

They were both in the book-flogging business at the convention, and I reveled in the thought that here at least one might recapture the spirit of the past.

It was good to see them both at last, even if we didn't talk for long. Moving on to recapturing the past in a more prosaic way, it was at SEACON that I was at last to complete my collection of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (from 1947 onwards) by buying the 25th Annish. One day, sadly, I suppose I shall be forced to read it.

Ken Bulmer was someone I hadn't expected to talk to at all. But one night in a bar we more or less accosted one another briefly: his life, like that of Ted Tubb, seems to me to have been one in which a substantial talent was ground down by the volume of work necessary to provide a reasonable living.

It's easy to say that I would have liked to have talked to him for much longer – I would have – but the same applied to many of the other British fans and writers to whom no more than a distant 'hello' was feasible.

As I indicated earlier, it took most of the convention for Ethel Lindsay and John Foyster to meet; once again, as was so often the case, we didn't have a chance to talk for long, and this exemplified the painful truth that fanzine publishers – indeed, fans in general – need more time than one visit with one another.

What's really needed is a full cultural exchange program, not just a few weeks in another country. At present, all that Australian fans can do is make return visits, which I did briefly in 1982.

Bob Shaw I didn't talk to. I've traded fanzines for letters of comment with Bob, but the crowds around him were – as most people know – almost impossible to broach. He wasn't unapproachable, just unreachable.

Brian Aldiss was one of the most approachable Guests of Honour I have ever seen in action. I have described his participation above. What a marvellous piece of PR work it was for science fiction conventions in general!

I wonder how many neofans were converted by this demonstration of friendliness by one of the world's best sf writers?

I've now rolled through a sample of British personalities in a summary sort of way. How about a party?

Mervyn Binns and I had been invited to the Gollancz party, as noted above. It was to be held in the Pavilion, which was quite a walk from the Metropole, and ultimately the perils of this distance were revealed to me.

Mervyn and I didn't want to spend very long there, since we had to tog up for the evening's parade, but we did want to enjoy it. It was a thirsty walk, as Mervyn soon demonstrated, but it was worth while to see such a high density of pros in action.

I even spoke to some I hadn't expected to.

Back in 1977 I had managed, at a stormy sort of Nova Mob meeting, to offend Vonda McIntyre with an off-hand remark that it was a pity that American science fiction had not yet produced a writer with the literary sophistication of, say (some waving of hand), Mark Twain.

Chris Priest, who was present at that Nova Mob meeting, later indicated that Vonda was more than slightly upset by this innocent but accurate observation. During SEACON I had been proving to be invisible to the McIntyre gaze. At the Gollancz party, however....

Well, I occasionally wear brightish tee-shirts. If they're not brightish, they're occasionally political. And for this day I happened to choose my Emma Goldman T-shirt (see photograph above). When he observed this apparition Chris Priest, ever anxious to demonstrate his prognosticatory powers, averred that Vonda McIntyre would certainly talk to me that day.

And it was so.

Indeed, she positively bounced over to see me and, going even further, introduced me to a few other of the prominent women writers present, such as C.J. Cherryh and Suzy McKee Charnas (but not Jacqueline Lichtenberg). It was a pleasant ending to an unnecessary difference of opinion.

Otherwise, the Gollancz party was an opportunity to talk to a few writers in a non-crowded environment. (Hmm, after a few days in the Metropole, talking to anyone at all in a non-crowded environment was a blessing.)

As I remarked a few paragraphs ago, it had been a thirsty walk from

the Metropole, and Mervyn Binns had been replenishing himself with occasional glasses of champagne. In fact we made quite a routine of it – he drank and I talked.

After an hour or so I felt that it was time to get going and said so in blunt terms to Merv. He, however, insisted that it was time for one more drink. He prevailed.

Then we set off. Now while it is a thirsty walk from the Metropole to the Pavilion, I can now add one further item to your store of knowledge: it is a tiring walk from the Pavilion to the Metropole. This is especially true if, like Mervyn Binns, you have been drinking champagne quite quickly for an hour and a half.

I may have been a little forceful in hurrying Merv along, but he really made life difficult by claiming that if only I would let him lie down for a little while he'd feel much better. This seemed an unpromising possibility, in terms of ultimately reaching the Metropole, so I insisted on walking him (though not frog-marching him) all the way back to the hotel where we were able to sober him up partially by the time of the parade.

Few people realized how difficult an evening Merv had that night. As a matter of fact, Mervyn Binns wasn't the only Australian to find it difficult to remain sober at crucial times. (Whether Al Fitzpatrick should be counted as an Australian, and whether he was ever sober during the convention, I leave to the judgment of those who monitored his movements more closely than I did.)

On the morning of the inaugural UK versus Australia fannish cricket match, so many Australians were unwell and unable to play for their country that the 'Australian' team finally included members as tenuously linked with Godzone as Mike Glicksohn (justification: he had once visited Australia, in 1975). The match itself was played on a pitch strange to Australians – a beach consisting of large pebbles (this undoubtedly explains the poor form of the few Australians actually in the team). Even Australian beach cricket is played in conditions superior to these.

It can't be denied, however, that the UK team was by far the better. Whether the result should have been declared a draw or not remains moot, but Mike Glicksohn and I should have received some award for best rugby tackle on a player moving between the wickets (an event imitated in an Alan Border testimonial match in 1993).

Apart from this event, Australians identified themselves as such only at a couple of times. There was a table in the fan room selling and giving away material supporting Sydney for the 1983 World SF Convention, and there was always an Australian or two behind the desk. I did a couple of

stints, and although there were many enquiries, most of the conversations seemed to be with other Australians, though some were only as 'Australian' as Robin Johnson.

The Australia in '83 room party was blessed with some of the worst Australian wine ever inflicted on fannish taste-buds (whether Australian or otherwise). I must take some responsibility for this, but the Australian Wine Centre in London – now, I trust, safely bankrupt – must take its share of the credit for locating this variously coloured vinegar which was wholeheartedly rejected as representative by all Australians except those most desperately in need of alcohol.

I managed rather better on one other occasion when Jenny Bryce and I had lunch with Terry Carr and a few others. Earlier in the year, while visiting Australia, Terry had become aware of my potential as a selector of wine, despite my teetotal status.

At the lunch he had the good taste to keep a straight face when I suggested a particular wine from the wine list. This was, of course, before the Australia in '83 room party and the Botany Bay Red.

The best meals available were those at the Churchill – that is, the breakfasts. Near the bottom must have been the meal with Ellen, Nils and Erik, which has been referred to above.

That was one of those lunches you have because it is pouring with rain and you want to sit down to eat with people and you don't look particularly carefully where you are going. The four of us had a fine time talking about science fiction and science fiction fandom, but fish and chips – bad fish and chips – shouldn't be one's most expensive meal at a convention.

Back to parties.

For example, Dave Hartwell had a party away from the Metropole (firm evidence of this is to emerge soon), and associated events suggest that it was early in the convention.

For what now seems like an age I stood in the centre of the room talking to Joyce Scrivner and Dave Langford. Well, listening to Joyce Scrivner and Dave Langford.

To be blunt, which Joyce Scrivner is inclined to be, not listening to Joyce Scrivner and Dave Langford, for Joyce (I seem to recall) said to me 'John Foyster, you're asleep.' It took me quite a time to comprehend this, which indicated the probable truth of the statement.

When I was able to reply I agreed, and shortly thereafter I left the party and set off to go to bed. Hotels are large and treacherous things in Brighton (as a Mrs. Thatcher was soon to discover) and getting out of one

of them, along the sidewalk, and into another, can consume a great amount of time.

The walk back in the cool night air (it was, I believe, around 2.00 a.m.) must have lifted my spirits somewhat because on reaching the Metropole I was easily persuaded by someone to go off to another party. I'm sure Eric Bentcliffe would not have done anything so callous, but I now recall no details of this other party.

Walking around Brighton by day was also possible, though one had to be careful about picking the day. If the day was fine, then it was pleasant to stroll about, and indeed there was one day when while out walking we came across, by chance, the folks going off to the Heyer Tea. It was a superbly fine day, and the costumed excellence fitted in well with the spirit of Brighton.

Brighton Rock was itself a desirable consumable (at least for people with sweet teeth like me), but it was really only when one got into the older section of Brighton – the part known as the Lanes, in particular – that the real extra-convention value of Brighton made itself clear. Though I'm not much of a window-shopper, this was plainly a fine place for it.

And worst of all – and I think this horror applies for almost every science fiction fan – there were a few second-hand bookshops.

I've slowly learned that these things are fine in one's own home town, but a deadly menace when at any great distance. Although it wasn't until we reached Bristol that I came across the breath-stopping sort of bookshop, there was still enough to groan about here. Almost all of it could be resisted, but in one shop I found two secondhand copies of the microprint edition of *The Oxford Dictionary*.

This was too much to resist, and I bought the cheaper of the two (it still had all the words I needed), little realizing what contortions I would go through to get it back to Australia: one volume was cabin baggage as 'reasonable reading matter'.

Why Fanzines?

Fanzines are why we are gathered together in this particular way. That's a slippery enough answer in itself, but in 1979 there were more pressing reasons for paying attention to this subterranean aspect of science fiction fandom.

For TAFF, Ian Maule and Joseph Nicholas had published *By British* ('A Fanthology of the Seventies') which not at all coincidentally appeared in time to be on sale at SEACON. More formally, Kevin Smith edited *Mood 70* ('The Best of British Fanwriting 1970-1979') for SEACON '79 Ltd. With a total of just under 150 pages these must be regarded as Serious Publications.

They are significant just because they were published at all. More than that, the editors clearly wanted to present their stories about what constituted British Fandom in this period. They present their aims quite frankly.

- I don't claim to have encapsulated the Seventies with this collection, and I have no doubts that some fans will tell me I've missed the single most vital piece of fanwriting of the last ten years, and why didn't I ask them if I could reprint it? I do claim that these are some of the best writers straight from the mainstream of British fandom – and that means they are very good indeed. (Kevin Smith)

- At the outset our aim was to publish a couple of articles from each decade to show the development of British fanzine fandom throughout the period. (Ian Maule)

We may begin to muse, for a moment, on the social philosophies underlying these introductory remarks, but we do not get very far before Ian Maule interrupts us with his later thoughts.

- However, looking back and re-reading the fanzines and articles that appeared in the early seventies it strikes us that a lot of what we drooled over and thought excellent then is now only suitable as a trap for fanthology compilers – they just don't stand up by today's standards. (...) • I think what you now hold in your hands is a better fanthology because of that re-think. Looking at some of the original articles we'd selected I can now see that although well written and interesting to me (...) the interest they originally aroused was of a transitory nature and is quite irrelevant to the fandom that we have around us now.

One is tempted to build theories about fan philosophies here but

instead we can turn aside and consider some facts.

We have a very large number of pages to work with (as did the editors), and a first useful step is, I think, to work out just what they chose to reprint – in chronological terms. Here’s a table which shows the approximate number of pages in the two anthologies which came from each year of the ‘seventies.

YEAR Number of reprinted pages

1970	1
1971	0
1972	3
1973	15
1974	0
1975	20
1976	28
1977	30
1978	25
1979	17

There’s a clear message here: the first half of the decade might just as well be consigned to the scrapheap of fannish history (a view several British fans appear to have held in the late ‘sixties).

Indeed, given that most of the 1975 contribution was a single article by Peter Nicholls, and that 1979 could scarcely be expected to have made much of a reputation by the time of publication, we find ourselves gazing at 1976 to 1978 as the memorable years of British fanzines in the ‘seventies, at least as revealed in these two anthologies.

The 1979 article is really just the long revisionist history of the ‘seventies by Joseph Nicholas which appeared in *By British*: fortunately it can serve us as a guide through what might otherwise have been an uncharted forest.

While I will use Joseph’s article as a frame for this discussion, there is one minor problem to be noted. Moskowitz’s Disease – the need to report pub squabbles as events of world-shaking significance – is one to which most fan historians are mildly susceptible.

Joseph Nicholas’s article reveals him to be no exception to this pattern. Colossi bestride the stage of world history in the form of civil servants using four-letter words as the reader is borne along from alpha (‘In The Beginning’ is the title of the first section of Joseph’s article) to omega (‘Sideways Towards the Millenium’) by surging section headings

which, if somewhat less messianic in tone, unrelentingly make sure we never forget that tide in the affairs of fen which leads inexorably to apocalypse. Who can resist the smell of soft soap in the morning?

But the appropriate place to consider Joseph's fanhistorical article at length is in its proper place: as part of the events of 1979.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Joseph tells us, fandom in Britain was unhealthy. Yet things could have been worse. Previously there had existed

- a scheme whereby anyone who wanted to publish a fanzine – regardless of their literary, artistic and editorial abilities – needed only to churn out a predetermined amount of wordage and then send it away for stencilling and duplicating by a 'central office' ... In other words, you could be rejected absolutely everywhere but still get yourself published.

Since self-publishing is the most common form of fan-publishing, and the barrier which PaDS seemed to be designed to overcome (as described by Joseph) was an economic one (making PaDS an unusually democratizing institution in fandom), it is scarcely possible at this point to avoid the thought that we are here dealing with an uncommonly organizing mind – one which likes to put things – and especially other people – in their places.

It isn't at all clear what the alternative and far more desirable practice is or was, but there is no doubting the writer's view that the practice described above was yucky.

Peter Weston's fanzine *Speculation*, we learn, was 'internationally circulated, highly respected and solidly sercon'. It is by no means clear whether any single one of these credentials did of itself guarantee exclusion from these historical surveys of the Seventies, but of the three the last seems closest: the only item reprinted from *Speculation* is an example of a subgenre very popular with the editors – the 'How I'm trying to become a Big Name Pro' confessional which depends for its impact, I suspect, upon how well one knows the author. That reprint is from 1973.

The Saviour, however, is at hand, in the form of Greg Pickersgill, assisted by Roy Kettle and various others. Pickersgill has his initial influence through *Fouler*, 'a badly laid-out, erratically duplicated and thoroughly tatty-looking ragbag': we may reasonably deduce from this that at this time Pickersgill was devoid of – at least – 'artistic and editorial abilities'.

Fouler is the source of the first reprinted item – a one-page 'ad' which depends for its impact substantially, if not wholly, upon the then-widespread British affliction of associating fanzines with animals. Perhaps this is the sort of thing Ian Maule had in mind when he wrote about having

second thoughts on re-reading what he had earlier had high regard for. Now, at any rate, its only value is in reminding us of a long-dead pastime.

1971, despite the continuing publication of *Fouler* and the emergence of Gannetfandom (see what I mean?), is unrepresented in the two collections.

This was also the period when, according to Joseph's review, fandom in Manchester 'began to clamber its way up from obscurity'. It's from one of the 1972 fanzines of that Group, *Hell*, that Maule and Nicholas reprint the first extended item, John Piggott's 'Babel Version Five: No. 1', an unremarkable account of Piggott's assault upon an apple tree. It stands out in the historical records under discussion by not being about science fiction fandom. This is the only item reprinted from 1972.

As Joseph Nicholas reports, at this time there were three significant serconzines – *Cypher*, *Speculation*, and *Vector* (edited by Malcolm Edwards for most of 1972), but there is no room for science fiction amongst the revisionists.

1973 is the first year with substantial representation. Malcolm Edwards's short piece is historically interesting, for it runs up the flag for yet another British Worldcon. But the longer pieces, by John Brosnan and Andrew M. Stephenson, represent quite different approaches to creativity – whether in fandom or without.

Brosnan's is the first of the 'Big Name Pro' articles I referred to earlier. 'Happiness is a Warm Rejection Slip' was a departure in editorial policy for *Speculation*, but this editorial flickering ensured that this magazine – which had 'five final-ballot Hugo nominations' – was represented in these compilations from the 1970s.

Australian fans who knew Brosnan before he travelled by bus and other methods to Britain – and especially those who endured his conversations about *Echo of Jackboots* – probably find this article more tedious than those who have known only the later Brosnan. This is the brief story of someone who decides he is going to be a writer; there's a serious message, but the touch is light. It isn't hard to see why John's writing would remain popular.

Andrew Stephenson's piece is rather the reverse. It appeared in *Blunt* (described by Joseph Nicholas as 'a large, attractive, well-written genzine with an unfortunately eclectic bent that tended to alienate much of its more fannish audience'), and deals seriously with Stephenson's endeavours as a fan artist. At the same time it is transposed into a fictive world, and the comparison with Brosnan's piece tells us something of the differing attitudes towards the writing of fiction of the two. Stephenson tends to

grab one by the lapel, while Brosnan plays it for laughs...

It is instructive, reading Brosnan, to note how much of the time the final sentence in a paragraph reads more like the punchline of a story than anything else.

The years 1974 and 1975 are described by Joseph Nicholas in a section titled 'Close the doors, they're coming in the windows!'. The launching of *Science Fiction Monthly*, the return of Greg Pickersgill to fanpublishing, and a general rise in the activity levels led Joseph to summarize the period with '... by the end of 1975 fandom was thriving again. The renaissance of earlier years had taken firm root and the future seemed full of promise.'

But there is relatively little representation of this period in the two collections – a long piece from Peter Nicholls and two short pieces by Roy Kettle, all originally published in 1975, constitute the only evidence we have about this renaissance.

Peter Nicholls's piece – a report on SEACON '75 as he saw it – has merits of its own. But it also may be read as an interesting attempt by an outsider to write like a fan, and in particular a fan who had had extensive exposure to at least part of British fandom in the early 1970s. What labels this as the work of an outsider, in part, is the verisimilitude with which it is presented.

The fact that fans in 1979 still talked about Nicholls's report with considerable awe is a tribute to his skills. For example, Nicholls makes much of Marianne Leconte's attempts to interview Chris Priest: 'She was onto the seventeenth tape, perspiring and fatigued, but Chris looked as fresh as when he started, two days ago. He was describing the plot of his new book, *La Mer Invertée* (The Lesbian Horse).' This is not only the start of a little bit of patter about liquids, but the skillfully developed climax of a series of short, blow-by-blow notes on this memorable encounter.

Furthermore, when Peter Nicholls writes about someone – addressing, say, his cretinism (that topic so much beloved of Ratfans) – he does so with skill and in detail, embroidering the initial impression in order to flesh out a whole person for us, not merely someone's hastily assembled straw man. One paragraph may illustrate his skill.

- I really like Martin. He has more integrity than almost anyone I know. He never slackens his valiant attempts to be totally offensive to absolutely everyone. He is a man of true dedication. To begin with he's good looking, in a poncy way, a fact he offensively hammers home by wearing priceless ivory pendants around his tanned neck. He addresses everyone as 'sweetie'. He boasts. He name-drops. He bullies waiters. He

humiliates people. He is unprincipled. Martin is really incredibly vile. I really do like him for this. He is ubiquitous for this, too. I tried to play with his girl-friend's foot under the table, and only when he fluttered his eyelashes at me did I realize that the foot in question was his. Oh well, in for a penny, in for a pound.

There is much more of this: plainly Peter Nicholls is not the sort of person you should invite to your parties. But in 'The Great SEACON Freakout' he produces one of the most memorable of personal experience convention reports.

Roy Kettle's two fillers, reprinted from *True Rat*, don't really begin to hint adequately at the depth of his talent (revealed rather more adequately in later reprints), but the advertisement for 'Was God A Poof?' is, I think, superior to the parodied SF magazine titles and stories which are reprinted, after a fashion in both of these collections.

True connoisseurs of the writings of Roy Kettle will be able to argue for years over which version of the contents of 'Science Fiction Plus VAT' the master preferred and should therefore be regarded as canonical – 'Fahrenheit 487' or 'Fahrenheit 519', '2161 – A Space Odyssey' or '2300 – A Space Odyssey'.

1976 saw the return of Greg Pickersgill with *Stop Breaking Down*. But according to Joseph Nicholas 'the promise of late 1975 was not being fulfilled – at least not by older fans'.

Readers of *By British* and *Mood 70* will find this opinion confusing. After all, as the table above indicates, 1976 is the year from which the editors have made the most extensive choice, and almost all of that has been the work of 'older fans'. Five pages from Dave Langford constitutes the only contribution by the 'talented new fans'.

Joseph has recently argued that his review was written independently of the selection of material. This is hardly convincing as a defence of the notion of establishing a canon of good fan writing from the 1970s. The only substantial item reprinted by the editors, from 1975, was the Nicholls piece, and a single squalor does not, I think, a boomer make.

For 1976 the editors chose much more material, most of it by older fans: direct contradictions of this kind are not the same as differences of opinion about relative merits amongst works of generally high quality.

At any rate, Dave Langford's short articles are thoughtfully planned examples of personal writing, amusing in a mildly-contrived way. But anyone reading through these collections in a chronological order – as I am here – would contrast them immediately with the smoothness of Nicholls's piece.

The pieces by the oldies are varied. Bob Shaw's 'Income Taxi' is straightforward *Hyphenstuff* which reflects Shaw's immensely accomplished skills – especially timing. Peter Nicholls refers, in the SEACON '75 piece, to others of Bob Shaw's skills, but his immaculate sense of timing should not be overlooked.

Rob Holdstock's 'Eight Days a Week' is another 'Big Name Pro' piece, one which by simple exaggeration can tell us something about the life of the young pros in England in the mid-70s, while carefully protecting the author from the perils of genuine self-revelation.

Graham Charnock's 'The Grand and Glorious Game of Fanac' was scarcely worth reprinting, but his other short article, 'Dodgem Dalmatians', has moments of inspiration. But whether a string of one-liners can hold the article together is another matter; it reads very much like an item which started out with an idea or two about content and some rehearsed lines but which, in execution, faded into boring generality, finally lurching back to the punchline.

Roy Kettle's two articles show some of his versatility. (He also has two fillers, the better of which quotes one 'Peter Nicholls' as defining sci-fi 'succinctly' as 'speculation, whether based on established scientific facts or on ...' going on for another ten lines.)

'The True Cat' immediately brings one out in a sweat worrying that this might be yet another boring thinkpiece about cats. But Roy Kettle does not let one down. The first paragraph amply describes the theme which is to be worked upon for the next several pages:

- In the daze of my youth we seemed to get through a lot of cats. We got through them like some people get through Kleenex, and almost as messily, although they were slightly more difficult to dispose of.

'An Interview with Thomas M. Disch' not only provides a stage upon which Kettle can deliver a monologue on his major failings as a conversationalist, but also an opportunity to drop careful oneliners like:

- My big chance. I followed him. We were alone. Luckily he is one writer whose name is impossible to slur. 'Mishter Disch?' I said.

1977 was also represented to an extent which I think belies Joseph Nicholas's claim about the performances of the older fans.

Kettle's 'How Not To Be A Writer' is the longest of his works reprinted, and by far the best single item in *By British*. His lightness of touch enables him to be serious without being maudlin, but at the same time he does not veer towards the frantic, as is often the case for other writers on this theme.

Kevin Smith's 'The Way We Are' is a Damon Runyon pastiche

whose charm probably relies heavily upon knowing a little more about the major characters than an outsider can. One may appreciate what has been done in an abstract sort of way, but at that level names may be interchanged freely without changing the impression.

Rob Holdstock's 'It's Hell Being a Contemporary of Andrew M. Stephenson' suffers when compared with the other tales of (semi-) professional life. But Holdstock's ear for a good line reveals itself in several places as he reports on the Dublin Professional Writers Conference. One of the problems of reading a collection of 'the best' is that one falls too easily into the sin of comparison, as I've done several times above. Dave Langford is represented again, this time with a piece from his own fanzine and from a relic one might not have expected to see represented – *Triode*.

I have to admit to a great weakness for *Triode*, so it will not surprise you to read that I felt that Langford's filler from *Twll Ddu* was exactly that, while his *Triode* piece, 'The Sound (If Any) Of Music' manages a straight story line better than much of Langford's other work.

1978, the last year from which items are reprinted, is represented by only two pieces in *Mood 70*, of which one is Greg Pickersgill's 'Billy The Squid'.

Given the role ascribed to Pickersgill by various writers in the two collections this scarcely seems a fair choice. He starts with an old-fan-and-tired paragraph and then wanders forcefully through a long series of topics during the course of which one wonders how much of the writing is in fact self-revelatory.

When Greg Pickersgill writes 'Birmingham or Newcastle or whatever last outpost of civilization the thing is being held in' is he parodying or exemplifying his reputed xenophobia? Is it a coincidence that he quasiquotes Ian Maule on his being 'as much a nonentity in fannish terms as I am in the other world' immediately after his dreary description of his working life? In any case, given the beliefs of the editors, it seems remarkable that he is represented by only one article, and that this should be it.

Joseph Nicholas sees 1978 as a period when there was a resurgence of serconism (not represented in these collections) and when 'The real highlight was Alan Dorey's personalzine *Gross Encounters*' (also not represented in these collections).

1978 is represented by a handful of other pieces, rather varied in style. I was very pleased to see included some of Peter Roberts's damning book reviews appearing as fillers (given his generally acknowledged role

throughout the seventies).

Dave Langford's other piece is one of his little playlets which read so well when you know the characters, but otherwise lose some of their bite.

Rob Hansen's article 'Shake, Rattle and Roll' is probably interesting enough but is about a subject for which I have no enthusiasm (see my GUFF platform).

Chris Priest – on being a science fiction fan as well as a writer – reveals his skill as a fan writer without compromising professional standards. And that's it.

Joseph's article reviewing the period is the 1979 representative, and as I've tried to indicate during the course of my review it is difficult to assess what Joseph is writing when the subjects he writes about are so much at variance with the critical opinion manifested by the choice of material in the two collections. Joseph is very mindful of what he is saying, but whether it is connected with the real world must be left to someone else to assess.

But we can still say a few things about British fandom in the seventies, assuming these two collections to be representative.

Firstly, Roy Kettle was unquestionably the most talented of the younger writers. He is widely and justifiably represented in these two collections and whether an item is long or short there is no doubt at all about its strength or direction.

Other writers seem less exciting by comparison – and at times frankly bland, with prose often limping along in just the manner which the authors so readily lambaste in the work of others.

Secondly, these are not quite representative collections. The mismatch between Joseph's historical review and the selections has been noted over-often, but there is one clearly-missing element – all that sercon stuff at which the Brits have, in a way, excelled over the years.

Peter Weston, for example, may not have been able to write his way out of a dependent clause, but he did have a way of encouraging others to write so effectively that he fostered a particular way of writing about science fiction which was widely applauded (note the Hugo nominations). I may easily be wrong, but it is difficult to imagine an alternative world in which *Foundation* came into existence without the climate previously created by Weston with *Speculation* (despite the curiously low opinion held of Pete by a number of UK fans).

One undercurrent of these contributions ought also to be noted.

One of the major attractions of fandom for me is that social class is *relatively* unimportant in determining relationships between fans. I've met

fans from over a dozen countries, and in only one country has social class appeared to me to be at all a significant factor – the United Kingdom.

Yet another deficiency in what has been considered above is revealed by the title of the second of the official SEACON '79 fan publications. *The Enchanted Duplicator* was reprinted yet again, and although there's the Bob Shaw reprint from *Maya* (which looked to me like a recycled *Hyphen* article, if one really wants to investigate pre-history) there's little in the two collections which comes close to being distinguished and polished in the peculiar way which the Willis-Shaw collaboration was.

Because, for all the joshing, the writers in *By British* and *Mood 70* take themselves more than a little seriously. Moskowitz's Disease seems pretty rampant throughout the country – perhaps not so overt as in Joseph's article, but subtextually significant. British fandom thought it important to establish a canon for the Seventies. This has been done with unquestioned success. Yet by doing so the editors of these anthologies have opened to us the possibility that all they have done is stir the storm in the teacup.

Travellin' Fan

Europe, and What We Did There

It isn't always the case that things work out the way you plan them. Several times in the next couple of weeks the truth of this off-the-cuff thought was brought home to us.

My plan to attend the German science fiction convention in Unterwössen in Bavaria was abandoned because Jennifer's friend in Basel was having more than the usual amount of trouble with her boyfriend – a telephone call during the week established that he was now into hitting, and we all thought that some visitors from outside might calm things down. As well as that, the details I had about how to get to the convention seemed, in the cold light of day, to be shy of a few crucial facts.

So we planned to visit Liz in Basel, then travel on to visit Franz Rottensteiner in Vienna, then wind our ways back to England via Venice, Florence and Paris. That didn't work out either.

What did work out was my back-up plan; to visit Cherry Wilder and Horst Grimm in Langen, in the event that things in Basel weren't too bad. On the Friday afternoon – the last Friday in August 1979, though I did not think about the significance of this at the time, and you are possibly wondering what it is too – we were to arrive in Basel.

That meant catching the boat-train on the Thursday night. Here was another cultural shock; as Australians we had read about boat-trains, but I at least didn't appreciate just what that meant. Jennifer, in fact, very much had the advantage of me over the next couple of weeks, for she had travelled in Europe in 1976.

Our immediate problem was solved, however, by the much-travelled Chris Priest, who drove us to Victoria in time to catch a train not long before midnight – and a last-minute job it proved to be, too, for it took rather longer than anyone had expected.

As always, Chris delivered the goods (two tired Australians, in this case). I remember nothing of the train trip, except for the crowding, and rather more of the boat trip, which was on a ferry which seemed wider than it was long.

It was certainly not one of the apprentice submarines in which more recent capitalists seem to specialize. There wasn't much chance to sleep –

the change to the boat at Dover occurs at around 1 a.m., and the boat trip is only about five hours – but not much chance to do anything else either. All the same, I slept better than Jennifer did.

We were surprisingly bright, I thought, just before six in the morning when we had to change to the train to Brussels, which also involved getting our Eurail passes stamped. The train was uncrowded (indeed, it wasn't until we arrived in Italy that we discovered what a crowded European train was like) and the one-hour trip to Brussels was uneventful.

All we had to do there was change trains, and there was a wait of almost an hour. I can remember working out which platform we had to catch our train from and then the two of us wandered out the front end of the station for my first glimpse of a European city. Jennifer is more practical – she remembers getting her first decent cup of coffee for a long time at that station, and when pressed I have to remember buying a Coke. What is most remarkable is that the coffee was available at the railway station; drinking coffee at an Australian railway station is a high-risk activity.

It was a quiet square in front of a railway station, and at that time of the day almost nothing was happening. Back to the train.

The trip to Basel was a long one, passing through Luxembourg, Metz, and Strasbourg. Both Jennifer and I slept for part of the trip, but despite being cooped up in a train we saw enough countryside to appreciate that we were in for a scenic tour for the rest of the trip. Mind you, the camera eye reveals that quite a deal of sleeping was done whilst passing through attractive countryside.

Basel

We arrived in Basel in mid-afternoon. We installed ourselves in a small hotel (the Hotel Greub – a hotel which has since been demolished) opposite the railway station. I came to like that railway station very much, partly because it became so familiar, but partly because it had a very wide range of services for its size.

We hadn't planned anything expensive, but even so the showering arrangements looked unusual, seeming to be nothing more than a shower stall placed next to a wall in an ordinary bedroom; and so it was. You had to be careful not to get confused between the wardrobe and the shower, rather like Garrison Keillor's greatest invention, the combination floppy-disk drive & toaster.

Liz met us for afternoon tea and we went to a health restaurant. Liz had muesli, making it clear that people in Switzerland were different. Later, when I ordered a cheese salad for dinner and got *exactly* that, I was absolutely certain they were. (Jennifer ordered a meat salad. It was a meat salad and no more – nothing more.)

We wandered around Basel by night a little bit, finding out from Liz what the lay of the emotional/physical land was. Apparently things had cooled off somewhat, so I telephoned Cherry in Langen and made arrangements to travel up to visit her and Horst the following day.

I had almost adjusted to the idea that I was in a country – indeed, a group of countries – in which English might be spoken by some, but by and large other forms of communication were needed.

I knew, because my grasp of languages other than English was so weak, that I could be in for an interesting time. (I actually enjoy other languages, and sometimes have a modest notion of sentence structure, but I never have any vocabulary worth speaking of, as you might say. I'm therefore a tolerable listener at times, but a hopeless speaker.)

It would certainly be interesting if I failed to make the connection with Cherry and Horst. One of the marvels of the European train system at this time was the regularity of the timetable; the trip from Basel to Frankfurt was just over three hours, with trains arriving in Frankfurt at 17 minutes past the hour, every hour! I took a fairly early train, and looked forward to a pleasant morning of travel; I was due back in Basel on Sunday afternoon. And so, on 1 September 1979, my train rolled across the frontier into Germany.

Cherry Wilder in Langen

Oh, the wonder of it all! Whereas the trip down from Oostende to Basel had been one covered in half-sleep, this time I was fully awake, having even had a shower in the strange contrivance already described, so I could take in so many things I had never seen before.

It wasn't just the European landscape which appealed to me (the Basel-Frankfurt train ride is not superbly notable for its scenery, but you do have to endure the Rhine and the Mosel and several fascinating cities, even if viewed only from the train); even the rolling stock in the stations had interest – all of it was indicative of a well-developed transport system, something one simply doesn't see in Australia.

The trip was far too short for me, but then I was soon going to have

plenty more of them. And I need not have worried about Cherry and Horst; they were waiting for me at the Frankfurt railway station – much bigger than the station at Basel – and I had no longer to worry about my lack of German.

We took a short subway trip and then walked down through the older part of the town to the Main, on the other side of which we were to catch a 'bus to Langen.

I've always regretted that we didn't spend a little more time looking at all those buildings near the cathedral which the travel books depict; at the time I was concentrating on the people, especially a troupe of actors who were performing on a stage in front of the cathedral.

As we crossed the Main over one of its several bridges I was shown yet another phenomenon which I didn't see enough of – a market on the southern bank which spilled over onto boats (or barges) moored nearby. I have relatively little interest in market produce of this kind (the usual crafty stuff), but I felt there was probably something new here.

In Langen Horst took me out for a walk around the area for the afternoon. Langen is not large, and can be regarded as only just failing to be a part of Frankfurt; the green belts around Frankfurt, which impressed me very much from the 'bus, make it difficult to decide on the basis of simple observation just where the city boundary is.

The Grimms lived near the southern border of Langen, so there were plenty of fields nearby. But although there are parts of Langen where the buildings are quite dense, there are also rustic areas, and those are the ones Horst favoured.

I later visited Langen a couple more times, so my impression of the town is now much more developed.

In 1979 Horst made sure that I saw some of the old (such as a tower where eagles were meant to roost during the appropriate season) and some of the less old but equally memorable (such as the remains of the synagogue which had been vandalized that night in 1938).

Horst was an ideal guide, both knowledgeable and caring of the visitor's interests. It was a wonderful afternoon.

But there was more to this day than idle wandering; on 1 September 1939, forty years before, the tanks had rolled into Poland. (The next time I visited Europe the tanks were rolling through Poland again.)

One outcome of that day in 1939 and those which followed was that Horst spent time as a youthful teenager in the German Army. Another outcome was that German television in September 1979 had some special documentary programs that night.

After many years working in Australia Horst now worked for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, a paper somewhat to the left of the perhaps better-known *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Horst's life seemed to me all of a piece, in which his work and his politics combined to reflect his concern (if not despair) about the past and to some extent the present. He very plainly had mixed feelings on this day, being concerned to assure me both of his conviction that nothing approaching the Third Reich could occur again and of his deep alarm at the occasional visible signs that it might.

From German television that night I learned several things. One was that television is a pretty good way to pick up a feel for a language; the messages, especially in commercials, are so simple that one can acquire quite a veneer, rather like Peter Sellers in *Being There*.

A second was that the quality of German documentaries is far above that of Australian ones (at that time hardly surprising).

A third was that German interviewers were very good indeed; admittedly they had the opportunity to work up a major issue, and to explore it (or exploit it) with some of the figures who had direct involvement with the activities being discussed.

Fourth, and finally, I shared with Horst and with the young interviewers a sense of incredulity as I listened to the older men – those of the generation before Horst – still defending the Third Reich and all it stood for. Here I could feel directly the alarm which Horst had talked about.

But I could also see the skill of the young interviewers as they hammered away at these old Nazis. Yet I do not think that unbelievers of even younger generations would take much notice; publicity, as leaders of the Ku Klux Klan have noted, is what maniacs feed on.

We did talk about science fiction as well, both that night and the next day. Cherry and Horst had both enjoyed SEACON, and Cherry also talked a lot about what it means to be an English-speaking writer of science fiction in Germany. She very plainly was delighted with the kind of company she could find in Europe. On Sunday morning Horst and I wandered further afield, to a much older town called Dreieich. Walking there, and back, gave more much more opportunity to appreciate the German countryside. The buildings in Dreieich are much older than those in Langen.

And beside a freeway (oh disillusioning freeway!) Horst and I explored the ruins of a castle which is still used for theatrical performances.

Under the cracked and crumbling arches we studied the tombs, seeing

how far back we could reach to our ancestors. It wasn't too far, thanks to the efluxion of time on the one hand, and the effects of acid rain, and other pollutants of human experience, on the other.

We caught a 'bus back to Langen, but not before Horst had time for a beer at a kiosk (as we would call it in Australia) in the town square; this is not the kind of thing you can do in an Australian town on a Sunday morning.

With some regret I now had to prepare to leave for Basel; the train left at around 3.30 p.m. and there was a 'bus to catch to Frankfurt. But there was still time for conversations and promises to see one another again.

The train arrived in Basel at about a quarter to seven, an hour or so before the next train left for Vienna. Jennifer was in the right place at the right time and so, after a quick gathering of refreshments at the station and a wander around, we took our place on the train for Vienna, the *Wiener-Walzer*.

(I do like the habit of naming trains; it makes information so much clearer.)

I slept well that night, so well that I have no idea of how well Jennifer slept! I can remember staring bleary-eyed at the railway station at St Pölten as we went through in the morning. We arrived at the Westbahnhof in Vienna just before 9 a.m.

Franz Rottensteiner in Vienna

I had read that you could easily find a place to stay when you arrived, but we had booked in advance to stay at a pension on the Graben, in the centre of the city. There certainly were a lot of friendly hawkers for hotel custom at the station, however.

I had been looking forward very much to visiting Vienna; not just to meet Franz, with whom I had been corresponding for over a decade, but because of what I had read about the city. I therefore had a map, and with this map in hand I felt that I knew how to get around. All I did wrong was underestimate a few things.

On the map the walk down Mariahilferstraße to the Graben did not seem very far, and certainly the sort of distance one might want to walk on a cool summer's morning. I underestimated the distance slightly. I also underestimated the weight of our luggage, especially when carried over a substantial distance on a warm summer's morning.

This was all a very interesting introduction to Vienna, however, even though our attention was very much focused on what we were carrying, as opposed to our surroundings. It was mostly shop-windows anyway, down Mariahilferstraße, except for places like the church where we stopped to rest on this hot summer's morning.

Although we didn't know it at the time, we passed quite close to Franz Rottensteiner's apartment.

Eventually we reached Kärtnerstraße at the end of this sweltering morning, and from there it was a short walk to the Graben and our pension, a friendly and wonderful place we came to treasure.

We had only a few days in Vienna. Jennifer and I did a lot of visiting in that time, and what we saw and felt had given to us a feeling about that city which is matched by no other city. Some, but only some, of that feeling can be conveyed here.

We were there in the week which was being celebrated because Vienna was becoming a third United Nations city (after New York and Geneva); a complex called United Nations City, over the northern banks of the Danube, had been completed and was being opened. We took a trip on a suburban train out past the Prater and the famous Ferris wheel and wandered around these new buildings which are so typical of modern bureaucracies.

At the other extreme, that first night we went to the Opera House. We had checked the program on the way down from the station, and although we didn't think we had the resources for the opera being performed on the Tuesday night, we did think we could manage the Monday night performance.

Standing room tickets are cheap, but you have to stand in long queues just to buy them. We waited for just under two hours in order to pay 65¢ each to hear Leonard Bernstein conducting Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

In the queue we talked to a young man from Birmingham who was visiting his uncle and was going to use the night's performance as training for the next night (at the opera, which we had decided not to try for). The performance was stunning – by far the greatest musical experience of my life.

In a sense, I suppose, the experience was heightened for me by the political context, the notion that the beliefs of Schiller and Beethoven were, in a sense, being realized here in a much more important way than the UNO bureaucracy, but the musical experience certainly stirred the audience (two people fainted in our immediate vicinity) – and the musicians; the soloists insisting on singing along with the chorus and,

because they were pretty mighty singers, overshadowed the chorus completely.

Afterwards we had supper with the young man from Birmingham to try to relax, but I think we slept well that night only because physical exhaustion overwhelmed emotional exultation.

On this first trip to Vienna we managed to visit some of the significant buildings, especially art galleries, which that city has in abundance.

The Upper Belvedere, and especially its modern paintings (later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), was especially precious to me and I remain enamoured of it now. But we did also visit Franz Rottensteiner.

I telephoned Franz on the Tuesday morning, and he suggested coming around that afternoon. By then I had discovered that Franz really lived within walking distance of where we were staying – and indeed, my main impression of Vienna remains that everywhere was in walking distance of everywhere else, though I know it isn't true because we took the subway and the train and the tram from time to time.

Franz's apartment is several floors up in an old building with fixed rent; Franz had decorated it superbly and in the main room the major impression is of a wall of books.

Many of these were – and this may fit ill with the impression readers of Franz's critical writings have formed – American hardcover volumes, some of them rather rare. A central part of the collection is, however, a multi-lingual collection of the works of Stanisław Lem. I was impressed.

But I was more impressed by Franz and his sense of humour, something often cunningly disguised in his writings. We talked at length about science fiction and Bruce Gillespie, about work and politics, and then Franz suggested going out to dinner with him and his friend Hanna and her brother.

And that's where Jennifer and I first met Dr. Rottensteiner's future wife. We had one of our best meals ever that night; Franz had as a favourite one of those hidden places which never seems to be written up anywhere. I remember having a marvellous fish, while we all had elaborate pancakes of one kind or another. Hanna had relatively little English, but some German as well as Polish, while her brother, who was an engineer in the Polish Army, had no English at all; so, because Jennifer had no German, she talked to Hanna and I talked to Hanna's brother.

We had a great time, even though we didn't understand each other very well. At the end of the night Franz suggested that the next night we

should come back to his apartment; he was giving a party. We decided that as Australians we had to find a koala bear as a present for Hanna; we were successful, but it was a little more difficult to manage in Vienna than it would have been in Melbourne. But Kärtnerstraße is one of those streets where you can find almost everything.

And what a party it was! There were probably only twenty or thirty people there, but Jennifer spent most of the night finding out about the East-West nuclear energy trade, while I talked to Roman Werfel, an old Polish Stalinist now 'retired' from the party hierarchy (he talked to me about his time as a revolutionary in Poland in the 1920s).

Later we managed to fit in visiting a couple of other places – a museum based on the Roman origins of Vienna, one of Mozart's houses – a few things like that. But we also prepared to travel to Italy, which meant booking tickets at one of the other stations.

We had done this successfully, but just before the party I discovered that I had mislaid my Eurail pass. We made some enquiries late that afternoon but were unsuccessful. Next day – the day we were travelling – we started trying again, but with little luck. But by midday all turned out well – a Viennese citizen had handed in the Eurail pass (which, I ought to say, is a very negotiable sort of item) and I was able to reclaim it from one of the railway stations.

We finished our time in Vienna with a warm glow towards both the city and its citizens, especially Franz and Hanna.

The train we took south to Florence was named Remus, and very early in the trip we experienced directly what those signs at the railway stations in Vienna had hinted at; a separate fare for 'hund' did indeed mean that dogs travelled on trains. And on our train, in our carriage, was a lady with a large dog looking for a comfortable compartment to spend the night. We joined the few others in our compartment in making the place look very full indeed.

It was six thirty in the morning when we passed through Venice, giving me a chance to regret briefly that we weren't visiting.

At 10 a.m. the train pulled in to the first railway station I had come across in Europe which did not appear to have a name. It was Florence, though the station is named Santa Maria Novella.

Florence

Jennifer had visited Florence before, in 1976, but then it was a matter of

staying with a friend who was doing postgraduate studies in art history, now returned to Australia.

We stayed for a few nights at the Soggiorno Iris (which recommended itself to us because the owners had lived in Australia for a while) on Piazza Santa Maria Novella. From our window we could see an ornate church. Its name was Santa Maria Novella.

Sometimes Italy's like that.

We were in Florence because Jennifer had been there before and because of the art. The latter soon became more important than the former. And science fiction very much took a back seat for these few days; I did notice an English-language second-hand bookshop with a few sf paperbacks in the window and, as we wandered around behind the carabinieri barracks which was on the far side of Piazza Santa Maria Novella from our pension I saw a (closed) comic-book shop (or so it seemed from the window) which I expect sold science fiction on the side.

When I did buy a book in Florence it was a collection of essays by Joyce Carol Oates, from a news-stand near the Post Office. There were some definite gains to be reported, however.

For example, a year before I had been arguing in *Chunder!* with Damien Broderick about whether Ghiberti's Doors of Paradise were on the Baptistry (or on the Baptistery – obscure reference...) and now I could walk down a side street and study them for myself. Or walk inside the building itself.

I made a discovery in a nearby construction which I would prefer not to have made; climbing Giotto's Belltower proved to be difficult not so much for the *amount* of climbing as for its *nature*, and although I had always been aware that I wasn't very happy about heights, it wasn't until I had to walk across the open grilles to get to the next set of stairs that I found out how strong my, ah, concerns, about height were.

But there were many enjoyable experiences to make up for that discomfort.

I had the feeling that very few of the other tourists in Florence at the time would have spent so much time wandering about the southern outskirts of the city just because Henry James had enjoyed living there so much – and had indeed in that place shared a residence with a woman (Constance Fenimore Woolson). It isn't hard to understand why James (or anyone) would have liked that area so much.

The other time we travelled out of Florence also involved an American woman.

On our last day we decided to visit Fiesole, an older town on hills to

the north overlooking Florence, and were planning to take a 'bus. We had almost reached the 'bus stop when we were asked by the driver of a Volkswagen whether we knew the way to Fiesole.

Well, I kind of did, and so she offered us a lift. She was preparing an exhibition at the Medici-Riccardi Palace and was just up from Rome, which is apparently where she took her driving instruction.

We miraculously reached Fiesole after our driver insisted on confirming my navigational instructions, just after I had given them, with whomever happened to be nearest – no matter which side of the road they happened to be on. It was easy to pull up next to them and interrogate while flabbergasted drivers struggled to avoid us.

A couple of hours wandering around the Tuscan hills does much for one, and I have very much regretted not returning there. We were driven back to Florence by our American benefactor, though in less exciting style. It's understandable, though, that most of our time in Florence was spent inside – there's so much to be seen in galleries and museums that is actually worthwhile or even important that being outside in the sun seemed unusual.

Anyone who has visited us in St Kilda knows that at least one of us is an enthusiast for Botticelli, and although it was possible to add a few more prints to our collection, seeing the originals (damaged though they might be) was something we regarded as more important.

And then there were tombs, statues, architecture generally – all those things striking for the contrast between the permanence they embody and our own relative transience. Just *being* in Florence was itself wonderful (as was being in Milan a couple of years later) and one reason for this was the strengthening of my reaction to the light in the Northern Hemisphere, which I've already referred to in writing about the Serpentine in London.

The kind of life I could take a lot of in Florence is typified by a very ordinary experience. One day we decided to have lunch in the Boboli Gardens (something which many people had thought of doing that day), and walked there down some back streets, picking up something to eat and drink on the way in a tiny grocery where no one spoke English but where the proprietors were friendly and charged almost nothing.

We wandered around the gardens for half an hour or so, then settled upon the amphitheatre as a place to eat our lunch. So did about sixty other people.

But the amphitheatre was large enough to allow all of us to sit in a high private space where we nevertheless felt we had company. There were no blaring radios or any of the other unpleasant necessities of

civilized Western life.

Then suddenly, but not simultaneously, though certainly in a short span of time, all around the amphitheatre the eaters stopped eating and looked up to see a newly-married bride and groom walking down the long axis of the amphitheatre; they looked so much like the model of a bride and groom on a wedding-cake that no one could resist breaking into applause. They were surprised and then pleased, and waved to everyone.

What was important to me was that everyone regarded this as a very *ordinary* incident – no matter how magnificent it looked.

Up to this point our travels around Europe had been untroubled. When it came to moving on to Paris things got difficult.

We had gone down to the station to book our onward journey only to discover that because the school year was now starting there was no space available on trains direct to Paris for the day we wanted, or even for the couple of days after that. This was the first time we made extensive and practical use of the Thomas Cook Railway Timetable.

Our first problem was that we had a hotel booking in Paris, so there would at least have to be a telephone call to straighten that out. Our second problem was that we did want to get to Paris fairly soon.

The railway timetable revealed that the only practical alternative was to travel around the coast, rather than following the direct route through Switzerland. The train we actually booked on was not one of the big expresses; it was instead a very local train for a journey of about an hour across to Pisa, then being linked with a larger train which went through Ventimiglia and on to Nice, arriving there at about 9.30 p.m.

We figured we could stay overnight in Nice and then take a train on to Paris the next day. Jennifer made a couple of telephone calls (to Paris and Nice) and I booked the train tickets.

Florence – Nice – Paris

The train across to Pisa was interesting but very slow. And from there on the train fell further and further behind schedule.

The trip up the western coast of Italy was made interesting at one point when some Australians wandering up and down the train stopped to talk; it turned out that one of them was a keen science fiction fan from Melbourne and remembered me from Space Age Books – indeed, it had been that which first prompted him to stop. He hadn't known about SEACON, though.

By the time we got to Ventimiglia it was plain that we were going to be very late in Nice, and in fact we arrived after midnight.

The train disgorged many passengers who were rather anxious about where they were going to sleep. At least Jennifer had made a booking for us (out of Frommer's *Europe on \$10 a Day*) at a place very near the station – the Hotel des Nations.

The lights at the Hotel des Nations were out and the sign indicated that they had no spare rooms. We decided we would try to rouse them, and said farewell to some of our fellow passengers who were going to have to try their luck further into the town.

It was very hard to waken anyone, and when we did we found out that our room had been let (not surprising). We made a very small fuss and were grudgingly given a small room not normally let out (we were told).

It certainly looked as though it was some months since it had been occupied, but at 22 Fr a double it was well below the lowest price quoted by Frommer (we had already decided that we could usually get good rooms at prices below Frommer's lowest, so this was no great surprise). After that amount of travel we were happy to sleep anywhere.

We had to pay more for our breakfast than we did for the room. But when we came across one of our friends from the previous day's journey and discovered how much he had had to pay for a room we had no complaints. So far as going to Paris was concerned, there was only one train we were interested in travelling on – *Le Mistral* – and that was easily booked for that afternoon.

We therefore had a morning in Nice, and a wonderful morning for strolling it was. We did nothing of cultural or intellectual significance: we just looked at the Mediterranean and at the buildings and the people.

Just before we took the train to Paris I had for lunch the most marvellous salad rolls I had ever eaten, and Jennifer had a Salad Niçoise; we ate them looking out over the sea. The accident of having to travel in this way rather than directly to Paris was proving most fortunate. This good fortune continued after we left Nice. *Le Mistral* was the best train we travelled on in Europe that summer, and I was so taken by Lyon as we passed through it that I resolved to return there. (This is described in a later chapter.) We reached Paris just after 10 p.m.

Paris

We were not particularly worried about arriving late in Paris, and because

the hotel we had booked in to was handy to a metro station it was quite easy to get there.

The management of the Hotel du Lys had changed since Jennifer stayed there in 1976, but everyone was still very friendly, even though I didn't appreciate this much in 1979. The Hotel du Lys is near the Odéon station, which makes it handy to almost everything.

Over the next few days Jennifer introduced me to many parts of Paris, but it wasn't until a much longer stay in 1981-2 that I felt at ease. One reason I felt uncomfortable was the language. My French should have been able to stand the small pressures which are placed upon the tourist, but I failed completely – or almost completely.

The truth was that in practice I managed better in German, in which I had had a total of about fifteen hours of instruction, and in Italian, in which I had had none.

I had, as Franz had pointed out to me in Vienna when we were discussing my limping German, no active vocabulary (in German I was more at home talking about test-tubes and formulas and equations). In Paris I was immensely frustrated because I could not communicate with anyone effectively.

But I *understood* quite a lot. I didn't understand idle chat, but I could make sense of a newspaper, or understand questions. I just couldn't answer – a disappointing situation for someone with French ancestors, albeit French ancestors some centuries in the past.

When I worked out what the problem was, I felt somewhat more comfortable, and late in the stay was able to put my meagre skills to some use. The arrangement we had made was that I would travel back to England ahead of Jennifer in order to do some of the fan visiting while she would be joined in Paris by an Australian friend coincidentally visiting at about this time.

These plans – and indeed the general scheduling of holidays – were somewhat disrupted by a train strike. What made the problem worse was that the strike affected the major rail lines (and some minor ones) but not completely. Some trains were running, but no one seemed to know exactly which ones were running and which were not, and when the functioning trains were running.

This is the kind of situation in which it helps to know what people around you are saying. All this happened, naturally, just as I was making my booking to go to London and we were expecting Jennifer's friend in Paris, *and* at a time when accommodation was tight; although a room had been booked for Joan the manager didn't want to keep it unless he had a

guarantee that she would turn up and pay.

My limited linguistic competence was put to some use: Jennifer, who had a good active vocabulary but had trouble following rapid conversations and gestures, did the talking while I did the listening. I was a sort of monoglot uni-directional translator, adding what I thought Jennifer should say in response. This was particularly difficult when communicating by telephone.

We nevertheless spent a lot of time at the Nord railway station wondering whether Joan's train would arrive (having now learned that mine was definitely departing next morning); indeed when it did arrive its behaviour was contrary to all that we had seen and heard at the station.

There were probably other things about Paris that made me feel uncomfortable, but at the time this seemed the most obvious one. In retrospect I suppose the fact that it was more crowded and rushed than anywhere else we had been for a week or so must have been another contributing factor, especially since just these things had made me feel uncomfortable about London. But there was much to like, if only I could have seen it.

The area itself was filled with bookshops, some of them selling science fiction (even in English), and I was certainly attracted to the French cinemas nearby.

We saw *Alien* with French sub-titles at a first-release house which showed wonderful commercials and had girls selling candies and ice-creams during the short interval; perhaps it was the fact that the selling of ice-cream was integrated with the commercials which most appealed to me.

We explored back streets and tiny stores, gardens and museums and art galleries, markets and department stores and the Seine. But it wasn't until much later that I appreciated these things.

For now it was to be an early train north and then back across the Channel by hovercraft to England, and back to science fiction fandom.

Round England

Now, the ways that we spent our time, I guess, were therefore the ways you spend time when you are normally at home. In other words, Chris made his flat a kind of second home, and that gave us a chance to settle in, settle down, recover – do all of those important things, such as the dry-cleaning and the laundry – which are difficult to do when you are travelling around at the rate at which we had been travelling. The laundry/dry-cleaning place that we used was about half-way from the railway station at South Harrow up to Chris's place. There's a sort of bend where Norfolk Road turns into Lower Road. Just about at that point there was a laundromat so one could, if one were so inclined, drop the laundry off there on the way to the South Harrow station to go into the city, and pick it up on the way back or, much more commonly, stand there and watch the laundry rotating, as one so often does. But Chris's house was – it's hard to describe – it was sort of in front of and adjacent to one of the cricket grounds used by Harrow – the school. And so there was opportunity to walk around on those grounds, there not being any schoolchildren around (not, at least, at the time we were there). And we did that – it was sunny, it was pleasant, it was (in a word) a bit like home, because at that stage Jennifer and I were living in St Kilda in Melbourne and in a house that was a similar distance from a similar kind of ground, though not (I must say) a similar kind of school.

The other aspect of life there, of course, was a chance to talk to Chris and other people. Because Chris had been out to Australia in 1977, we knew him moderately well, and it was a good opportunity to get the chance to get to know him better, and to get to know some of his friends (some of whom I've referred to in passing, earlier in this volume). In particular, I recall that at the time I was most impressed with both the writing and the conversation of Christopher Evans. Later, I think, I found Chris Evans's science fiction novels less interesting, but it was at an early stage in his career, and it was quite an opportunity that we had to talk to him.

Another important thing Chris did was to try to introduce us to real food – which in England had been pretty scarce. He took us to a Chinese restaurant which, I'd have to say, was not too bad. The other person who took us out that I particularly recall, was John Brosnan, that famous science fiction writer, and author of the well-known novel *Echo of Jackboots*. John actually took us to an Indian restaurant at or near his club,

and I must say that was pretty good food – for England. (If I criticize English food, it's just a habit I formed.) So we had quite an opportunity to meet up again with John Brosnan, whom we'd known for much longer than we'd known Chris. John Brosnan had been active in Australian fandom since the 1960s and when he moved to England at the time of the famous bus trip, Australian fandom lost one of its most energetic members.

The other side of living in London was that there were chances to see other people, either accidentally or deliberately. Accidentally, indeed, was how we came across Bert Chandler one day. We had no knowledge of whether Bert was still in England. It was quite a surprise, therefore, when we came across him, while walking along near Piccadilly Circus. We were crossing over one side of the street and – lo and behold – there, in a city of millions of people, was someone that we knew from Australia – knew quite well. So the size of the city didn't really constrain us from meeting people.

Another person that we were lucky enough to – well, another friend that we spent some time with in London – was Jennifer's friend Caroline Coffey. Caroline worked at the Courtauld Institute at that time and she had a fairly famous, or perhaps infamous, boss – Sir Anthony Blunt. We went to the Courtauld Institute one day and we walked over the place and thought it was an extremely comfortable place to work. But we couldn't see ourselves getting a job there. And Caroline left the Courtauld Institute not too long after. But it was a different side of living in London, and one which was attractive – as indeed, despite my complaints about food, many aspects of living in London proved to be; I think it was partly because of the warmth of the environment in which we lived.

There were other people that we ran into – sometimes accidentally, as I've said, but also deliberately. I can remember particularly going to listen to Malcolm Edwards at Gollancz where we talked a bit about what future science fiction conventions of the world variety there might be outside of the United States (and North America) in particular. There was a time when we were really enthusiastic to get things rolling and indeed, obviously since 1970 the frequency with which the world convention has ventured outside the North American continent has been quite substantial. So, in that sense, it was certainly a success – the discussions that we held were consistent with what was ultimately done. Indeed, I was really hoping that Malcolm would stand for GUFF when the return trip occurred. At that stage it would occur in 1981 and, indeed, he did stand; but the limp-wristed Joseph Nicholas was the winner, with long-term

consequences for Joseph – and also for Judith Hanna.

Another person I was lucky enough to visit in London was Nick Shears (and his wife Audrey). Nick had been in ANZAPA when he lived in South Africa. He subsequently moved to London and was just integrating himself – or seemed to be integrating himself – with English fandom at the time and it was only just before leaving for Australia that we re-established contact. So it was a matter of shoe-horning a visit to Nick and Audrey into what was already a fairly busy schedule. So I didn't spend as much time with Nick as I would have liked.

But, then, with a trip of this kind, you always say that about a very large number of people. The opportunity to spend time with people who are your friends – perhaps only by correspondence, but certainly people that you've come to appreciate – is more limited in a trip of this kind than one would anticipate. It's always possible to make a rapid acquaintance with someone, but to really get to spend time with people that you know over a lengthy period is almost impossible. If you spend as much as a day with anyone, you'll be really lucky. Perhaps it's because I'm a bit slow, but I would certainly have preferred to spend more time with people. There were a couple of people that I did really get to spend a decent amount of time with, and certainly the sense of being at home, well, it's more memorable; when you spend more time with someone. But on the other hand you have to balance that against the fact that sometimes it's the fleeting meetings that create the greatest impression – or perhaps have the greatest impact on your life.

Now – as I have indicated above – we spent quite some time at Chris Priest's house, both immediately after the convention (a little bit of time) but then more time after we'd gone to Europe. We also did a little bit of travelling around that was not connected with fandom, and this was deliberate in a sense, in that Jennifer Bryce was not as closely involved with fandom as I was (although quite closely involved). But she also had non-fan friends, and there was good reason for spending some time with them. It didn't actually amount to very much time at all.

One thing we did just before going to Europe was, stay with Jennifer's sister, who lived in a place called Colne Engaine just out of Colchester. And this Colne Engaine was a tiny, tiny place. Barbara worked in the city, so they drove into Marks Tey each day, and Barb would go and work in London, in the city, as I've described earlier in this report. But then, at night, it was a matter of going back to Colne Engaine. So immediately after the convention we went off with her to Marks Tey where Mike picked us up and drove us to their house in Colne Engaine

which was really a farmhouse.

We both had quite severe colds after the convention and so it was a matter of choosing to lie down being sick, holed up like a wounded beast, in Colne Engaine, and annoying Jennifer's sister and brother-in-law – or doing so with science fiction fans. On balance, it seemed better to annoy one's relatives than one's friends.

Now, Colne Engaine seemed absolutely unremarkable at the time – pleasant, because it was a small village (at no other stage did I really get to a small village in England) – but, apart from that, unremarkable. However, in the intervening years, I've gradually learnt a little bit about that part of England, and I now know that in fact quite a few miles to the north of Colne Engaine, in Norfolk, there was a family of Foysters (from whom I may or may not be descended) who, having started off as peasants in the southern part of Norfolk, gradually began to acquire property until, around about the year 1800, they had acquired farms and other properties over quite a large area of southern Norfolk. And then, round about 1820, the last male member of one branch of that family died, and his properties were passed to a relative. And this relative lived, not at all in Norfolk, but right down to the south, in a town called Halstead, in Essex. And Halstead is about three miles to the west of Colne Engaine. So when I was in Colne Engaine, in 1979, I was actually quite close to the location at which, perhaps some property transactions concerning my ancestors (or perhaps not my ancestors) were involved. So, England is, indeed, a small place – but that was certainly not something that I'd had in mind.

Now, there were other excursions that Jennifer and I undertook which were not related to science fiction fandom. The first of these was a trip to Cambridge, and that one was balancing a trip that Jennifer had done to Oxford previously. It was just a matter of going to Cambridge for the day from London, and I must say it seemed unremarkable. It doesn't mean that one wouldn't go to Cambridge again, but there was nothing in particular that attracted one about it.

There were two other trips that we took – one short, and the other somewhat longer. The shorter of the two was actually a trip to visit two old friends of ours who were working at Bletchley – you can call it Milton Keynes if you like. But they were friends with whom we'd worked in Melbourne, and they were currently working in England, so it was an opportunity to go and visit them (which we took). We drove around Milton Keynes, which is possibly not one of the most interesting locations in England – except for one aspect of it, which was as we were heading across a long street in Bletchley going towards Milton Keynes, we stopped

for some reason in the road, and I looked around the longish road; there was nothing special about it – until I noticed that its name was Watling Street and then there was that rush of blood to the head that you sometimes have when history comes flooding in. So I really was quite impressed to find myself standing on Watling Street.

And finally there was a longer trip – a full-day trip – to visit a friend with whom Jennifer had been working in one of her positions, in Bristol. Trevor worked at a technical college in Bristol, and so we thought we'd spend the day travelling out there, and there were several things that were quite impressive about that. The fast train was quite reasonable, but Clifton College, which we drove around, seemed quite an interesting place and, of course, when I later discovered that Peter Roberts had been at Clifton College – I immediately recognized the fannish import of it all. We went to Trevor's technical college, which was very much like a technical college in Australia – and something one could take or leave.

But then there were two other things which were far more interesting. One of them was Isambard Kingdom Brunel's suspension bridge over the Avon, which I thought an absolutely wonderful construction, and it certainly changed my whole conception of Brunel and his vision and achievements. I find myself taken back to that time, whenever I think about Bristol; I think about that bridge, and just what was able to be achieved in the nineteenth century. In Australia, of course, such bridges are relatively uncommon. By comparison, for example, the Sydney Harbour Bridge looks like a much easier thing to build – though of course it's much, much bigger. That suspension bridge of Brunel's is just beautiful. The Sydney Harbour Bridge is quite rightly known as 'The Coat-hanger' in Australia because it's very functional – it's not at all beautiful. But Brunel's bridge is beautiful.

The other remarkable thing in Bristol was George's bookstore. I had certainly not gone to Bristol with any intention of buying some, or many, or indeed any, books. However, one gets trapped by these things, and when, while walking innocently around the downtown part of Bristol, one comes across a secondhand bookshop – naturally, one goes in – and when one goes in, one finds many interesting books (as it happened, none of them science fiction, though I'm quite sure the science fiction that was there was interesting enough). But there were many other books which were rather more interesting, and I only bought one or two, but they were really the sort of things that I would have been very pleased to have found anywhere. And to have found them there was quite pleasant.

And so we turn now to the science fictional side of travelling around

England – something which took a while, but not really very long; it was about four days.

As I've indicated above, the notion had been that, by putting in a gap between the convention and when I wanted to see English fans, there would have been some time for the other visitors to have departed. But England was so attractive a place in those days that I'm afraid my goals could not be achieved, and it wasn't always possible to arrange to see people. However, there was quite a nice little itinerary worked out, that enabled me to see people that I knew, or had just met and liked, and also people whom I'd known for a long time.

Now, the trip started off by going out to Reading with Chris Priest to visit and stay overnight with Dave and Hazel Langford, and that we did. It was a very strange gathering, because I had not been to a town the size of Reading, which is a bit puzzling to an Australian, being so close to London and yet being somewhat substantial itself. In some senses, you could construe it as a suburb, but in other ways it's not, and though certainly there are such places now, in and around Melbourne and Sydney, it was something that I was not quite ready for. An interesting thing about that visit to Dave and Hazel was that it was possible to give some instruction to Dave in certain arcane aspects of the fanzine duplication business. At the time, there was some association between Mr Langford and the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society, and it was necessary to produce certain publications.

The difficulty that I saw from an artistic point of view was that these publications were much too well reproduced. If you are to have science fiction fans, who are the novices, then one of the characteristics of a novice science fiction fan is that he or she (and it's probably he) really can't manage a duplicator, so if you are attempting to reproduce the works of a neo-fan, generally speaking you shouldn't have a well-written and well-reproduced fanzine. And so I was able to instruct Dave – I'm sure Dave knew about these techniques, but he quite kindly allowed me to think that he was not aware of these techniques – in techniques for making fanzines appear to be very poorly produced.

This I did with some enthusiasm – there are so many ways in which one can turn the handle of the duplicator unevenly, so many ways of smearing ink on the page – and it was quite a joy to resurrect all those sins of my youth and to come up with a properly inky fanzine.

But that was then a visit to someone whom I'd only just met. And the next day was to be a similar adventure, because I was going on to spend the middle of the day with Pam Boal at Wantage, and the way to do that

was of course to catch a train which was notionally headed off to Oxford, to disembark from the train at Didcot, and catch a train across to Wantage from there.

Well, catching the train was all right in the morning, but it was pretty cold. It was even colder standing at Didcot waiting for the bus which was to take me and a few other forlorn customers on to Wantage and other parts at which the bus no doubt called.

The railway station at Didcot had no attractions whatsoever. The most interesting thing one could do was to look across to the cooling towers which were nearby, but that was scarcely attractive either, and so I was extremely relieved to get on to a bus to go into Wantage.

This was a bus which was, I guess, the equivalent of a – well, it was a mail-drop sort of route. So we took back roads – or what seemed to these eyes to be back roads – on the way around to Wantage. The bus was also quite slow. I knew what the timetable said, but I really hadn't anticipated that it would travel as slowly as it did, and it was as a result somewhat tiring. One looked out and one saw fields, one saw hedges, one nodded off, one saw some more fields and hedges, and maybe some trees, and really it wasn't, I thought, the greatest travel. But, in the fulness of time, we pulled up at Wantage, probably ten miles at the most from Didcot, and I found my way around to where Pam lives.

Wantage, of course, is well known for being the birthplace of Alfred the Great. So getting there was something which was historical, I guess; but Wantage itself is not a large town. I had lunch with Pam, and we talked about science fiction fandom and things, and what we did, and over the years since then we have maintained a desultory correspondence, I suppose, depending mostly on whether I was publishing a fanzine or Pam was publishing a fanzine. But that's the kind of relationship that you have in science fiction fandom, and I guess Pam Boal is one of the people I feel most comfortable with, even though we only exchange words every three or four years.

I had to leave earlier than I wanted to because I had a pretty fair journey ahead of me the rest of that day. It was a matter of getting to Didcot first of all, and then travelling from Didcot down to Exeter, and then from Exeter down to visit Peter Roberts at a place which is spelt 'Cockwood'. The train was another one of the fast trains, so it wasn't a long trip by any means. And in the initial stages we passed through what is called the Vale of the White Horse, which is very appropriate, because there is indeed south of the railway line a white horse in chalk (or whatever it is that those things are done in) and from the train one could

see this white horse and – well, there are similar things in Australia, though not as old.

So travelling to Exeter was a matter of nodding off a bit, and occasionally seriously trying to get a bit of sleep as one edged one's way down to Exeter. It was almost as though one was going on for ever along this southern part of England. But, of course, one wasn't – it was no great distance at all – but certainly you felt that you travelled a long way when you travelled down as far as Exeter. And then at Exeter, of course, it was a matter of changing to a smaller train – a much slower train – and there going down on a short trip, only ten minutes really (perhaps, twenty minutes), down to Starcross, and there getting out and seeing again, at last, good old Peter Roberts.

Peter Roberts had taken over from Ron Bennett in the early 1970s as the dispenser of news about fandom in England, and accordingly I had relied upon Peter as a source of information about what was going on in English fandom, right up until the time of this convention.

It was by this time late in the afternoon, and Peter took me, I think, without referring (and this was remiss of him) – without referring to the nearby enormous atmospheric railway – he took me from Starcross down to Cock'ood (or Cockwood), and as we arrived at Cockwood, Peter explained to me the great deal of trouble he had had, as you might expect, with the locals (him not being a local), and his attempts to pronounce the name of the town in which he lived. He would say, 'Cock'ud', and the locals at the pub would say, 'No, no, no, you've got it wrong: it's "Cock"ud.' And Peter would look puzzled – which was appropriate, I suppose.

Anyway, we spent the afternoon talking, and the evening talking, and the next day went for a bit of a walk around the back roads – I think of them in that way – of Cockwood, before I set off on the next stage of my journey, which was to be by far the longest one. And it was a journey that would take me as far north as I would go on this trip. Once again, just as leaving Pam Boal had seemed to be a matter of leaving too soon, so it was that leaving Peter Roberts was something that I hadn't really wanted to do.

We'd known each other for a decade, probably, through correspondence, and here I was, haring off somewhere else, and we'd really only started to get to know each other in person. Although there'd been some opportunities at Brighton to talk, it's not quite the same as the opportunities you have when you've got a few hours with someone. Of course, sometimes having a few hours with someone is the last thing you want – but I was lucky, because in England that never happened.

So the next morning, which was a Friday, after this invigorating walk around the back-blocks of the metropolis of Cockwood, I set off by train to head north, and my final destination that day was to be Holmes Chapel.

Holmes Chapel was where Eric Bentcliffe currently lived. Eric Bentcliffe was one of the first fans I made contact with in England, after Ken Slater. I made contact with Ron Bennett at about the same time. Eric Bentcliffe was associated with some of the most remarkable fanzines ever published. One hopes that histories of the fanzine will be able to capture some of the spirit of what was there in fanzines such as his – particularly, obviously, *Triode*.

The later issues of *Triode* were so beautifully duplicated that even the highest quality American fanzines probably didn't exceed *Triode* in quality of reproduction. The amount of time that Eric and his co-editors and writers and illustrators put into *Triode* was almost incalculable. I think 'incalculable' is just the word, because if ever they'd sat down to think about how much time they were putting into producing that fanzine, they would have not done it; they would have stopped. But they didn't. And science fiction fandom was all the luckier that they didn't. What did happen, of course, was that they got older – demands on their time got greater – and they ceased to produce fanzines at that time.

So I was really looking forward to visiting Eric. Of course, one of the reasons why was that I had to change trains at Crewe. And although I suppose there is nothing especially exciting about changing trains at Crewe, I was somewhat (as I still am) – interested in trains, and a large number of train lines intersect at Crewe. The line to Holmes Chapel is, more or less, the line that goes from Crewe direct to Manchester, so it was a matter of getting off a train part-way. The train that took me from Exeter to Crewe was quite large, but the train that took me from Crewe to Holmes Chapel was quite small.

Now, travelling from Exeter to Crewe proved to be remarkably interesting. It proved to be remarkably interesting for a reason which might almost be said to be science fictional – and this is that, because it was such a long journey, obviously one takes a book to read, but also one spends a fair amount of time looking out the window, hoping to see something interesting. And I did.

As the train travelled along, looking out to the west, I saw a radar dish – a fairly large radar dish – and this seemed interesting to me. There was nothing really near by. But then, quite some miles further along, I saw a second radar dish. And I thought, 'That is odd.' And by the time I saw the third radar dish the penny dropped: I was looking at a long-baseline array.

But it wasn't until the following day that I appreciated it all, however.

Changing at Crewe was straightforward (as both earlier and later chapters in this report will attest, I am contentedly familiar with the ways of railways systems) and so, early in the evening, Eric picked me up in his car at Holmes Chapel.

After meeting Eric's wife and daughter I was plunged into the exhausting program Eric had designed.

That night we spent hours going through photo albums and boxes of slides. Although *Triode* has been, as I have said, a wonderful fanzine, it didn't extend to portraits of its contributors, so this was one major source of interest to me. In addition, Eric had amassed quite a collection of photographs from conventions and other gatherings and here, as well, names were more familiar to me than faces. By the end of the night I felt almost overwhelmed by the data input.

The next day, Saturday, proved to be no less interesting; Eric had obviously entertained so many fans over the years that he now knew by instinct what would be of interest to the hasty visitor. What impressed me most was that there was so much within so small a geographical area. Saturday began with a trip to Sandbach. A few miles to the south of Holmes Chapel, Sandbach has an interesting market-place in which on this Saturday – and perhaps most Saturdays for all I know – there was a fair of the kind perhaps describable as medieval (but not really), with animals roasting on spits and so on. Since Sandbach must actually be quite old (and is described in some tour guides as 'quaint'), everything seemed to fit together quite nicely. I don't know whether Eric did this deliberately or not, but bringing someone like me from a country in which there is nothing constructed which is older than a couple of centuries to a place with artefacts which are around a thousand years old is like producing and using a time machine. It was a great morning.

And have dealt with a time machine, we now set off for a space machine. All those radar dishes were in fact controlled and managed from Jodrell Bank, which we reached on the road to Manchester slightly to the north of Holmes Chapel. I was so ill-prepared for this travel, in the sense of having studied the terrain, that I had not realized how close Jodrell Bank was to Holmes Chapel.

By the late 1970s Jodrell Bank was beginning to be more significant for its historic contributions to science than its contemporary ones. Nevertheless the opportunity to see that large dish (and of course Australia has similar arrays) was one I relished. But why was it that just about the only souvenir I bought was an Apollo 17 tie? Perhaps I was trying to link

two aspects of space exploration?

Eric, of course, had more in store for me. Although geography is scarcely a subject which excites me, there had been no escaping the fact that England looked different from Australia (which I have noted to some extent above), and Eric was about to show me yet another novelty. It meant driving further north towards Manchester.

It also meant, since Eric wasn't going to spoil things by describing too much, a sense of confused anticipation. But eventually we pulled off to the side of the road and, standing on the edge at Alderley Edge, looked north towards Manchester airport.

Partly, of course, my surprise was a result of the fact that I had never before seen this particular topographic phenomenon (I'm sure they must exist in Australia, but not where I've seen them); to stand at the boundary between two level areas of land which are separated vertically by a couple of hundred feet is a bit awe-inspiring. But in addition there was the fact that I was seeing some of England which looked almost – *uncivilized*. It was probably not until then that I realized that just about all of England that I had seen was neatly clipped and in its place; standing on Alderley Edge I found myself surrounded by vegetation which showed every sign of being there because it wanted to be there, not because it had been put there by a human being.

On the way back to Holmes Chapel Eric pointed out to me the stfnal significance of it all: 'Alan Garner lives around here,' he said, and in that way suggested how the writer had drawn the atmosphere of his novels from his own surroundings.

By now it was time to return to London, so Eric drove me back to Crewe; in just 24 hours I had had a crash course in both fandom and science fiction which was as pleasant as it had been surprising.

Post-GUFF

Introduction

What happens on a Fan Fund trip is self-evidently important in terms of the purposes for which the Fan Fund was established. To me, what happens after that trip is almost certainly more important, for it is here that the effect of the experience on the traveller is revealed.

I don't think previous Fan Fund reports have taken a longer and more reflective view of what happened – largely because the report appears so soon after the experience. In my case, where external circumstances have produced a delay of well over a decade (although when this sentence was originally drafted the period was less than a decade), I'm able to report those longer-term effects.

I propose to do this in two ways in this section, and so to describe how GUFF changed my life, and thus directly or indirectly say something about what Fan Funds do.

The two aspects of post-GUFF experience I shall write about in this chapter are my developed interest in travel (and what that meant) and my interest in fandom on an international scale (and thus my return in the early 1980s to Worldcon politics).

The first chapter in this section is based upon articles I published in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association in 1982 and 1983; the second chapter was written mainly in 1988.

To Vienna and Back

In December 1981 and January 1982 Jennifer Bryce and I travelled to Canada and Europe. The reasons were essentially non-fannish, but as the reader will find out (if it isn't already realized), fandom is Everywhere. It may be helpful to recall that Martial Law was declared in Poland in the middle of December.

20 December 1981

Departure from Melbourne – early on a Sunday morning. The weather was fine, as I recall, and the journey made very much easier by the fact that Jenny's parents had taken us out to Tullamarine, where the airport is, the previous night and had also paid for us to spend the evening at the

local Travelodge.

Gosh! (Colour telly!)

When the plane arrived in Sydney Robin Johnson (the infamous travel agent who may be remembered by the reader from an earlier chapter) met us and escorted us across to the international terminal, where we had to wait a fair while for our CP Air flight to Vancouver. We filled in the time satisfactorily with booking seats and generally milling – come to think of it, there were quite a few other people milling, too.

But soon enough we were able to board the DC-10 (a plane which then justifiably induced shudders in the average passenger). On top of everything else, we now had to pay to escape from Australia.

(Later, briefly, the Australian government introduced an arrival tax to complement the departure tax, thus achieving the fundamental aim of government – to get you coming and going.)

I don't really recall too much of the trip to Honolulu. No doubt there was a movie – but I only complain about such stuff. On the other hand, I tend not to complain about airline food, partly because I don't think it appallingly bad, and partly because most of the people I know who complain usually subsist on TV dinners or something even lower on the culinary ladder.

In Honolulu there was plenty to talk about.

We arrived at around midnight. CP Air has two flight from Honolulu – one to Toronto, and ours to Vancouver (since we were actually intending to go to Toronto, one would have thought we would be on that flight, but we were booked through Vancouver, with consequences). The ex-Sydney flight was a feeder for both. Therefore the passengers who have debarked (wonderful word!) from our flight are divided into two sections, depending on their destinations.

We sat around for quite some time, and then passengers for the Toronto flight were called. At 2 a.m. passengers for Vancouver had still not been called, and nervous nellys like me were reading their tickets closely and trying to work out how late they could afford to be and still make the onward connection.

Then the announcement came: there was a problem with one of the doors on the 'plane scheduled to fly to Vancouver. (I must point out to members of DC-10 Fandom that this was not one of the infamous rear cargo doors, merely a safety exit door for passengers.) The airline announcement revealed that it would be necessary to off-load all but about one-third of the 'planeful of passengers: CP Air asked for volunteers who would like a day in Honolulu at CP Air's expense.

There was a mild rush for the counter, but when it was over there were still not enough seats to go around. *This is to be a moment of glory for me (since I've been told what to do in this situation) so please pay attention.*

Now CP Air began to load passengers in their priority order. This meant: first, families with small children, then persons with physical impairments of one kind or another, and so on, and so on. Members of each category queued up and emerged clutching – almost gloatingly triumphant – a piece of coloured card. Finally (3 a.m.) the call list reached ‘those with onward connections’, and this was where my instructions told me what to do. We shambled forward, but only fast enough to reach the desk just as the airline ran out of economy seats.

Oh hell! We would just have to settle for the first-class seats which were left.

And that's how we came to travel first-class from Honolulu to Vancouver.

That's also how Jennifer came to accept an offer of a mai-tai at 4 in the morning; that's how I came to shiver at the thought (and how Jennifer did too, after she had a sip). But Jennifer did also get a breakfast of Eggs Benedict.

(By the way, it was still 20 December, no matter what you think, and it was still 20 December at around 10 a.m. as we drifted down over the Canadian coast and spiraled in to the Vancouver Airport).

As we were taxiing in I noticed another DC-10 taxiing out. I consoled myself that we still had a couple of hours up our sleeves to make the connection.

Getting through Customs and Immigration is almost always a painful business, especially when you are really only in transit, which we were.

‘How long will you be staying in Canada, sir?’

‘About two hours if I get through this system fast enough.’

‘In Transit’ is what goes into the passport. Of course, by the time we reached the CP Air rechecking desk things were no longer so simple.

Apparently that plane I saw departing was our plane; the ticket had the wrong departure time on it. ‘No matter,’ says a very friendly CP Air ticket agent ‘we’ll fly you through to Toronto and you can take the next flight from there. And of course we’ll look after your accommodation in Toronto.’

Ahem. This is all very well, but what about our arrangements in Europe?

Well, after we had gone upstairs and chatted with the CP Air chap

about our rebooking, and been reticketed for Business Class travel through to Amsterdam – well, it didn't seem quite so bad.

'You'll have to collect your accommodation vouchers in Toronto,' we are told: 'Just present the ticket – it's all in the computer.'

We were properly grateful, checked our bags, and walked about the terminal a little (dropping in on Smith's Bookstore, and looking at newspapers and things) before deciding to accept a little of the Canadian sunshine (which exists, even though the temperature is below zero Celsius).

We walked outside of the terminal building and stare at the snow-covered peaks. It's at just such peaceful times that one can reflect on the main events in our lives, which have occurred between the close of the previous chapter and the opening of this one: the birth and death of our son Christopher.

Such moments will recur from time to time during this trip, but fortunately we couldn't see into the future, and the birth and death of our second son, Angus, just three months into 1982. But the sun, the sun was out. It was not fiercely bright, but it might have been earlier – when we landed, for example.

We looked about, but we couldn't stray far, because we aren't really in Can – but we can, *we can!* we've entered Canada without Immigration noting it. This is our chance to melt into the crowd, to get away from it all!

Perhaps one day, but not now, not on the way to Europe.

Back in the terminal, there was an opportunity to look briefly at what other facilities were available, and then we must move onward.

We flew from Vancouver to Toronto by 747 – a sensible and solid aeroplane with sound doors. Passing over the Rockies at just about a perfect time of day wasn't planned, but it was most spectacular. I have half a dozen or so photographs taken at about 4 p.m. local time which I gaze at from time to time.

It was quite dark when we arrived in Toronto, and it took a very long time to get through Baggage. In fact, it was so slow that I went and telephoned John Millard and Mike Glicksohn for a chat while waiting for the luggage.

I had written to them both about the trip, saying I hoped to see them as we returned through Canada, but this particular transit stop was of course totally unplanned. I agreed to ring again as soon as I return to Canada.

Eventually the luggage arrived – and I ought to say that a lot of the delay was due to refurbishing of the lounge areas, rather than any

indolence on the part of the airline (something you can't always genuinely offer as an explanation) – and we tottered off to collect our transport and accommodation vouchers. It can take quite a while, I assure you, to find these, but then at last we got out to the 'bus, and to the Constellation – a motel which seemed to have relatively little to recommend it. By the time we had settled down, ordered breakfast and reorganized our thoughts it was almost, at long last –

21 December 1981

Phew!

Jennifer had some supper, but I didn't fancy anything until next morning. What came then wasn't too bad at all: pancakes and maple syrup for me.

We figured we would have time to take our bags out to the airport, get into downtown Toronto for three or four hours and then catch our flight to Amsterdam. This is roughly what happened, with the roughness being introduced by my own stupidity.

Getting out to the airport by 'bus was straightforward, as was checking the bags. We had decided to get to downtown Toronto by 'bus and subway, using the guide we had picked up at the motel.

In fact, since then, another method had been added, so that there was a choice of where to change to the North-South subway line. The out-of-dateness of the subway guide wasn't very helpful, but one comes to expect that things will be about that way.

Eventually we got out at Charles Street (as I recall it), just near the self-proclaimed World's Biggest Bookstore (I don't think it is). The World's Biggest Bookstore does have a lot of books, but we spent very little time or money there that day; we were mainly reconnoitring for the return visit.

Now we drifted south to the Eaton Centre, when Jennifer began a search – which was to last for a month – for Winter Clothing.

It was only after she had decided that there really wasn't anything just right, but that in any case she ought to change a traveller's cheque, that we discovered that I had left almost all of our travellers' cheques at the motel, from which we had so recently checked out.

Panic!

I rang the motel. The room had not yet been cleaned, and I should call back in half-an-hour.

There followed a rather nervous half-hour while we contemplated the various things we could do with a couple of thousand dollars in travellers' cheques. Then we thought about what other people could do with a couple

of thousand dollars in travellers' cheques.

When I did call back we were *very* delighted to learn that the cheques were safe and sound, and that I could call for them any time in the afternoon. There were a couple of much-relieved Australians in Toronto that day.

We walked back down Yonge Street to Grandma Lee's, a cheap lunch spot we had noticed earlier. It *was* cheap, but just what we needed at the time.

After that we walked up along Bay Street, looking for some bank sufficiently naive (or sophisticated) to change my NZ\$ travellers' cheques. One bank got close enough to use up half an hour of our afternoon, but we had no success.

It began to snow as we walked (Wow!, which is the appropriate reaction for someone who has never seen snow in a city before – but don't worry, by the end of this report there'll be more than enough about snow), and as we passed a place advertising Häagen-Dazs ice-cream we were very tempted to step in for a sample (but we thought it too cold then, and that we would try some in January, on our way back).

We were headed for a branch of Deak-Perera, which a thoughtful assistant in the most recent bank we had visited had assured us could handle my funny money. When we found them I was indeed able to change one soft currency into another.

This brought us near to the time we should go to the airport. For variety we took the East-West subway, changed to the correct 'bus, and arrived safely. (This is the kind of thing I like to do – travel around a strange city by different forms of transport, or at least along different routes. But the suburban views were quite monotonous.)

Jennifer then sat around there while I traipsed back to the Constellation to retrieve the travellers' cheques (and receive appropriate chastising remarks from the manager). This trip wasn't entirely wasted because I took the opportunity to buy a few more US magazines in the motel lobby to add to the collection I had amassed in the morning, this time including, for example, the issue of *Atlantic Monthly* in which David Stockman spilled the beans on the sophistication of Reagan-style economics.

Perhaps that was the strongest single impression of these 24 hours in North America – I could read the magazines I normally read, except that they were current rather than four months out-of-date.

Well, we did at last get ourselves organized and onto the next DC-10 (why does this have to happen to me? I thought) passing through a mildly

awful eatorium at the airport and noting (but not remembering in starkest detail) that the post-immigration facilities were more or less non-existent.

At last, late in the afternoon, we were again on our way to Europe – via Halifax.

Halifax?

Yep, that was the first port-of-call.

As the plane descended into Halifax the announcements were made in English, French, Dutch (each of which could easily be explained) and what sounded to me like Greek. Jennifer asked the flight attendant what the fourth language was, and after some prompting she admitted she thought it was Greek. Only much later did I recall that there are (I think) a fairly large number of Greek fishermen operating out of Halifax.

And so we left the New World for the Old.

22 December 1981

Early in the morning we passed over a large bank of cloud and smog. ‘England’, I muttered to myself, and it was.

Landing in Holland wasn’t all that much more exciting.

Heavy snow had only just ceased – or not quite ceased, if you insist on precision. We came in over flat paddocks crossed occasionally by canals and roads; Schiphol Airport was almost a surprise.

Its size was also a surprise but here, as we expected, things went quite smoothly (except for our bags being slow). We took the opportunity to get some currency – guilders for me and French francs for Jennifer.

I was asked how long I planned to stay in the Netherlands and was able to give an answer which almost duplicated that of the previous day in reply to the similar question at Vancouver – ‘Just as long as it takes me to get a train to Paris!’

Catching a train to Paris is almost easy at Schiphol because the railway station is under cover and a short walk from the air terminal. At the station we put our Eurail passes into action and I stared at the central lighting in the booking hall, which reminded me very much of the flying saucer in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The trip to Paris can be recounted with some precision.

At 1224 we caught the train at Schiphol, arriving at Den Haag at 1256. (We shared the compartment with a Dutch girl who was interested in Australia, had travelled a lot, but had never thought of going so far south.)

The station is a pleasant one to look at; unlike Australian railway stations, but rather typically for Europe, it’s rather like a vast hangar constructed of glass and steel. This is intended, I assume, to protect passengers from the weather, but to Australians who can still remember a

southern summer it is rather cool.

At 1310 we caught the train to Brussels, arriving at Brussels-Midi at 1519.

The Paris train departs from Brussels-Sud, so since you might one day need the information, I'll mention that Brussels-Midi and Brussels-Sud are one and the same. There was a half-hour wait here, so Jennifer had a coffee and I had a Coke using some currency I had changed on the train (no doubt at an unsatisfactory rate).

The Paris train was due at 1549, and we didn't have reserved seats (being somewhat delayed, as you'll have noticed). The crowd at platform 9 (out of about 20) was quite large – an ominous situation, I thought.

When the train arrived and we pushed our way aboard we quickly found *one* first-class seat, but by the time I realized that we weren't going to find a pair together, I couldn't find another *one* anyway.

So Jennifer took the seat we had while I rummaged around amongst the second-class carriages (eventually finding a seat – standing in a train for three hours is not my idea of fun).

About three hours later (at 1846) we arrived at Paris Nord. For some reason the platform was filled with Frenchmen wanting to get onto this train, which means that we had to do some pushing and shoving to get off, firstly separately and then together.

We pushed successfully towards the metro station, and took the train to St-Michel.

It was almost 2000 when we reached the Hotel Du Lys. Our old friend from 1979 was still on the front desk. The ground-floor room we wanted wasn't available, but he assured us that the one we now had was better (and cheaper). It was on the second floor, up a series of very narrow stairways. It proved to be just possible to get our bags around the corners.

After settling in we relaxed briefly, then wandered out into the slightly chilly evening air, and bought some Algerian sandwiches and (a new thing for us) crêpes at a streetside crêperie.

I don't really like the things, and this was the last one I was to have in Paris. But Jennifer more or less Formed A Habit. We walked back to the hotel, where we checked on possible mail (and discovered that there was none – which was mildly surprising).

We were now quite ready for our holiday to begin, but it was the end of the day, so we turned in instead.

23 December 1981

It was our intention to spend this morning exploring: my few days in Paris in 1979 had left me with little by way of a useful impression of the

city.

Up to a point we did just explore, though verging on experiencing Paris as well. We asked again at the desk about mail, and this time some was unearthed; most importantly an envelope of information from Pascal Thomas.

During the morning we telephoned Pascal and arranged to meet him for lunch. Before that we pressed on in exploration mode, relocating markets and supermarkets, checking out bookstores we just happened to pass, and thinking about what to do for the next week or so.

Pascal met us at the Place St Michel. This is one of those locations in a city which is always filled with people waiting to meet other people, but nevertheless we found one another. The large memorial provides some shelter, and the space in front can be occupied by both waiters (of the non-professional kind) and parked motorbikes.

Pascal then led us a merry chase across the Seine (pointing out how flooded it was – the flooding of rivers was something we were to become very familiar with over the next few weeks) into the Marais and around the Place des Vosges, but getting there took quite a while, for it was a circuitous route via narrow streets which, occasionally, owed their continuing existence to strong buttressing by solid wooden beams of the adjacent buildings. But not everything was narrow: we were surprised by the width of the pedestrian zebra crossing outside the *Tour D'Argent*, which must have been at least 8 metres wide. We ducked out of getting any closer to that famous restaurant. While this may have been partly because the buildings were old, there seemed to be distinct signs of unconventionality; the building housing the *Relais de Varsovie*, decorated for Christmas, had a wall which bowed out at an angle which may be best described as jaunty.

Our destination was a restaurant Pascal had been to once or twice before, and was actually partway along this track, but it was too crowded when first we passed. When we finally got there it was, as we had anticipated, superb.

Afterwards we continued strolling about that part of Paris until Pascal had to leave us to pack; he was going back to Bordeaux for Christmas.

We agreed that we could come down to visit him in Bordeaux the following week, and that we would make final plans by telephone at the weekend.

Separating again at the Place St Michel, we followed Pascal's advice and bought a copy of *Pariscope* to check out what was on where. The issue we picked up ran to over 200 pages, so this took us rather longer than

we had expected.

Checking through *Pariscope* was something we were to do several times over the next month.

First on *my* shopping list was Robert Altman's *Popeye*, which I had missed in Melbourne because of the usual appallingly short runs Altman films have there.

We saw this at a fancy cinema in the Boulevard St Germain at a latish afternoon session, and Jennifer was not too disappointed. For my part I was enchanted, in approximately this order, by Shelley Duvall's performance, by the direction, and by some of the songs.

Well, this seemed rather a good start, and the Maysles brothers' film *Gimme Shelter* was on later that night at a cinema called Videostone, so why didn't we go and see that as well? Apart from exhaustion, we didn't really have any good excuse, so after consuming a bit of the local version of fast food we made our way to this second cinema.

Videostone shows videos – to about 25 people at a time at a maximum. The theatre became rather smoky (and noisy) at times, but it was worthwhile to go for a film we had both been wanting to see.

Besides, Videostone was also showing, at a different time, *John Lennon For President* and seeing *Gimme Shelter* gave us some practice at the unusual conditions. After *Gimme Shelter* we were ready to turn in.

Although this had not been a very long day, we had done a lot of walking which the description I have given here scants. There didn't seem to be much point becoming exhausted in the first week of a five-week trip. (Unfortunately we misjudged this quite often, and some later days involved a good deal of sitting around recovering.)

Back at the Hotel Du Lys we laid out broad plans for the week: go to Lyon on Saturday (Boxing Day in Australia), to Versailles and Chartres on Monday, and to Bordeaux on, say, Wednesday, then leave Paris on the Saturday. On such a framework we planned our holiday in Paris, listing relevant films, concerts, museums. And it almost worked.

24 December 1981

This was a quiet day, at least in the sense that the diary doesn't reveal a long list of things done.

In the morning we explored parts of a department store – Samaritaine – in search of a small water heater, which we eventually found and bought. One of the early lessons for a traveller is that there are many different ways of conducting financial transactions, and while you may manage the variations you come across in your own country, it's much more difficult in a foreign land. And there, I think, it's much more the social barrier than

the language barrier which interferes.

That afternoon we went to see *Raiders of the Lost Ark* which, like almost all the movies we went to, was in the Version Originale (which means with French subtitles, usually). I still like the film. Otherwise we did very little.

This gives me a chance to describe briefly another of our connections with France. Every second day, or thereabouts, we bought *Le Monde* which, so far as I can make out in my tiny to negligible French, is the best newspaper in the world – which means only that it contains the kinds of news I think newspapers should carry.

It is, however, very difficult to read, as Pascal Thomas admitted to us when we talked about our struggles with its texts. More or less every day we bought the *International Herald-Tribune*, which was quite satisfactory for news, reviews of the right kinds of books, and comic strips.

In Sydney, before we left, we had bought a small AM/FM radio – something I would recommend to anyone travelling overseas – and in Paris we listened most days to France-Musique, a station somewhat like ABC-FM (round-the-clock classical music). Occasionally we tried another station or two, but always found ourselves coming back to France-Musique. Listening to the news in French helped a little with my mediocre vocabulary.

25 December 1981

Besides being Christmas Day, this was a day on which we did many things, and indeed the next three or four days were very hectic.

We started by walking to the Gare de Lyon. This meant going through the Marais area again; this was definitely worth a second look. We also passed through the Place de la Bastille, where we sat for a while and looked for Significant Things. I don't think we spotted any.

At the Gare de Lyon we made a booking to go to and from Lyon the next day. Even then the SNCF had computer facilities to allow you to book yourself onto the next available train, but we were quite anxious to take the 0915, and not some later train. As it happened the 0915 was fully booked, and we found ourselves instead booked onto a relief train – at 0920!

It was marvellous then, and is marvellous now, to reflect on the idea of a couple of long trains travelling at over two hundred kilometres an hour so close to each other. The physics is easy to handle; what's impressive is the organizational skill involved. (We'll never see anything like that in Australia.)

The Gare de Lyon looked as though it had recently been redecorated and was certainly much more attractive than the other major stations in

Paris. For the first time since we arrived the sun was now (almost) shining, and so we took the metro out to Montmartre, changing at Nation, with some optimism. Jennifer wanted to walk around that area; I was happy just to walk.

We got off at Pigalle and past the sex shops (which were not quite like the Melbourne variety, even in the morning) we marched, climbing the hill towards Sacre Coeur, albeit by an awfully roundabout route, and more and more the sun shone upon us and our endeavours, and we started to feel warmer.

We passed through an ‘artists’ area, with the usual rotten stuff for sale, and by the time we reached Sacre Coeur the clouds had lifted. But the haze had not. As a result, we had a fine view of the basilica – gold against a glowing blue sky.

But to turn to look out over Paris was to see only a few vague buildings embedded in a red-brown murk. Indeed, there were no obvious landmarks visible which would allow one to identify what was out there as Paris.

We stayed for around half an hour or so, gazing at all the wonders that were there, and then began to walk down the hill again, this time pausing for some fast food, which in my case was French fries and for Jennifer, another crêpe.

We ambled down to Clichy and took the metro to Opéra. There we stared at yet another ornate building (which I was to spend an hour or so on New Year’s Day photographing) and then we decided that, yes, we would come back later in the day to see if we could get tickets to the ballet that night.

At around this time it became clear that there were considerable changes in your impressions of a place as the weather and lighting changed. After just two days we managed to see Notre Dame both under overcast skies and (later) with a very clear blue sky, late in the afternoon. Drab grey became daunting gold by movements of the clouds.

The afternoon was spent walking back to our hotel and around the Odéon area. Our dinner that evening was unremarkable, and I can recall having a notterriblygood Boeuf Bourguignon. We returned to Opéra around 1830. Jennifer bravely went in to look for a queue to stand in, and I bravely stood out in the cold. I’m not sure who had more fun.

Over the rest of the holiday I came to spend quite a lot of time waiting outside while Jennifer did her shopping, but nothing could equal what I saw that evening.

At the vast roundabout which is the Place de l’Opéra, almost all the

traffic moves clockwise at that time of night. The exception is one short portion, but this does fit in well with the general flow of traffic. This statement does not apply, however, to the one 'bus route which runs along the exceptional portion (no problems there) and then turns against and across the main traffic flow (problems).

This happened several times while I watched. Each time the 'bus became completely boxed in. Each time the driver got out and abused the motorists, and each time the motorists got out of their cars and abused the 'bus driver. This was so much more exciting than this mere verbal description that I shall leave the rest to your imagination, except for noting that sometimes the chorus of blaring horns was so loud that it drowned out the shouted obscenities.

But let me return to culture.

After half an hour Jennifer emerged triumphant; she had found a queue to stand in, and it was the one selling tickets for that night. We now had two of the cheapest seats in the house.

As the show was due to begin at 1930 we began a stately entrance – or as stately an entrance as is possible for a stout person in jeans, in my case. Up and up we climbed, to the kinds of heights more commonly associated with mountaineering, until we reached the cheapest of the cheap.

The stairs were ornate, the decorations were ornate, all the way, but the higher we rose the plainer became the apparel of the attendants. Jennifer nevertheless divested herself of her coat at a suitable place, and we were shown into our seats from which it was possible, with only some slight neck-craning, actually to see the stage. Later in the evening this became less of an advantage.

By the time the ballet began the theatre had filled slightly. Immediately in front of us was a group of Chinese schoolgirls – perhaps a netball team getting some Parisian culture. Later in the evening one of them fondled my knee in the mistaken belief that it was an armrest.

Don Quichottée (for indeed that was the ballet) could sensibly be described as disappointing, but at least we had managed to be inside the Paris Opéra on Christmas night, which is what we thought about as we reached our hotel.

26 December 1981

We went to Lyon for the day. Lyon is 456 kilometres from Paris. We went by train.

Now in a way that isn't too remarkable – when we went to Bordeaux we also went for the day, and it is nearly 600 kilometres from Paris. But

that took much more of the day. Some arrival/departure times might help. We left Paris at 0920, and arrived at Lyon at 1210, then left Lyon at 1550, arriving at Paris at 1840.

(One might reasonably ask why we didn't spend more time in Lyon, and I suppose the short answer is that seeing the countryside was part of the reason for going. Travelling à la TGV is the quickest way I know to see a lot of countryside, and that was one of the reasons of going – it was unbeatable and so nearly indescribable that I'm not going to try.)

The TGV (Train à Grand Vitesse) first came into operation in September 1981, so we were lucky to have planned our travels for this time. At the time there were 13 trains a day each way between Paris and Lyon – more or less one an hour during daylight. It is probably faster than aeroplane, city-centre to city-centre, is about as comfortable as an aeroplane (except that you don't have to wear a seatbelt), and it is certainly cheaper.

On this sort of run (between two large cities) I suspect that this form of transport could replace the aeroplane on journeys of up to about 1000 kilometres. At the time of our travel the TGV ran at a top speed of 260 kilometres an hour, though the top speed in trials was 380 kilometres an hour.

The reason the journey to Lyon took so long was that the high speed track hadn't then been completed. Travelling by train was only *part* of our intent, of course. We had both liked the look of Lyon when we passed through it by train in 1979, and the availability of rapid transport just made it so much easier.

The day was a little hazier than we would have liked, and it stayed that way. One question in my mind had been whether it would be possible to take photographs from the train. (The answer is yes, but at 1/250 second or faster.)

On the way down to Lyon it was so gloomy that I didn't even try. But soon after we reached Lyon it brightened a little, and stayed that way all afternoon.

We didn't really do much in Lyon. The Saône and the Rhône meet there, so we had the chance to watch more flooded rivers. We walked along pedestrian malls and across squares (on the way we bought and ate gruesomely sweet cakes – mine was shaped like a green frog – from a shop which proudly proclaimed of its products 'Garantie au beurre', and that is certainly the way they tasted...). We climbed a hill and looked at a cathedral or two. We rode down the side of that hill in a funicular railway. We walked past a Roman Theatre.

We walked past our first SOLIDARNOSÇ poster ('Pologne Solidarnosç Liberte', high on the side of someone's house. We walked past a statue in memory of Ampère. It was an average sort of holiday day.

What was inescapable here – and I didn't mind it in the slightest – was the golden light which had so enchanted me in Florence two years before. There is nothing like it in Australia. It was particularly striking when we stood on a bridge over the Saône and looked up along the river to the brick and terra-cotta buildings which cover the slopes down to the water. I won't ever be able to forget it, and have a handful of slides to remind me of it.

We walked slowly back to the station, our steps slow and laboured – not so much from exhaustion as from reluctance. We dawdled, we visited a bookshop where I, ever anxious to slow things down, even bought a copy of Proust in the Génies et Réalités series published by Hachette – a marvellous book.

A suspicious person might have suspected that we were angling to miss the train.

Not so!

We merely wished to take in as much of Lyon as we could in the available time.

See the statue!

See the fountain!

See the merry-go-round!

See the railway station!

Oh Hell!

The station was crowded. Trains leave Lyon in any of half a dozen directions, so this wasn't surprising. What was surprising was to see so many TGVs parked there, waiting to make the trip back to Paris. No doubt they were quickly used up as the TGV service spread out over France.

Apart from the better light, the trip back was uneventful. We arrived back at our hotel in Paris quite exhausted, the first week of our holiday behind us.

27 December 1981

We should have been, I suppose, very tired after the trip to Lyon, but perhaps in tribute to the comfort of the TGV, we felt in excellent shape on this Sunday.

Sunday, of course, meant free admission to art galleries and such, and that is how we spent the day.

I had not been before to the Jeu de Paume, and we managed to get there by opening time (0900) – in fact we arrived a little early and had to

spend ten minutes or so in the gardens outside.

It was a very suitable time to reflect on what we were doing and why we were there. We found ourselves in agreement on the place of Europe in our lives.

The Jeu de Paume was not really crowded, as one might have expected, and this gave us an opportunity to look closely and without interruption at the works of the Impressionists therein.

I am not an enthusiast for the Impressionists generally, so it is not perhaps surprising that the work which had the greatest effect on me – *Girl in a Red Dress* – was painted by Frederic Bazille who died in 1871 at the beginning of the Impressionist period.

At the time I thought myself to have been shocked by the painting, and that description remains the most appropriate. The girl is actually dressed in a red and white vertically-striped silk dress, and she is facing away from the viewer, looking out over a town or city.

I was unable to get a reproduction/postcard at the time, and having temporarily forgotten the artist's name was quite unable, even consulting senior gallery staff at the Victorian National Gallery, to locate the name for some years. But what could not be forgotten was that first impression, which lives with me still in such detail that I can recall the angle at which the light struck the painting. This was one of a small number of paintings which had a lasting effect on me on this trip.

We next moved on to the Louvre. Here I was able to renew my acquaintance with all those works which had so strongly moved me in 1979 – Boucher, Poussin, Watteau, David, Fragonard, Ingres, the Nike, the Marie de Medici series by Rubens (where is the missing one?), and so on. There can scarcely be an end to the list. And all of this was completed by midday.

I wanted to get across to the Centre Georges Pompidou (aka Beaubourg) for the afternoon, so we walked fairly briskly via the Forum (ex Les Halles) – where Jennifer got some lunch in the form of a sandwich – and across the Boulevard de Sebastopol to Beaubourg.

It was a sunny day, and the book vendors on the streets were doing a roaring trade. We looked fairly carefully at the stalls before going inside, but we didn't buy anything, something I regret every time I recall it.

Inside we were expecting something special, and we got it. The bookshop inside Beaubourg is the best I have seen for Art and Theatre stuff; that in itself took up quite a large amount of our time, but our purchases were minor.

One day I will spend a thousand dollars in that shop – I can feel it

even now. Outside the bookshop, Takis had a sound-and-mobile work operating which we observed for a while.

The exhibition which attracted me to Beaubourg was by Man Ray. This was *mainly* photographic, but there were a few objects as well.

It was while wandering around here that I saw a startling girl with flaming orange hair, electric blue eyes, and a permanent brightly-red complexion.

We finished off the afternoon at Beaubourg by finally going carefully through the modern art gallery there. The permanent exhibition was, as I was to discover in so many places, far superior to the temporary one, with wonderful pieces by Ernst, Dalí, and so on – every modernist you could think of (especially the ones I don't terribly much like, such as Picasso).

We were amazed, and would happily have spent a couple of hours more. Instead we went and had a coffee in the coffee shop, watched the queues waiting to get in to the movies, and finally left at around 1600.

Down in the square the performances of the acrobats and other entertainers were now at best desultory, and so, picking up a Sunday Times at a news-stand, we returned (via the metro) to the hotel. For me it was the end of a long day.

Jennifer was fit enough to go to a concert of Bach cantatas at St Julien Le Pauvre, a little church across the way from our hotel. What stamina!

28 December 1981

'Closed Mondays'. That's a sign you see in lots of places. But, anxious to get through our extended schedule, we had made up our minds that this was to be the day to visit Chartres and Versailles.

We set off on an SNCF train for Chartres, departing from Montparnasse (from which station, following countless (unreported-here) attempts, I finally managed to telephone Roelof Goudriaan in Lelystad!). It was on this trip that I began to appreciate the size and nature of Paris.

Most of my previous travel through the suburbs had been in the evening, or at a murky time in the morning; now it was possible to observe if not to admire the multi-storeyed blocks of flats in which the real folks live. Paris went on for miles! (And kilometres, for that matter.)

The train passes Versailles on the way to Chartres, which gave us a chance for a swift and unprofitable glance at our afternoon's destination from what was, to be honest, a rather decrepit train by comparison with the glories of the TGV.

By the time we got to Chartres it had become – let's be frank – cloudy. Nevertheless we hastened to the cathedral which is really quite close to the station.

There's little point in giving here more than a few lines to a description of Chartres Cathedral. Chartres is better seen than described, and if it must be described then one satisfactory approach is to read Henry Adams's *Mont St-Michel and Chartres* and an alternative is to look at a guide-book; the one I have runs to 128 pages and has, apart from the photographs, only the grossest of details.

The building is vast within and without, and as the clouds gave way to rain we persisted in our circumambulation, though I admit we did from time to time take shelter under parts of the building itself. There's another aspect to the cathedral that the visitor from the train doesn't know about; beyond the cathedral is a part of Chartres quite different from the old section interposed between train and church. From the cathedral one may look out over the town, and though the view is almost entirely restricted to roofs the rotation of 180 degrees from facing the cathedral to looking out over the town is akin to time-travel, and very much a good thing to do.

In concentrating on the exterior I don't mean to suggest that there's nothing to be seen on the inside. On the contrary, we spent a long time in there, with many other visitors, and there's plenty to occupy *any* visitor (even if it isn't raining).

But the outside is overwhelming. By midday it was time to find out what 'Closed Mondays' really meant. In Chartres on that Monday it meant walking around in drizzling rain looking for something to eat or drink.

Chartres is, we discovered, a wonderful place to visit – indeed, we wouldn't, we decided, mind a week or so there – but don't try to buy casual food there on a Monday (unless, it appeared, you wanted something at a cakeshop, which at the time we did not). Perhaps it was the time of day, but we did not strike it lucky until we got back to the railway station where Jennifer was able to buy another of her sandwiches, just before we got back onto the train and off to Versailles.

From the railway station I managed to navigate us on a more or less direct route to the château (this is not very difficult when most road intersections are signposted 'To the château' and – as the only alternative – 'Other directions').

There, at Versailles Palace, we stared at a scene out of a landscape painting of two hundred years before – the palace beyond a vast square, with a magnificent blue (well, bluish) sky dominating the visual field – marred only by the acres of cars parked on that square. It being Monday, almost everything was closed.

But we were, in any case, more interested in looking at the gardens, which were indeed fine, even if the presence of winter drapery on some of

the statues lent a touch of realism which we could have managed without.

Within the gardens I managed some Marienbad-like photographs (not difficult in that place) and also photographed some of the statues which were uncovered. This series of photographs is one I find particularly attractive to look back upon.

We took a different train back to Paris – RER rather than SNCF – which meant arriving at the St Michel RER station, a much shorter walk than that from Montparnasse once we had jumped the exit barriers. Our Eurail passes entitled us to travel on that train, but this was of no assistance in physically getting off the platform.

(At Versailles we were able to ask to be let out. Systems which operate without ticket-collectors or conductors are undoubtedly cheaper, and probably more efficient, but there are times when they make trouble.)

That night neither of us wanted to go anywhere. One main concern that night was to plan for a relaxed time the next day.

29 December 1981

As predicted and planned, this was a quiet day. We made reservations for the opera for Thursday night (*Don Giovanni*), went to FNAC in Montparnasse (if only Pascal had warned us how crowded it was, no matter how cheap the books and records might have been!) but didn't buy anything, and went to see *Phantom Of The Paradise*. This was a reasonable preparation, we thought, for the next day, on which we were to meet Pascal and travel down to Bordeaux.

30 December 1981

The plan was that we should meet Pascal at the station about ten minutes before the train left.

We got to Austerlitz a little early and so looked around it before heading for the agreed meeting place. We waited there, at the entrance to the platform, until nine minutes before the train was due to leave, and then decided that we should set out along the platform in case Pascal had arrived early (which he might easily have done, since we had been well away from the entrance while we explored). In doing this we ignored the length of the train.

From later evidence we are able to piece together what happened. Within seconds of our entering the platform Pascal had arrived and not finding us waiting, made exactly the same decision we did, and set out along the platform. Now Pascal was returning home, while we were only visiting for the day, which meant that he was carrying quite a lot of luggage while we had almost nothing. As a result, as we marched separately along the platform Pascal, starting behind us, and being more

heavily-laden, fell further and further behind; our mutual but unvoiced strategy was separating us, rather than bringing us together.

In addition, we were both slowed by the fact that every now and then we stopped to check both forwards and backwards for the other. Try as we might to get closer, we succeeded only in drawing apart.

The next step in the strategy was one on which, once again, we agreed. At about the same time both parties decided that they had gone too far, and that it was time to turn back towards the platform entrance.

This time the strategy worked in our favour as Foyster and Bryce, not encumbered with luggage, closed rapidly on Thomas.

Unfortunately, however, this was a situation which involved time as well as space, and so although in a different kind of world we would inevitably have caught up with Pascal, in the SNCF-world trains depart more or less on time, and when the train departed the two groups had not closed to within range of one another.

Now our strategies differed.

Pascal had to go home to Bordeaux anyway, whereas we were going only to visit someone who, so far as we could make out, was not travelling down there.

So Pascal caught the train and we didn't.

(Later that day Pascal telephoned from Bordeaux, and we reconstructed the events described in the preceding paragraphs: more importantly we made definite plans to go down to Bordeaux the next day...)

We decided to fill in the day quietly. I, at least, had not fully recovered from the previous week. In any case, this did give us an opportunity for Jennifer to buy some music.

Music for oboe (and indeed, music generally) is much cheaper in Europe than in Australia, and Jennifer was able to make much of this.

Earlier, during our wanderings around Paris, we had spent some time in Strasbourg-St Denis buying music; that is to say, Jennifer went upstairs into a small shop for half an hour or so while I waited in the street (Rue de L'Echiquier, if you must know) where I was accosted by many French persons seeking either my advice or my custom.

To get us to that shop I managed at least two wrong turnings. On this day, Wednesday, we wanted a shop in St Honoré.

Rue St Honoré.

Not Faubourg St Honoré.

I knew that these were not the same street (well, actually they are, but the name changes partway along), but somehow I didn't get around to

asking Jennifer which one she wanted, but assumed that she wanted Faubourg St Honoré.

Shouldn't've.

The long walk back probably did us some good, but Jennifer didn't seem very pleased about it at the time: on the other hand she had managed to buy a lot of music.

Now I haven't, in this account, yet made substantial reference to Good Bookshops. Paris has many of them, and our travels and wanderings were invariably interrupted by slight detours to check out a bookstore. Often, in the evenings, when remembering not to imitate the opening of a J.G. Ballard short story, we would spend an hour or two visiting bookstores which remained open to late hours.

The bookshop I regard as the best I have ever been in, La Hune in Boulevard St Germain, opened at ten in the morning and closed at midnight (most days), and although there was scarcely a book in English on their shelves I reckon we must have spent an hour there every second day.

Other bookstores carried strange mixtures of new and second-hand books, of 'serious' and 'other' books. At various stages of our Paris sojourn we visited the Bande-Dessinée shops a few times, and the SF shop in the rue Dante twice (though not buying anything, and regretting not having bought those copies of *Galaxy* back in 1979).

From newsstands we could buy papers from all over, though *The Village Voice* didn't seem to be on sale any more. And I've already mentioned that useful Whatzon, *Pariscope*.

From time to time, therefore, and unheralded in these writings, we would loiter for an hour or two in bookstores of one or more of these kinds; FNAC, mentioned above, is a discount shop which is fine for getting cut prices on mass-market books or records. The few English-language bookshops shocked us a little with their prices, which at times approached the kind of price Australians have to pay in their own country!

Thus, on this particular day, although I might report that we returned from the rue St Honoré to our hotel, the truth is that there was a great amount of shop-loitering of the kind which most people do all the time. Consider it said.

However, in all honesty I have to report that I didn't feel so good after the morning's excitement, and spent the afternoon in bed.

That night we had an opportunity to see a film which, if you believe the publicity which was around a year or two later, does not exist. In 1927 Abel Gance made a film which used some techniques which were

advanced for the time but which was a marvellous depiction of the life of Napoleon. A silent film, expensive and long, it didn't get much of a showing at the time.

Over recent years Kevin Brownlow has pieced together most of the original and late in 1980 Francis Ford Coppola (as he then was) released this fancy version (with music composed by his father) in the United States of America, to great and justified applause.

In 1971, however, Claud Lelouch had produced a version, with Abel Gance, which was dubbed, and had a few additional scenes included to improve the continuity. This film, titled *Bonaparte and the Revolution*, we saw that night in Paris (out near Gobelins) for about four bucks (as opposed to the twenty-five bucks asked for in Melbourne to see the Coppola version).

We thought it was great. So did the intensely patriotic local audience, stirred by nationalism of a kind which will never be able to surface in Australia. It was a bit of a fleabag theatre, and you had to fight with the management to get in, but it was worthwhile.

Afterwards, as we stood in the pouring rain just before 0100 looking hopefully for a taxi, we for a moment doubted our wisdom in going out that night, but that feeling soon vanished: the taxi was easy to find, for a start.

Of course the driver didn't know where our hotel was, and we collectively were not good at giving directions in French because I would have to give them to Jennifer in English, and she would then translate. But we arrived, the taxi-driver charged us a monstrously low fare (so much for the stories we had heard about cabfares in Paris!), and we could scarcely have been happier as we walked along the rue Serpente to the hotel.

Although this was not a typical Parisian day for us, there were elements which made it more excitingly French. Perhaps it was because things went wrong occasionally, which we had to sort out, but in any case finishing the day sitting with a French crowd watching a French movie led me to at least begin to feel that I could now be a part of the place, rather than being a foreigner dumped there for a brief visit. It was on this day, perhaps, that my attitude towards Paris began to change.

31 December 1981

This time we did catch the train to Bordeaux. The train left at 0900 and arrived at Bordeaux about four and a half hours later, a journey of 581 kilometres. It was a dark, gloomy day as we left Paris, and one could not see for any great distance early in the trip. Later, though not as early as we would have liked, the light lifted, and our swift views of such places as

Tours, Poitiers, and Angoulême were sufficiently attractive to beckon us back (somewhat ineffectively so far).

Pascal met us at the station. A 'bus took us towards the centre of Bordeaux, where we began with a quick tour of a cathedral which seemed to us unusual in that the steeple was detached from the main body of the building. (Pascal said that this style was quite common around Bordeaux.)

Apart from that, it was the kind of intricately-butressed place we had come to look forward to admiring. Next stop was the place where Francis Valery was staying. Francis was, in Australian terms, a sort of combination of the better points of John Bangsund and Bruce Gillespie, with a drop of Paul Collins and the vigour of Irwin Hirsh in his younger days... Or so it seemed at the time.

His office was piled high with fanzines and prozines and those funny things in the middle which are becoming increasingly common. Francis had much less English than does Pascal (but more than I had of French).

He was planning to go to California in February 1982. He struggled with my accent and then became quite frustrated.

Pascal made life tough for him by pointing out that in California accents (i.e. deviations from mid-Atlantic English) tend to be stronger than mine. Outside we ran into Jean-Daniel Breque, a marvellously-talented illustrator of whom I hadn't previously heard, and whose skills I didn't know about at the time. Jean-Daniel's English was quite good, and he mentioned that he was reading Joyce Carol Oates's *Bellefleur* (in English), which I had just finished.

We seemed to like similar aspects of this work. I noticed later that *Bellefleur* had just been translated into French.

Pascal had a plan. We were to go to his parents' flats in the suburbs, and there Francis, whose energy still astounds me in retrospect, would do an interview with me. He did occasional sf shows on local Bordeaux radio, and this interview might be useful for one of his programs. Over at the flat where Pascal was staying we looked over the book collections – much more exciting in another country – and got down to planning the interview.

It was to go like this: Francis would ask the questions in French, Pascal would give me a free translation of the question into English, I would reply in English, and Jean-Daniel would give a simultaneous translation of my reply into French. As you can imagine from the description, there were plenty of opportunities for confusion here.

For example, quite often I would understand Francis's question, and would be begin formulating my reply only to find that Pascal's wording in English required a somewhat different reply. In practice I answered a

question about halfway between what I understood Francis to have asked and what Pascal actually asked, since my understanding of the original question in French had probably been inaccurate.

Next, in providing an answer, I would try to structure it in bite-sized chunks which were easy to translate in the phrase-by-phrase style Jean-Daniel was using, trying to make the answer interesting if that was consistent with the other constraints.

Well, this was tiring stuff. We took frequent breaks, and soon Jean-Daniel was allowing Pascal to translate some of my replies.

By the time we got around to the stage where there were bilingual catchphrases used in a half-punning manner (I recall particularly ‘the tyranny of distance’) the interview was definitely getting out of hand.

It was a fair old strain all round, and what interested me most was the general direction of Francis’s questions – they were substantially about the Australianness of Australian science fiction. Given the extent to which Australia has become Americanized, I thought I did well to come up with anything at all. But it set me thinking about my own attitudes towards the local sf published by Paul Collins, *Futuristic Tales*, and Nev Angove.

Even if it isn’t any good, at least you can say it’s Australian.

In Europe, perhaps, the notion that a kind of nationalist identification is essential seems a commonplace. In Austral climes there may be too easily a forgetting of differences of a trivial but *interesting* kind. If Australianness in science fiction is a virtue, I certainly spent most of that afternoon seeking virtue. We eventually got through to the end of the interview by talking about the Melbourne bid for the 1985 World Science Fiction Convention.

Jennifer found this all rather amusing to watch and listen to. After the interview was over, Francis and Jean-Daniel headed back for the centre of Bordeaux, while Pascal’s mother drove us down to the river. We thanked her for the lift, and Pascal began a quick tour of the older parts of Bordeaux as the darkness came down rather more quickly than we would have liked. He was able to show us only a few of the local marvels, but included in the tour the site of a previous French SF con. My fascination with building strengthened as Pascal showed us delightful and weird places we would never have found for ourselves.

Somehow Pascal navigated us back to the railway station where, after a quick nosh-up on pommes-frites, he headed back for home and we took the train.

This is where the story really starts. As you have gathered, trains in Europe are always on time. This train, which had come from Spain, was

indeed on time. But at Poitiers, alas, the train stopped for an ominously long time before the station attendants passed the word to the train's public address system, whence we learned of the problem with the 'machine'. This problem lasted the best part of an hour. The train was unable to make up this temps perdu, and we arrived at Austerlitz just as midnight sounded.

Now I really do mean *sounded*. At Austerlitz there were a few firecrackers, a little tooting of horns. Austerlitz to Odéon is but a short journey by metro, and at Odéon the cacophony seemed out of control. To the honking of cars were added the futile sounds of police car sirens and, rather frequently it seemed to us, the crash of broken glass.

Back at the hotel the noise was much the same – for the next hour or so. The honking of horns continued, as did the occasional sound of breaking glass and the police sirens. This was followed by what seemed to be the sound of cars crashing into each other, and perhaps gunshots. Eventually we did get to sleep, though with some uncertainty in our minds as to what we should find out there on the streets when we woke.

1 January 1982

I suppose the first thing we noticed was a car which had run into a pole (not a Pole: that was much further north). Then the rows of shops with trashed windows – not restaurants for some reason.

Later, when we went to the movies, the streets were notable for being crowded with macho-looking private armed guards who seemed to be very attentive to those few large and fashionable stores which had not been attacked. Unfortunately the newspapers we read didn't go into detail about this sort of excitement.

It was an almost painfully sunny day. I had been hoping for this, because I wanted to take a lot of photographs of that over-decorated cake, the Académie Nationale (aka Opéra).

We took the metro to Opera and emerged onto the sunlit Place de l'Opéra, along with twenty or thirty other photographers who all seemed to have the same idea as me. We got along well enough with one another, but the professional photographers didn't do much trade selling their photographs to passers-by.

After taking those photographs we turned back towards our hotel. We hoped that the sunny weather would last until we got to Notre Dame, but it didn't, and my desire to take photographs there was almost utterly frustrated. I did take some of the square in front of Notre Dame, but these are somewhat less than inspiring in their impact.

In the afternoon we visited another of the local cinemas, where we saw an excellent print of *The Big Sleep*. There were almost no scratches.

The short, of which we saw part, was an early Chaplin, and it seemed an appropriate sort of finish to this stay in Paris – a quiet walk back from the movies.

Although I've mentioned in this account the movies we saw, I haven't by any means given a fair and detailed report of what we *could* have seen. This isn't the place to go into the fine detail either, but I should provide a slightly better impression than I have done so far.

Our hotel was close to the boundary between the 5th and 6th districts, but was actually in the 6th, Luxembourg. By my count the 6th boasts 50 cinemas. Some of these are in those multiple affairs with one or two ticket offices to half a dozen theatres (salles, rooms...), although the largest in the 6th only has five rooms.

And in this particular week you could see English-language movies at ten of those cinemas. (You could see many more than ten different English-languages movies, however, since it is quite common to show different movies on different days of the week, or at different times of the day.)

And the 5th, just across the road, had almost as many cinemas; we probably did go to the movies more often in the 6th than in the 5th, but only just.

I have already mentioned how small Videostone was. I think the largest cinema we were in would have held 500 people.

The only way to give a complete picture of the movies would be to list them all, and I don't intend to do that. But what can be said, quite simply, is that in choosing a movie we would select something we thought looked close enough, and was showing soon enough after we decided to go, and we then went to that cinema.

On the way I might take note of any interesting movies showing at other theatres so that if we couldn't get in to our first choice we would have a fall-back theatre, but this was never necessary. The nearest we came to using that strategy was when I would draw up a list of possible films with starting times at intervals of ten to fifteen minutes, and we would then go to the movie which corresponded most suitably to the time we finished in the restaurant. Eat your heart out, Bruce Gillespie.

Restaurants. We did not do anything adventurous in that line, nor anything expensive. The most comfortable food, I suppose, we found in a Chinese restaurant near Notre Dame.

The other major excitement associated with our stay in Paris I have thus far neglected completely. This was 'dealing with the Post Office'.

For example, I wanted to send a parcel to Joseph Nicholas. With my

luck, it turned out to be over two kilos, which means it had to be taken to a special post office – this I knew from previous experience.

I also knew exactly where to go in the post office to which we were directed, having been there before – except that when I arrived I discovered that renovations were in progress. Scaffolding was everywhere, and all the signs, implicit and explicit, seemed to say ‘Keep Out’.

But an inquiry around the corner at a small post office elicited the response that no, one had to go around the corner to the main post office to lodge a two-kilo parcel.

I stumbled through several doors and around concrete-mixers, meeting many people who had no interest in two-kilo parcels of fanzines. I eventually gave up and resolved to go to the main post office near the Louvre.

Same gimmick: ‘Sorry, this is over two kilos, you’ll have to go upstairs.’ I thought he said to go to the second floor, but it turned out to be the fifth.

On the fifth floor was one of those long counters which are partially subdivided – obviously so that the different subdivisions may comfortably carry out their different functions without interference – with no indication of the various purposes served by each subdivision. Unerringly I chose the right subdivision and indicated in my execrable and unintelligible French that I wanted to send my parcel to England

Can’t be done – or so it seemed was the reaction. Having played this game before I knew that all this meant was that some paperwork was involved and that the parcel was, to tell the truth, over two kilos. So I reached across the counter and took the forms which I knew had to be filled in, scribbled on them to the best of my ability, and passed them back across the counter.

This time all was acceptable, and the lady behind the counter indicated that I should now wait at an adjacent counter because I *might* be able to get a cheaper rate.

(She hasn’t realized that the parcel is over two kilos, I muttered to myself.)

Well, in time the gentleman at the new counter checked my parcel and began to explain, in somewhat expressive but gentle French, that there was a problem with the parcel.

My face must have revealed my boredom, for a lady standing at the counter asked very kindly if I understood what was being said to me. Then, without waiting for a reply, she told me the news which she was sure would be painful to me: my parcel was over two kilos. (I know, I

know!)

So back I went to the original counter, paid over a large pile of francs for the privilege of sending stuff to Joseph which (as it happened) reached him long after the time it would have reached him had I sent it direct from Australia at a lower price. The European Community is a wonderful thing.

At the end of this day, the first of the new year, we were able to look back and regret that we would be leaving so soon. I haven't written at all about what could be bought at the local supermarket, or at the cake shops; I'll leave that for my description of our return trip. For we were to return for several days, cancelling our planned revisit of Florence.

Now our overall plan called for us to separate for a couple of days. The next morning Jennifer would take a trip to Basel, while I would head north, Jennifer visiting her friend, while I would meet with sf fans in Belgium and Holland – then we would join up again in Frankfurt and stay with Cherry Wilder and Horst Grimm for a couple of days.

We packed that night, having spent a bit of the afternoon sending a parcel back to Australia.

This was the part of the journey that was going to be most difficult in terms of moving baggage, and we didn't want more excess junk than was absolutely essential. I would be getting rid of many copies of *The Antipodean Announcer* – but that meant I had to carry them until I got rid of them. When we finally divided the bags it seemed as though Jennifer might have slightly too heavy a load, but there didn't seem much of an alternative. The main problem was that her train left the Gare de l'Est a couple of hours after mine left the Gare du Nord. Thank heavens for the metro!

Ghent 2 January 1982

The weather was fine for our joint departures from Paris. We had been at the Gare de l'Est on the previous day, so had been able to check from which platform Jennifer's train for Basel would depart.

But I hadn't really decided exactly which route I was going to follow. I could go to Ghent by train via Lille, which I hadn't seen, or Brussels, which I had. I could even do both if I wanted a genuinely round-about route. But I had to be in Ghent by 2.30 p.m.

In the end I followed the conservative path, via Brussels.

What was this all about? Why Ghent? Why, for that matter, Europe? What were we doing here?

Nowhere in what I have written earlier in this chapter have I made a deliberate attempt to explain it all, though there are occasional hints. To understand why I am going to Ghent it is necessary to understand longer-

term plans.

An extended parenthesis is therefore desirable.

[At SEACON in 1979 the group of Australian fans who were present made substantial efforts to boost the Sydney bid for the 1983 world SF convention (I ought to point out that Sydney fandom was not generally represented at SEACON, and most of the pushing was being done by fans based in Melbourne). No effort which involves getting both George Turner and John Foyster into fancy dress can be regarded as trivial.

[But Sydney fandom's efforts before and after SEACON were not enough to win against any competition at all, and this was obvious by early 1981, with voting to close late in August 1981.

[As this was clear by mid-1981, I and a number of other Melbourne fans felt that a bid from Melbourne for 1985 had a chance of success. Whereas our bid for 1975 had been successful partly on the basis of the novelty of it all, any bid for 1985 (to be decided in 1983) would be on the basis of a track record. With that record and the experience we had had boosting Sydney, we thought 1985 was a genuine opportunity, and accordingly we launched a bid for 1985 at the 1981 Worldcon. With the experience we had behind us in running the 1975 convention, we could afford to devote a much larger proportion of our effort, in the early days of the bid at least, to drumming up support for the bid from quarters which had tended to be ignored by most previous bidders. In particular, those of us at SEACON had been taken by the interest of the European fans and, with Roelof Goudriaan working on creating links between European fandom and non-European fandom, the time seemed right to work with the Europeans.

[By the middle of 1981 I was ready for a decent holiday; both Jennifer and I had had a rough year and I was going to change jobs at the end of the year. We had been wanting to return to Europe as a result of our 1979 experience, and this was a good time to do it. At the same time I could try to meet with European fans and talk about the Australian bid. Through Roelof's and other contacts I had a list of people I wanted to see, and this to some extent dictated our itinerary. When we travelled in late 1981-early 1982 we had no idea that we would be returning to Europe later in 1982 (see the next chapter). That

return visit provided us with a quite unexpected opportunity to see again many of those we had visited in winter.]

But now, back to Ghent!

Andre De Rycke was my main contact in Ghent. We had agreed to meet for the Saturday afternoon in a hotel opposite the railway station in Ghent – hence my specification of 2.30 p.m. as the time I was due in Ghent.

As it happened I arrived at just about the same time as Andre and half a dozen other local fans. We then spent a few hours discussing fandom and science fiction in the way that new acquaintances do, but reverting to more general subjects, like the differences between Belgium and Australia, as the opportunities arose.

Late in the afternoon the group broke up and a smaller subgroup arranged to meet for drinks in a local bar.

In fact we only lost one or two from the original group, so this was really a continuation of the 2.30 p.m. gathering. This bar had been chosen, I suspect, to create a particular impression on me, which was certainly the effect when I was faced with an eight-page beer menu. The Belgian fans were lamenting the fact that there were now only a couple of hundred breweries in Belgium (by comparison with the ‘good old days’).

In Australia at that time there was also some reduction of the number of breweries going on, but on a quite different scale, since the number of breweries in Australia was only about one hundredth the number in Belgium.

‘Scale’ was probably the main subject of our conversations – or rather the differences in scale between the two countries. Although the populations are significantly different (a ratio of two to one, say), the size, and distance from Europe, of Australia were areas which were to dominate all my discussions in 1982 with European fans (since I was usually talking about the possibility of European fans coming to the 1985 convention), and it was in Ghent that I first got strong reactions.

In general, not just Europeans but most people Australians meet when travelling think of Australia being much smaller geographically than it is. It seems unthinkable, somehow, that some 16 or 17 million people living in a Western-style country could be spread out over an area about the size of the United States, or 50% bigger than Europe.

This problem manifests itself most seriously when people visit Australia, and are not prepared for the distances one has to travel between different cities.

But the killer idea for Europeans, at least, is the notion of the distance

one has to travel to reach Australia. Because we in Australia are used to the idea of a three or four hour flight which doesn't take us out of our own country, travelling for over 24 hours to reach Europe doesn't seem too bad; see, for example, my description of travelling to Europe – either the one at the beginning of this chapter or, for sheer foolhardiness, the one at the beginning of the next chapter, in which I complete the travel to Europe with a day's travel through Europe! (By contrast, my own understanding of the size of Europe was substantially enhanced later in this month when I flew from Milan to Amsterdam one day and then from Amsterdam to Rome the next. It took hardly any time, yet each trip overflew several countries!)

So when I talked to the fans in Ghent about coming to Australia for a convention it seemed a much bigger excursion to them than to me. One or two of them had relatives who had travelled to Australia, and thus had at second-hand some information about the country, but for the most part Australia was still *terra incognita*.

This gave me the chance to talk about some aspects of the country, but not much. I was more interested in persuading people to come and see for themselves. I had a few leaflets and oddments to hand around, but at the end of the day didn't feel that I had managed to attract any visitors.

The end of the day was still, in fact, some distance off; because I was leaving early next morning by train to meet Roelof and Kees van Toorn, Andre suggested that I should stay near the railway station; he would arrange it. But before that, perhaps a short tour by car of Ghent?

It was already well into twilight, so what little I could see had relatively little opportunity to make an impression on me. But this short excursion made me regret that I was moving on so quickly (this was not the only time I was to have this impression, of course). Ghent is a place deserving of extended study, and this whetting of my appetite is a matter which will have to be attended to one day.

Andre arranged a cheap room for me about 200 metres from the station (the cost was about \$4 Australian for the night), and we talked about the likelihood that we would meet again (which we did in August). I slept well that night; the next day involved Dordrecht and Amsterdam, and then after a short break in Amsterdam I would be travelling down to Langen to meet Cherry and Horst (and Jennifer!) again.

Dordrecht 3 January 1982

(Ghent-Brussels 0933-1010 61km; Brussels-Roosendaal 1013-1120 99km; Roosendaal-Dordrecht 1123-1147 38km.)

This was – and in retrospect I'm grateful for it – a quiet day.

The pub I stayed in overnight (a Saturday) had as its main advantage its proximity to the railway station, something which was important given the time I was catching a train on the Sunday morning.

The morning itself was grey, almost a reminder that this was, after all, winter, and that our time in Paris had protected us from the extremes of weather we were about to encounter.

The trip north was quite short, as the table at the head of this section indicates. There was actually a change of train at Brussels, so the three-minute break there was used productively. Roosendaal was not a change of trains, merely a change of countries – travelling around Europe, even so long pre-Community, makes one awfully casual about international boundaries.

Roelof Goudriaan and I met at a railway station near Dordrecht. While I travelled from Ghent he was travelling south from Amsterdam, so we met just before noon and, as is always the case, science fiction fans had no troubles recognizing one another.

We took a cab to Kees van Toorn's place. I had not met Kees or Angélique before, but Annmarie and Leo Kindt, who were also there, I had met at SEACON in 1979.

We spent most of the afternoon talking fan politics; the Australian bid for 1985 was now well under way – after all, this was part of the reason I was visiting – and the Dutch bid was starting to warm up.

There was much we had in common with respect to strategies, so it is not surprising that both bids were successful.

But the people involved in the bids were very very different. In Australia, at this time only one member of the bidding group had anything to do professionally with science fiction; we were not science fiction professionals, but when it came to running conventions we had all been involved in the 1975 Worldcon.

Most members of the Dutch bidding group had some professional connection with science fiction, although this did not interfere with their status as trufans. This led to lengthy discussions about the different possibilities for science fiction fans in non-English-speaking countries. At that time the translation opportunities were more or less one way (English – or should I write American? – into Dutch), although now there have been a couple of translations of novels and collections into English.

As a result the bidding group members were well-known in their own country and to the authors they had translated. This gave them some organizational advantages, especially when it came to local publicity.

But the working conditions of translators were unattractive. While

you could make a living at it, you had to turn out very large wordages because the rates were so low. I'm not sure many people would want to earn their living from science fiction in this way. Kees also did some translations for radio, which I suppose provided some variety.

(Five years later I would do a radio adaptation myself, and thus discover in practical terms what I had previously suspected only theoretically: radio dialogue is not easy to write if you want to make it sound convincing.)

Early that evening we all went out together to enjoy that interesting consequence of Dutch colonization, the rijstaffel. After a good meal with more talk Roelof and I were driven off to the Rotterdam station to catch a train north to Amsterdam. This meant driving through the Europoort, the vast Rotterdam wharf district which, even by night, was impressive in terms of its extent.

In Amsterdam Roelof thought it would be relatively easy to find a room for me before he went back to Lelystad. In a way it was, though I think it took a little longer than we had both thought. But down a small street near the station Roelof found a place which could offer me a room. There I settled, while Roelof returned home.

Amsterdam 4 January 1982

In Amsterdam I had one specific task and some general ones.

The specific task was to try to make contact with my colleague Jan Timmer. The general tasks related to visiting art galleries and road-testing chocolate.

Back in the middle 1970s I had carried out a national study of innovative education programs in Australia. One result of this was making some contacts with people around the world who were also trying to analyse what was going on in the 'different' educational climates we came across in association with these programs.

Jan Timmer had been doing some similar work in the Netherlands, and we had briefly corresponded. When I realized that I had an opportunity to meet up with him in Amsterdam I wrote, but had not heard back from him; in Paris I had been waiting for calls from both Roelof and Jan.

Now I could put in a morning checking out what was going on, on the spot. This wasn't too unpleasant, as it turned out, though not immediately fruitful.

I was staying in a spot just off Damrak, in the centre of Amsterdam, and Jan's office was adjacent to one of the nearby canals. Jan's work had been done at the Research Institute of Applied Psychology at the

University of Amsterdam, and seemed to me to be capable of more general application than I had seen.

I had to walk west across several bridges over canals to reach the office, which was on Prinzengracht. Walking to that office was a delightful way to be introduced to daytime Amsterdam.

Jan had not replied to my letters because, just after the first one arrived, he had had to leave for a period in India. His secretary was very helpful, even providing hot chocolate rather than the coffee I am usually offered in such circumstances, but one thing she couldn't be sure of was exactly when Jan would return. She thought it would be in two to three weeks, but made it clear that Jan was very interested in meeting me. I left my various anticipated telephone numbers and said that I would continue to try to make contact. Three weeks, however, was about the outer limit so far as I was concerned.

This left me with the afternoon to myself. I had planned this in any case, and expected to spend most of the afternoon in the Rijksmuseum, which is exactly what happened.

The Rijksmuseum was about a mile from where I was staying, so I had a reasonable chance to explore more of Amsterdam on the way. At the same time I could carry out that other important task, road-testing Dutch chocolate.

This I did as well as I could under the circumstances; it was cold, but not so cold that you could justify a really high-calorie diet. In fact, it was warmer than it had been when we had arrived a couple of weeks before. I can remember working up quite a sweat on the walk out to the Rijksmuseum, mainly through shopping areas, but with some pleasant grassed areas as I neared the gallery itself.

Because I am not much taken with dark paintings of Dutch burgers I felt that there was a fair chance I would find the Rijksmuseum disappointing. I was both right and wrong.

The 'big' painting on display at the time was *The Night Watch* and although I do admire many of Rembrandt's paintings this is not really one of them. Indeed, in the main display area I found only a couple of Italian paintings which really attracted my attention.

But elsewhere in the Rijksmuseum I found more than enough to justify the visit.

For a start, the works of painters of Vermeer's period or thereabouts seemed much more impressive than I had expected from the reproductions I had seen. I was able to spend quite a long time with paintings I already knew of and through this extended exposure I became much more aware of

their qualities, something which would stand me in good stead in a few weeks (although I didn't know it then).

But then there was Paulus Potter. Obviously I had been reading the wrong art books, and Paulus Potter was completely unknown to me. What struck me, as I suppose it must strike many who see it for the first time, was the sensual impact of Potter's painting of the Bull.

I had not any clear idea of when landscape painting moved from classical, Arcadian styles to almost photo-journalistic realism, but I supposed this must be close to it. Instead of animals being a minor part of a landscape, the bull occupies the centre, and about one-third the area of the canvas. Billed as a landscape, this painting brings animality into the foreground. It was one of several shocks of this kind I was to have in 1982.

Elsewhere in the museum I found other paintings to admire, but something which stands out in my memory is the room or so devoted to the history of Amsterdam and the Dutch. This kind of historical display, when juxtaposed with the art of the period, certainly helps to give the viewer a setting against which to admire what the artists have done.

Quitting the Rijksmuseum, I headed further south down Paulus Potterstraat, but not to the Vincent Van Gogh National Museum (I find van Gogh too difficult) but beyond that to the Stedelijk Museum.

Here there was a display which reflects and emphasizes the point I have passingly made reference to above about the relationship between artist and society: DE KUNST VAN HET PROTEST, the title of the exhibition, needs no translation. The collection of posters from the period 1965 to 1975 ranged from Provo pieces to – and I suppose this is a reasonable contrast – Peter Max, Tomi Ungerer and Ron Cobb.

This was more than an ample day of culture. I headed for bed early that night, as I was to travel quite early the next day to Frankfurt to link up with Jennifer, and to re-visit Cherry and Horst Grimm.

Langen 5-6 January 1982

The distance from Amsterdam to Frankfurt is 495 km, and accordingly this trip involves a very early departure from Amsterdam; I caught the train before 8.00 a.m.

The journey is via Köln, and the train line follows the Rhine as far as Wiesbaden before continuing east to Frankfurt.

I quite looked forward to this journey along the Rhine, but somehow things didn't turn out as I planned. The journey across to Köln is about 250 km, and while some of the early parts of the trip through the Netherlands are interesting (and industrial!), by the time we reached Köln I was becoming bored. There was barely time for a glance out the window of the

carriage before we were moving again, towards the Rhine and towards Frankfurt.

I was the only person in the compartment, so I settled down to stare at the various marvellous castles and towns along the river; I woke up just after the train passed Bingen, about 30 km before we reached Wiesbaden and thus I managed to miss seeing just what the journey was planned around!

Nevertheless it was a relief to arrive in Frankfurt just after midday to be met by Jennifer and Cherry; Jennifer had arrived from Basel only a short time earlier. Cherry guided us out to the Grimm apartment in Langen – but I am sure that I could have found it again by myself, having been there as recently as 1979.

The remainder of the day was spent quietly recovering.

And so was the next day, for that matter. Cherry, Jennifer and I went out for a Chinese meal for lunch. Cherry and Jennifer went on ahead to the restaurant and, while waiting for me, told the waiter they wanted to wait until their friend, a man with a beard, arrived. Unfortunately for them, this was the day when something like 20 men with beards arrived for a Chinese meal. Eventually I appeared to sort out the confusion and we ate in comfort.

After that there was some supermarket shopping in Langen before we returned home – which is the way we came to think of the Grimm's apartment in Langen.

It had become distinctly colder since I had left Amsterdam, and we wondered what the future held in store from the climatic point of view; we had been out in the snow in Toronto, but it looked certain that we would now find out what snow was really like.

München 7 January 1982

We travelled down to München (437 km) in just over 4 hours. As we travelled south and east during all the morning the signs of snow, and of flooding, increased steadily.

From the back of the train, looking out over the receding tracks, there was a curious dislocation; it was a matter of looking back at a past we had not actually experienced. Snow and flooding on this scale were both things we were unfamiliar with, although we had seen plenty of snow in the non-urban environment when we had visited the south island of New Zealand in mid-1981.

As readers of science fiction, however, we could adjust to managing a past which belonged to someone else.

It is probably also important to write something about the München

railway station, not just because we saw quite a bit of it, but because as an institution it plays a much greater role in public life than do railway stations in Australia. (Much the same sort of remark could be made about other railway stations in Europe, particularly, in my view, large stations such as those at Frankfurt and Basel.)

The difference is one of temporal shift, at least in my perception. While European cities are without exception more modern than their Australian counterparts (as if any Australian cities could be counterparts of European cities!), both functionally and culturally, the railway station in most European cities appears to retain a place which in Australia was long ago surrendered. The railway system in Australia, like that in North America, is of much reduced significance. Throughout Europe, or so it seems, a different perspective has led to the retention of rail as means of travel of importance; systems are being developed, not demolished, and as a consequence there's a life about major railway stations which is absent from their Australian equivalents. But by casting my mind back to the early 1960s I can reconstruct an Australian world in which the rail system had some significance; to visit Europe is thus for me to travel both into the future and, in this one particular, simultaneously into the past. It's a strange dislocation.

Waldemar Kuming had arranged for us to stay with Gary and Uschi Klupfel out near the airport in a suburb named Ascheim. But we had arrived in the middle of the day, and wouldn't be travelling out to Ascheim until later in the day. This left us with a few hours to fill in, which we had no trouble managing at all!

For example, Jennifer had been continuing the search, inaugurated in Toronto, for a suitably warm coat, and she had not yet found one. So we did the obvious thing and checked out appropriate shops as we walked through the centre of Munich along the main pedestrian area or, as the German puts it so much better, the Fußgängerbereich.

This particular search was not successful, although walking in and out of heated shops did draw forcefully to our attention one of the difficulties of living in the cooler Northern hemisphere: this internal heating of buildings is okay, but you are forever shedding and then re-donning clothes as you go from shop to shop.

We were not to spend the whole afternoon in this fruitless pursuit, fortunately, and after a snack Jennifer and I walked around to our first BIG German art gallery, the Alte Pinakothek.

For my part, I had one particular reason for wanting to visit the Alte Pinakothek – to see Albrecht Altdorfer's *Alexander's Victory* – but one

short afternoon changed my whole perception of this great museum.

For a start, getting a look at Alexander's Victory wasn't as easy as I had hoped it would be; the painting was surrounded by students making copies of it, or portions of it. While this was disappointing in itself, it did allow us to redirect our attention to other parts of the gallery.

Much further on I shall describe my own extended visit to the Deutschesmuseum in München. That later visit was frustrating because the museum was so vast that it was not possible to even approximately encompass it in an afternoon. The Alte Pinakothek, by contrast, is not vast in size, but even three visits have left me wanting more time there.

Part of the attraction of the Alte Pinakothek must be the *average* quality of the paintings; I can't recall seeing any there to which I was not attracted, although I had seen reproductions of relatively few of them beforehand.

To try to describe, within a limited compass such as this, any considered imaginings about such paintings seems almost impossible. It makes more sense to move slowly and cautiously.

For example, Albrecht Altdorfer, once merely known to me as the painter of the original used for the cover of the British paperback edition of Norman Birnbaum's *The Birth of the Millennium*, now seems a giant figure. For *Alexander's Victory*, no matter what its many merits, scarcely compares in impact, for me, with *Susannah and the Elders* or the Danube landscape or the *Birth of the Virgin Mary*.

Susannah and the Elders (*Susanna im Bade*) must surely, for example, have influenced strongly M.C. Escher some five hundred years later, so artificial yet so forceful is its perspective. Most of Altdorfer's paintings in the Alte Pinakothek appear to have been painted as though viewed through a wide-angle lens on a modern camera. Seeing the Altdorfer landscape *Donaulandschaft bei Regensburg*, which also has this effect – with vast trees flanking our view which extends back through the forest to a castle and mountains beyond – was to be on the end of a sort of double whammy after the Paulus Potter experience in Amsterdam. (Paulus Potter's *Peasant Family with Animals* is to be found in the Alte Pinakothek.)

The Birth of the Virgin Mary (*Die Geburt Mariae*) is remarkable not only for the perspective noted above, but the unusual geometric order brought into the painting: above Elizabeth and the newborn Mary is a vast circular halo of carefully painted (hyperrealistic, in fact) cupids. (Because of the richness of the collection in the Alte Pinakothek you can compare Altdorfer's geometric obsession with that of Botticelli in *The*

Lamentation.)

But it does thus return to *Alexander's Victory* (*Die Alexanderschlacht*). *Alexander's Victory* is the work of a mad miniaturist; details of the whole painting show how carefully Altdorfer composed each section, yet it is the whole work which has the greater impact – wide-screen baroque at its most extreme.

But there's more to the Alte Pinakothek than Albrecht Altdorfer. For example, two of Dürer's great and intense portraits (of himself and the one of Oswolt Krel) are to be found here. The sketches Rubens did for his Marie de Medici series are here. On and on for two floors stretch galleries of exciting paintings which cannot be even tentatively appreciated by a fleeting visitor. Perhaps this is why we were back here the next day and why I returned a few months later.

It was still cold when we stepped outside, and it was time to travel to Ascheim, there to be protected from temperatures we had not previously experienced and to talk with the Klupfels. We were also introduced to Spetsi, a combination of orange juice and cola which is very pleasant but which is also an acquired taste.

8 January 1982

Next day was to be a very full one.

Waldemar Kuming picked us up in his car, and we visited a PX, clearly a benefit to Waldemar of being in the spying information-gathering business. Waldemar bought a few books, as did we, before going off for an Indonesian meal at midday.

That afternoon we tortured poor Waldemar – or at least that is what I felt we were doing at times – by dragging him around the Alte Pinakothek (no further description needed now) and then, across the road, to the Neue Pinakothek.

The Neue Pinakothek houses paintings from around 1800 onwards, and had re-opened after rebuilding only in March 1981. As a result, the edition of the catalogue we had bought for the Alte Pinakothek actually included some paintings now found in the Neue Pinakothek. But, as I have indicated, it's just a matter of crossing the road anyway.

The Neue Pinakothek is substantially an art gallery devoted to the nineteenth century. This means that it includes some extraordinary paintings (an 1820s landscape by Caspar David Friedrich, for example – but I am too much an admirer of his paintings to have much power of discrimination as between them), but somehow many of the paintings feel as though they can be appreciated only by some kind of acquired taste which I'm not sure I've got. Before coming here I would never have

expected to admire – even want to explore further – painters such as Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller or Hans Makart, yet that was the result, and even now, years later, only a strong effort of will can fend off unjustified praise of these very ordinary painters.

They are in company at a different level for the Jugendstil at the end of the nineteenth century makes its appearance and is represented by, for example, Klimt. There are also many Impressionist paintings, and all in all it's a delightful way to spend an afternoon, except if, as was I think the case for poor Waldemar, it's not really your cup of tea. Waldemar was to have his revenge later, but in the afternoon stoically followed us around the gallery. But eventually we had to move on.

We were going to a meeting of a local SF group, but there was some spare time before that started, so Waldemar suggested we walk over to his flat in Herzogspitalstraße. This proved a remarkably short walk (in terms of what you normally expect when visiting a science fiction fan and start from the downtown area), but it was getting pretty cold, so brisk walking seemed to be the most desirable mode.

When we arrived there was really only a short time before we would have to move on to the club meeting. Nevertheless there was time for Waldemar to play us some of his recordings of the German radio version of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, something which would have meant much more to us if we had been familiar with the English version. I guess we were pretty unusual in knowing a great deal more about Douglas Adams than about his writings!

Eventually it was time to set off. It had become even colder. Let's just put this in perspective. Australians are used to temperatures in January of over 30 °C, not less than 0 °C. This was quite an adjustment to make. What we didn't know then was that the weather was deteriorating quite rapidly, and that our travel to Vienna the next day would be affected. But we set off from Waldemar's south towards the meeting place, which was only a kilometre or so. The trouble was, it seemed so much further. (The following summer I would walk along parallel roads basking in the sun and thinking it was all quite marvellous.) We started off chirpily enough but it soon became sufficiently cold that we preferred not to talk and keep as much heat as possible inside. If only Jennifer had been able to find a coat! (I, at least, was protected by a synthetic fur cap which Bruce Pelz had insisted I get in Los Angeles back in 1976 when I was about to travel across into blizzards on the east coast of the USA.)

I think we would have welcomed any corner in a wall, but we finally reached a shop which doubled as a meeting place, and we were warmly

greeted by around a dozen SF fans, few of whom spoke English.

The greeting was warm in more ways than one: we were offered something to help us recover from the cold. Mulled wine and hot black tea was just the thing for a night like that – except for me, whose teetotal status does not include drinking either tea or coffee. But on that night hot tea was just the thing. Jennifer had the mulled wine.

Although most of the München fans did not speak English we managed to enjoy a pleasant hour or so of conversation before Gary drove us back to Asheim.

On the way, he told us as we drove that the traffic was unusual because this was the first of the environmentally-friendly winters in which salt was *not* spread over the road. Accordingly everyone appeared to be trying to drive more carefully, but some weren't managing it too well. This made for an interesting drive, but fortunately Asheim wasn't far. And when we got there the Klupfels' house seemed the warmest we had ever been in.

Vienna 9 January 1982

This day was to be one which included more adventures than we had planned. What we were due to do was take what was then called the Orient Express to Vienna. It didn't turn out that way.

The Orient Express was due to arrive at 9.33 a.m. (and then depart at 9.45 a.m.), so this meant an early departure from Asheim; Gary drove us down to the local train station for the short journey to the city. There was a lot of snow around, so we were dressed as warmly as we had ever been.

At the main railway station there were large crowds milling around, and it quickly became clear that the weather was affecting the trains. The loudspeakers boomed at regular intervals as potential passengers bustled round looking for somewhere to go; us too. But the Orient Express was a major train: surely it would not be affected.

But it was. At twenty to ten we got the feeling that the Orient Express, if it arrived, was going to be rather late – and there was no way of telling how late. What to do? Take out one's copy of Thomas Cook's International Timetable, of course.

Since we would have to travel via Salzburg, the logical thing to do was take any local train to Salzburg and then look for any other train going to Vienna. According to the timetable there might be such a train at around 10.15 a.m. By following the information from the loudspeakers (which, as is the case in almost all countries, would be difficult to follow even if you were fluent in the language of the country, which we were not) and that available on the television monitors, we worked out that a rather

ramshackle set of dull green carriages being dragged reluctantly into a platform at one end of the station must be some sort of relief train travelling to Salzburg. The Thomas Cook timetable was not useful for accurate details of when trains would travel, but it did indicate which combinations of destination name were likely to get us where we wanted to go.

We piled onto the local for Salzburg along with other travellers willing to take a chance and eventually set off slowly in a train which looked like one of those you see in 1950s movies which are taking refugees from one part of Europe to another just after World War II. In fact, on reflection, like all the European trains we ever travelled on it was warm and comfortable, but the bleak conditions outside made things seem miserable.

As we travelled south through Bavaria things didn't improve. The stations we passed through were almost always deserted, as though the local inhabitants were too smart to venture outside. Sometimes you could only just make out the station buildings when the train stopped, so heavy was the snow. But the train ploughed on (not quite literally) and in about two hours reached Salzburg.

The Salzburg railway station was smaller and simpler than I had expected it might be, which made it easy to find the platform for trains to Vienna. But it wasn't at all clear what schedule trains were following that day. There was nothing to do but stand and wait. It was pretty cold.

We felt confident that we would be able to get to Vienna that afternoon, but it was not possible to predict how long we would have to wait, so wandering around Salzburg and getting a meal was not a sensible option. We stood and we waited.

Eventually a local train arrived and some four hours later we arrived at the Westbahnhof in Vienna. We were greatly relieved, not only because we had arrived, but because this was, in many ways, our real destination.

We took the subway to the Pension Nossek on the Graben, where we were pleased to have any room at all, although the room we got wasn't as good as the room we had had back in 1979. We took some time to warm up and then went to visit the small local restaurant we had sometimes used in 1979, the nearby Stadtbeisel, before collapsing into bed and sleeping very soundly.

10 January 1982

We were now to settle down for almost a week – to try to establish ourselves, however fleetingly, as residents of Vienna.

In 1979 Vienna had been a place where we had felt immediately at

home, although we knew other Australians who had found Vienna to be quite uncomfortable. We had been certain then that we would return, but had not expected that it would occur so soon.

Whatever the other attractions of Vienna, one must have been the scale, because it was and is so walkable a city – at least the inner city! The difference this time, of course, was that it was winter, and although we had begun to sense what this would mean while we were in München, we still had no idea of just how cold it would become.

The other difference was that we were returning to a city we knew. Although our time in Paris had also been a return, we had had different feelings about Paris on the earlier trip in 1979, whereas Vienna had been instantly attractive to us both. Vienna was a place about which we knew enough to plan our own explorations (or so we thought), so that it had the attraction of being both known and unknown.

This first full day we therefore took rather quietly, acclimatizing and planning. Part of the planning involved telephoning Franz Rottensteiner and learning something quite exciting which is to be revealed below.

Part of the planning was accidental; the Upper Belvedere, down to the south past the Schwarzenberger Platz, was one of my favourite places to visit (and I think Jennifer enjoys it too), so it was our first port of call. Although I have a bad habit of brushing past stalls with tourist brochures for some reason we stopped at one outside the gallery and found a brochure which was a very comprehensive guide to art galleries, exhibitions, and so on; hence the planning.

The Upper Belvedere is one of the baroque creations of Johann Lukas von Hildebrant, designed for Prince Eugene of Savoy at the beginning of the 18th century (no problems with gays in the military then...). Mentioning this raises a problem which should be dealt with now.

Visitors to Vienna who reflect upon their impressions – and even those who are more than visitors – cannot help but be struck by the richness of this small city. It's the richness of the cakes in the conditorei of which much is made in travel books, but there's more to it than that. As a centre for art, architecture, music, literature (and of course psychology) Vienna seems heavily overendowed.

As a result of our brief visit in 1979 we were aware of this, and of the risks of being overwhelmed – so, consciously or unconsciously (fateful words in the city of the Old Fraud), we focused our attention in this second, longer visit. This time most attention would be given to art (including the associated architecture), whereas on the first visit the focus had been upon music (if it is possible to identify a main theme in so short a

visit). And having limited ourselves to such a small goal we should be able to pace ourselves and thus enjoy more fully one aspect of Vienna.

This theory didn't work out, as our activities of 15 January, reported below, will show. But at the time it seemed an appropriately modest goal.

Now back at the Upper Belvedere the tourist is torn between the contents and the container. The Grolier Encyclopedia remarks about the Upper and Lower Belvederes and Lukas von Hildebrandt: 'Perhaps the high point of his secular architecture was the twin palaces of the Belvedere (c.1714-24) in Vienna, whose ornamental richness, spatial fluency, and harmony of parts are distinctly Hildebrandt's own' and certainly those three elements are what strike the eye in the Upper Belvedere (I've never been in the Lower Belvedere, so I'll take the encyclopedists' word for it).

If you can layer gold onto building elements, it seems to have been done here! But this is where contents and container blur into one another; does the building appear richer because of the art works it contains, or vice versa?

The Upper Belvedere houses 19th and 20th century art, mostly Austrian and German, and it's here that you find Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*. This building is probably one of the few settings in which Klimt's gold-laden masterpiece would not look ostentatious. There's an added benefit in that some works of the late 19th century precursors of Klimt, such as Makart and von Alt, are exhibited here. While there might be elements of High Gloss in the Upper Belvedere, it's also a place which repays close study.

That took a solid half day, so we spent the latter part of the afternoon wandering back through the streets to the Pension Nossek in the inner city, passing a few books and record stores which were noted for later attention.

That night we thought we would be experimental and, following the success with Cherry in Langen, we tried Chinese food in Vienna. The menu was not particularly baffling, but when it came to the fine detail of what each dish contained – well, that was a matter of chance.

Because Melbourne is a fine place in which to buy Chinese food it may be unfair to make comparisons, but this was definitely an aspect of Vienna which fell short of a similar experience in Australia: tolerable, but nothing to write home about.

11 January 1982

This was a day which continued our wandering activity.

But it also included some more purposeful things.

Firstly, in the morning we made our musical arrangements for the week. Whereas in 1979 we had toughed it out in standing room, this time

we wanted something more comfortable. From the cultural program we had picked up the previous day we knew that there were more concerts we wanted to go to than we could fit in (probably a year-round occurrence in Vienna). It was therefore just a matter of making a booking for the item of our choice.

As it turned out, this was not quite so simple. Jennifer had more or less decided what her priority was, but at the general booking office when I asked for tickets for that concert I was turned down, and had to tell Jennifer we would need our second choice which was...? 'Er, Trio Di Milano,' she said. That booking we were able to make.

We walked back to the Graben and as we passed Dorotheergaße Jennifer noticed a music shop she really felt she ought to visit. We picked up some extra clothing at the Pension Nossek and walked back to Dorotheergaße.

We had picked up extra clothing because it was now very cold. The temperature outside was -20 °C to which ought to be added (or subtracted) the wind chill factor which I didn't want to think about.

Jennifer said she would not need a lot of time in the music shop so I thought about it for a moment and decided to stand outside and wait for her.

Now what Jennifer was interested in buying was music scores, in particular classical arrangements for small chamber groups; what could be bought in Australia was very limited in range, so opportunities like this were not to be missed.

So while Jennifer went inside I stood out in the slightly windy street. I examined all the posters, which were the usual kind of thing one finds outside such stores all around the world: announcements of forthcoming concerts and of newly released records.

After about ten minutes I began to run out of posters to read. Jennifer had said that she would not be long, and after all the store looked quite small, and would scarcely have all that much music for oboe.

After about fifteen minutes I began to wonder whether perhaps Jennifer had managed to leave via another door. I walked up and down the street for the length of the store; there was no other door. I began to wonder about the icicles forming on my beard; is it acceptable manners to break these off and cast them down into the gutter beside the footpath? and if not, what is acceptable behaviour?

After twenty minutes I looked inside the store. From the door I could not see Jennifer, nor could I see anywhere else she could have gone. But could I go in and ask about her? I didn't think so. I could ask about mein

frau, but after that – well, my Deutsch is not really good enough to describe someone in a recognisable way (I am pretty sure). So I went back to standing outside, walking up and down, stomping my feet to keep the circulation going and drawing short breaths through a thin veneer of ice.

And so it went on until, thirty minutes after she had entered, Jennifer emerged triumphantly weighed down by a pile of scores. The store had been a spectacular success, and the reason I hadn't been able to spot her from the door was that the proprietor, quickly realizing that Jennifer was a serious customer, had taken her out to a storage room at the back where the real treasures were. She had not been able to buy everything she wanted, so this had been a much more successful excursion than the similar one in Paris.

At least now we could return to the Pension Nossek and warm up slightly.

After lunch Jennifer decided to sleep for a while, in preparation for our afternoon visit to Franz Rottensteiner but I, buoyed by my demonstration that I had enough fat to survive what seemed very low temperatures, decided that this was the time I would take the walk I had been wanting to do for some time – a walk around a significant fraction of the Ring.

As it turned out it was too cold to do serious walking, but by early afternoon there was a blue sky (significantly absent earlier in the day) and a walk like this would be just the thing to set me up for the later walk out to Franz's flat. It also meant looking at a different kind of architecture, for the buildings around the Ring were 150 years more recent than those we visited on the previous day.

For a reader in English there still seems to me to be one best source for understanding the Ring – the long chapter titled 'The Ringstrasse, Its Critics, and the Birth of Urban Modernism' in Carl Schorske's magnificent *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna Politics and Culture*, which appeared in paperback just a year earlier than this visit to Vienna, and reshaped my ideas about the city. Just to walk around the Ring without understanding, or trying to understand, its historical context seems more feckless than is absolutely necessary. This wide-ranging construction plan, which followed so closely the revolutions of 1848, is very different from Baron Haussman's more or less contemporaneous plan for Paris. But as you trudge around in the snow you tend not to think too much about it, at the time. On longer reflection, the scene changes.

My original ambition had been to walk the full length of the Ring, but what I really did was walk down the Graben and then continue more or

less west out to Schotten Ring. At that stage the snow was deepish – a foot or so – but there were clear pathways through it all.

This brought me out more or less opposite the university, and then I turned left and walked the length of the Ring around to the state opera house, which meant passing the Town Hall, parliament, theatres, museums and the Hofburg. The Ring itself carried more motor traffic than I had expected, but the snow meant that it travelled slowly; I don't feel nervous when traffic in modern cities passes me by at high speed, but there's something relaxing about traffic moving at a sedate pace.

The weather ensured that I didn't move at too sedate a pace, although I would have liked to linger. But the purpose of this exercise was to have done it, to be able to recall the impressions (visual and otherwise) generated by this cityscape which was both planned and unplanned.

It took about an hour and a half for me to complete this walk which makes it clear to me that I couldn't have been hurrying *much*. On the way back down Kärtnerstraße I veered off to the left, seeking an alternative route, and passed an English language bookshop and, easily tempted, went inside. That's where I bought Carl Schorske's book, just mentioned above. I escaped with just the one book.

Later in the afternoon we revisited Dr Franz Rottensteiner's flat, which was now rather more densely inhabited than when we had first visited in 1979, for the now Mrs Rottensteiner had just given birth to Jan Joachim, freshly home from hospital. JJ's mother Hanna, whom we had also met in 1979, and grandmother, whom we had not previously met, were also in residence. It changed the way we saw the flat, but the books were still the overwhelming presence – well, almost.

We agreed to go out together for a meal a couple of days' hence, back to the restaurant we had eaten in in 1979.

We walked back into the inner city, looking in at various shops on the way. Jennifer's experience in buying stuff served as a sort of inspiration, and we seriously looked at the possibility of buying vast quantities of discount records, but inertia and a touch of good sense prevailed. In the end we bought only a few books, and nothing that was very heavy.

12 January 1982

This morning – loosely speaking – was our first serious attempt at art gallery visiting since our arrival; although the Upper Belvedere can count, it was really only an exploratory visit, and doesn't count in quite the same way.

The gallery we visited (and what we did cannot be described as anything more than a visit) was the Kunsthistoriches, a short walk from

Pension Nossek.

This is a vast museum of art, in which the emphasis on historical works makes an exploration in depth almost impossible. The kind of mental change you have to make in going from the ancient (Roman and Egyptian) to the near modern (decorations by Klimt, for example) make this museum feel like excess more than most I have been to. But you can spend a long time in such a place. And we did.

We then returned to the Graben and visited a small supermarket (actually part of the large Julius Meinl chain). We just wanted to buy a few things and thought it would be straightforward, but it wasn't quite, and this was where we experienced our first and almost only example of mild discourtesy in Vienna.

There were two checkouts and, so far as we could see, there was no difference between them. Naturally, we joined the shorter queue. But when we got to the head of the queue it was made very clear to us that we were in the Wrong Queue. Yet we bought the same quantity of goods, and paid in the same way, as those just in front of us. It was one of those strange experiences foreigners have for which there is no doubt a perfectly obvious and simple explanation – but you never find out what it is...

That night we went to listen to the Trio Di Milano. What we didn't know at the time was that they would be visiting Australia later in the year, but I don't think we would have swapped the experience for anything.

In Australia, listening to classical music, especially chamber music of this quality, usually means sitting in a large theatre-style house which stuffed chairs and, if you are not particularly flush with the readies, sitting on them a long way from the performers.

But this was Vienna, and things were different. So we sat in a small hall, perfectly box-like, which held perhaps 300 people, on what looked like kitchen chairs, and perhaps ten rows from the front. Those hard wooden chairs were quickly forgotten for the next two hours, and we walked back through a cold evening convinced that Vienna was just about the right place, in all the world, in which to live.

But that isn't the way the world turns out. And we hadn't really become serious about sightseeing.

13 January 1982

Now it was time for serious tourism. Several important things happened this day. The first was that we decided, finally, that we were not going to Florence from Vienna, and that instead we would go back to Paris, to which I had now become addicted. Whatever the attractions of Paris itself might have been, they were magnified by just how comfortable

we felt together in Vienna. We had now felt comfortably at home in two very different cities, and perhaps it was time to explore this feeling further, rather than going on to Florence, which though we knew and loved it well, had not had the same effect on us as Paris and Vienna. (Besides, we were planning to go to Milan and Rome as well on this trip...)

As we hadn't yet booked anywhere to stay in Florence there was no need for any action there, but Jennifer did have to ring the Hotel du Lys to make sure there was a room for us there. That wasn't a problem either.

That out of the way, we moved into more serious museum-going mood.

Our major stop in the morning was the Stadt Wien Historisches Museum. This reminded me of the part of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam which had dealt with the history of the Dutch, but was far more firmly focused on the life and evolution of a city. What worked particularly well here and wasn't really tried in Amsterdam was the integration of 'formal' art into the historical panorama. Another difference was that the exhibitions here worked steadily through to the twentieth century, not stopping arbitrarily some hundreds of years ago.

This was really the place we should have visited first, to give us the long view of the history of the city, but it really was a case of better late than never.

Then we walked back towards the Danube and towards the Prater gardens, not so much for what we might experience in there but rather just to walk through that part of Vienna. That's the sort of thing tourists can really 'afford' to do.

Walking back through narrow streets I noticed a post office and decided to mail some of our collected goodies back to Australia; they had been piling up steadily as we travelled around, and now was the time to reduce the load.

Unthinkingly, I had picked *the* post office in Vienna, if not in the world, Otto Wagner's Postal Savings Bank. My excuse for not recognizing it was that it was undergoing a major facelift, both externally and internally, and that we approached it from one side. I bought a posting package and sat down to fill out the associated forms, surrounded by scaffolding. Filling out the three forms necessary for posting large parcels to Australia gave me no cause for alarm, because I had been trained by an expert; back in Langen Horst Grimm had worked with me as I filled in the four forms necessary for sending large parcels from West Germany, and I figured this had to be a little easier, even without Horst to oversee my work.

I proudly presented the completed forms and parcel to a clerk, who studied them carefully and then pointed out that I had not completed one section on one form. Trying to read upside-down, I thought I had worked out what I had omitted, but no, I was wrong. What *did* he want me to fill in? I was puzzled. The clerk became insistent: 'Städt? städt!' he said. What a pity it is that 'städt' in German sounds like 'state' in English! Eventually I cottoned onto what was needed, and blurted out 'St. Kilda' and wrote it down. The mail got to St Kilda, despite my efforts to send it somewhere else, and we stumbled outside, walked a hundred metres or so and then looked back: 'Wait a minute' I said 'that's *the* Post Office', which of course it was, except that you couldn't really appreciate anything other than the bulk and weight of Wagner's conception because of the scaffolding. It was *Alexander's Victory* all over again.

In the afternoon, inspired by this 'discovery', we thought we would look in on the Sezession building, back near the Stadt Wien Historisches Museum. But no, it was closed. This seemed very much like a plot to lure us back to Vienna at some later time.

You can spend a long time doing this walking-around stuff, and it was late afternoon by the time we were getting back towards the Pension Nossek. Having unloaded book purchases from several countries on an unsuspecting Post Office, we were now free to do some more buying, which is exactly what happened, even if it wasn't exactly *intended*.

It was becoming dark as we walked past this particular bookshop and, since there was no great hurry, we window-shopped quite carefully. And that's where I found what I hadn't exactly been looking for, but which I was very pleased to see far up in the left-hand corner of one window: the two volumes of Stanisław Lem's *Fantasie und Futurologie* in splendid German hardcovers. And the price wasn't too bad either.

Into the shop. An attendant comes to help.

Now here's how things can start to go wrong. You can always buy things in a shop in any country if you can pick them up and give them to an attendant. but this I couldn't do. So I explained in pidgin German what I wanted, emphasizing *zwei*. He came back with one volume.

I went over my request, again, having to make clear that no, there was nothing wrong with the book he had brought and, no, don't put it back but there's another book I want as well with the same title (but a subtle II on the cover as well), and I really want both books, not one rather than the other.

Eventually everything went okay. The man at the cash register explained that it was the attendant's first day on the job. I guess that

between us we didn't do too bad a job, in that case.

That night it was back to the Städtbeisel for dinner, where I managed to evoke another negative reaction from a Viennese citizen.

I didn't think my request was at all extraordinary, but the waiter certainly did: 'Mit spinat?!' he almost shouted, and I, thinking there was nothing wrong with having a side dish of spinach with goulash emphatically replied, 'Ja, mit spinat.' At least I got what I wanted, again, even though there was a lot of headshaking.

14 January 1982

The next day was decidedly peculiar, at least in the sense that some of it was unexpected.

This was the day we decided to visit a less well-known gallery; at the Palais Liechtenstein there was an exhibition of modern American Art, and we felt like being a bit adventurous. We went there by subway mid-morning, and spent a pleasant two hours roving over a two-storey building of some antiquity which was housing a very well-laid out collection of American paintings. There wasn't any individual work which was outstandingly exciting, but looking at Andy Warhol's work in Vienna is quaint – or perhaps odd. Anyway, it was a couple of hours well spent.

That afternoon was our return visit to the Rottensteiners'. Whereas previously I had spent my time talking to Franz, the visit to the Palais Lichtenstein had got me going and I spent the late afternoon talking to Hanna; completely ignoring the fact that she had a new-born child as a main interest, I raved about how exciting the exhibition at the Palais Lichtenstein was.

That got us talking about art, and led quite naturally to the Alte Pinakothek and how wonderful *that* was. By the end of the afternoon I was ready to plan an expedition to take Hanna to Munich to see the galleries there.

But we had other matters to attend to. Franz had correctly sensed that we had enjoyed our night out with him on our previous journey, and so had arranged for us all to go out to the Antiquitätskeller again, with Hanna's mother doing the baby-sitting.

This evening was more relaxed than the meal in 1979. We had plenty to talk about based on what had happened in the few years since we had last seen one another and had extensive opportunities to talk. The food was just as we had remembered it, and the pancakes just as excessively rich. Even now I worry about how many calories were consumed that night.

Fortunately for all of us we were able to make it an early evening; the Rottensteiners because of their child and Jennifer and I because, although

we didn't know it at the time, we had a very full day ahead of us.

15 January 1982

This was our last full day in Vienna. We had found the Pension Nossek to be a wonderful base to work from. In the heart of Vienna, it meant that there was no escape from, on the one hand, the pressure of tourism, and on the other the inevitability of foreignness. The proprietors were wonderfully friendly and helpful, and the breakfasts meant that the day always started well. On this day, we needed to have everything working for us.

Recognizing that this was to be our last day, we spent a long breakfast planning just how much could be squeezed in. We began, not for the first time, to regret some of the morning when we had not hurried, some of the afternoons we had rested rather than get on with the business of being tourists. It was all rather frustrating. But it did mean we planned carefully, even if we had to leave out some places we would have liked to visit.

When it came to the crunch, we managed to see what mattered most to us, given the restrictions of time.

Two things were at the top of our list; seeing the Imperial Apartments and visiting an exhibition at the Modern Art Gallery over near the Sudbahnhof. Other things would be fitted in where possible. This was the one day in Vienna when we tried to operate by the clock.

As usual, when you spend a lot of time planning, you cut down on the amount of time for *doing*, but we managed to make this a relatively minor fault on this day.

We walked up the Graben to Köhlmarkt and past Demel's (where elaborate cakes carved out into the visages of Brezhnev and Reagan were threatening one another) to the Hofburg.

We started with the Imperial Apartments in the late morning; careful planning gave us the opportunity to visit the Neueburg, which houses musical instruments, and the Ephesos Museum, with antiquities, at more or less the same time.

Where the problem arose was in the guided tour.

Tours of the apartments in the Hofburg are guided, and these tours are conducted mainly in German and English. Unfortunately, at this time of the year, there are relatively few non-German visitors, so the tour was available only in German. In our party (two Americans, two Brits, two Italians, and two Australians) only one had any acquaintance with German – and I've made plain in the pages above just how deficient my German is.

So we wandered around the apartments for two hours, our guide muttering reverently about Franz Joseph in the kind of tone that Franz

Rottensteiner loves to parody and drawing attention to features of the rooms which none of his listeners could understand (although I did understand what he was talking about enough to sometimes think he had it wrong). But it was a memorable experience not so much for the guide's words as for his surroundings. I was surprised that we hadn't paid our respects in 1979.

The Neueburg was of greater interest to Jennifer than it was to me, but seeing old musical instruments is still worthwhile; why do we not use old instruments the way we use old books? The Ephesos Museum was lacking in excitement beside some of the places we had visited.

Next came the long walk over to the Schweizergarten and the 20th century Art Museum where I was due for a large surprise.

Even before we got in there, early on a Friday afternoon, we saw something unexpected. An international bus terminal operates near the Sudbahnhof and there, in long queues, waited eastern Europeans returning to their homes after a week's work in the west. They seemed to be pleased about it at the time.

The 20th century Art Museum had two surprises, actually. The lesser of the two was that there was another exhibition of modern American art (rather better than the one at the Palais Lichtenstein, though more crowded). This you could enjoy for itself or because of the contrast with the major exhibition.

The main exhibition was of the Art Club of Vienna, founded just after the second World War by Albert Paris Gutersloh, who had earlier in his life been part of the Sezession movement. This was a direct link with Gustav Klimt, whose works increasingly came to define my attitude to art, or at least art in Vienna.

The member of the Art Club I first became aware of was Paul Flora, whose feather-light drawings I was attracted to probably around the same time that I became interested in science fiction. Some time later the horror fantasy paintings of Ernst Fuchs began to appear in various places, and their forcefulness ensured that they were paid attention.

And as more cultural emphasis was given to fantasy in art, paintings by Rudolf Hausner and Wolfgang Hutter also fluttered across my consciousness.

To discover that all of these artists (and many more one wouldn't immediately associate with them, such as Friedensreich Hundertwasser, aka Friedrich Stowasser) were part of a group was quite marvellous. The exhibition, which managed to include quite rivetting works from many members of the Art Club, was not the sort of discovery one wants to make

at the last moment, but this was definitely a case of better late than never. It was difficult to leave, but we had two more galleries to visit that day, and it was already late in the afternoon.

Our main target was the Town Hall, which was featuring a Major Exhibition, but on the way (I persuaded Jennifer, since I wasn't too interested in the subject of the Major Exhibition) there was a gallery with a small show that we could just fit in before closing time. I'm glad we went to the exhibition of some of Max Klinger's works.

Possibly the best-known works of Klinger's are the drawings making up his series *The Glove*, which (logically enough) follow a glove through the society in which Klinger lived (i.e. just pre-Sezession, late 19th century). This exhibition had the complete set, as well as a broader sampling of Klinger's works. The forty-five minutes or so we spent there filled in some gaps in our background knowledge of Vienna.

The Major Exhibition was a quite large one covering most of Picasso's life. I haven't ever seen so many Picassos in the one place, but since I don't care overmuch for Picasso I must admit that I found it all rather too much. At this time in the late afternoon to early evening there were still modest queues to get in, and the exhibition space itself was quite crowded; it was possible to shuffle around fairly quickly if one worked at it, which I'm afraid I wanted to do, whereas Jennifer, who admires Picasso's paintings much more than I do, didn't seem at all inclined to move at high velocity. We compromised our way out of it with my feelings about Picasso unchanged (which says more about my taste than I ought to admit).

We had earlier spotted the Café Budva as a place to try, which gave me yet another opportunity to try goulash, but after that it was an early night because on

16 January 1982

it was back to Paris by train.

This was a long journey: our train left Vienna at 8.20 a.m. (whence the early night on the previous day) and we arrived in Paris just before midnight after travelling almost 1400 kilometres.

Of this trip I can remember only passing through Strasbourg early in the evening. We must both have slept most of the way, making up for our exertions of the previous few days. But at the end of the day we were – and this is just how we felt – at home again. In Paris.

Paris 17 January 1982

Returning to Paris was like returning home in more than one way.

After the cold of Vienna it was a great relief to return to conditions in

Paris which were more like those in Australia in January – a warm sun, blue skies, a general holiday atmosphere.

We were thus in a home away from home which was not at all like our real home. It was familiar yet surprising.

One result was that we spent much more time just wandering around, trying to be like citizens. Being in Paris meant being in a home that was not home. It meant sitting around in parks or cafés, it meant wandering, rather than rushing, through bookshops, it meant exploring for out-of-the-way places.

But we were also very plainly far from home. Throughout this period of travel, the coup d'état of General Jaruzelski in Poland dominated headlines. Wherever we went, the signs of rising tension were unmistakable.

Our timing in returning to Paris could not have been better. Only a couple of hundred metres from the Hotel du Lys, just across bde St-Michel was place Paul-Painlevé, in which was situated the publishing house of François Maspero. Much later Maspero was to become famous also for his fiction, but a core activity at this time was the publication of a political bimonthly magazine, *L'Alternative*, which specialized in political articles (mainly translated documents) dealing with (as the magazine's subtitle put it) rights and democratic liberties in Eastern Europe.

This magazine had begun in late 1979 and so was quite well-established by 1981-2. The January-February 1982 edition might once have been planned around Solidarity's October 1981 platform, but the lead article was titled *After the coup d'état*. In addition, before we left Paris, I was able to buy a copy of a special edition of *L'Alternative* which summarized the last 16 months of events in Poland.

We were, although we did not know it then, politically a long way from home. (By the time we got to Canada, just over a week later, interest in developments in Poland in the press was still high, but a fortnight later, in Australia, there was nothing. We knew by this that we had returned to the fantasyland that was Australia in the early 1980s.)

Reading about events in Poland made clear to us just how close we were to the 'real world', and how far from that real world Australia was. It wasn't clear then, and it isn't clear now, that this is a very comfortable feeling.

There was more to do, of course, than just wander through bookshops.

The Louvre was even more crowded than on our previous visit. The deliberate tourist finds this depressing, for a visit to the Louvre may

happen to be focused on seeing particular works. Seeing what you want to see is less than likely if a few thousand others want to see the same items.

What's worse, it may be that what you want to see is not popular with others, merely adjacent to something popular. Trying to see almost anything in the same room as the *Mona Lisa* was almost impossible, and in the same room were quite a few other paintings of great quality. (In March 1994 many of these problems were reduced somewhat in magnitude when it became possible to visit parts of the Louvre via WebLouvre. About 200,000 computer users 'visited' the Louvre in this way in the first six months of operation.)

Other aspects of the Louvre are resistant to crowds, and luckily for me the Nike Athena from Samothrace is one of them. This used to be near some stairs and was brushed past by most visitors, but I suspect there'll always be some place from which you can study it uninterrupted – thank heavens!

So visiting the Louvre almost became a chore – and quite a change from Vienna, where the only dense crowding occurred at the Picasso exhibition.

The crowding made us pleased (and at the same time disappointed...) to leave and walk about outside in the sun. The sun was so warm, and the sky so blue, that we almost felt ourselves returned to our own hemisphere where it was glorious summer, until we noticed that the puddles of water were frozen solid. Being reminded like this of the adaptability of mankind to different climatic conditions is heartening, until you begin to worry about how much you rely upon your perceptions.

The only notable food excursion of that day was a Chinese lunch. By Australian standards it was ordinary, and we didn't worry too much about Chinese food again until we got to Toronto.

We visited a few bookshops for the remainder of the day.

18 January 1982

This was a movies day.

We had picked out a couple of films to catch up on, using the mostly-reliable *Pariscope*, so in the morning we took in Joseph Losey's *The Damned* and in the afternoon, at Videostone, it was time for *John Lennon for President*, which I remember as being mildly disappointing. It was also a 'we ought to try it' day; we visited Les Deux Magots for afternoon coffee (chocolate in my case) with a musician friend of Jennifer's. With Café Flore, Les Deux Magots used to be the place for the literati to sit, drink, talk, and write. There wasn't much going on in the hour we were there.

19 January 1982

In the morning we visited the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris. This was modern art in a building which can only be described as modern architecture.

I'm afraid that the building seemed a bit basic to me, so much so that the paintings in it seemed almost to be not so much decorative as necessary to the existence of the building. This may have been a clever ploy on the part of the architecture, but it was a relief to get outside and look across (under somewhat cloudy skies) to the Tour Eiffel. This, alas, was another construction which does not appeal to me much, and I've never been nearer to it than this – across the river and under the trees.

By now in Paris we were much less interested in dining in restaurants than in seeing what delights we could put together ourselves from the local shops; much more like tiny supermarkets, to be honest.

On our first trip to Paris in 1979 we had visited a fruit and vegetable market near the Gare du Nord, but on this occasion we never ventured so far; in small streets off the bde St Germain there was plenty of variety in the shops and markets, even though the prices were not the cheapest.

There was a fruit and vegetable stall from which we occasionally bought fruit, but it was a 'convenience' store which we made most use of.

The fruit and vegetables were ordinary, but almost everything else did very nicely. Cheese was something we could make a fuss of, since it was so portable, but the range of other small items was just right for tourists (I wonder why...).

As a result, our hotel room was always stocked with snacks, and with the natural and inexpensive refrigeration offered by quite wide window ledges we only had to shop every few days. We were, whether we wanted it or not, in a home away from home.

This was also the day on which the telephone call came – the one from Amsterdam.

Jan Timmer's secretary rang the hotel and left a message asking me to ring back. This I did in the afternoon, to be told that Jan would be arriving back in Amsterdam from India at the end of the week, and could see me the following week.

This placed some minor constraints on what could be arranged, since we were leaving Rome for Toronto on the Wednesday of that week. But we quickly settled on Monday as the Day. All I had to arrange was to fly from Milan to Amsterdam and then back to Rome, while Jennifer went straight from Milan to Rome. It sounded easy.

20 January 1982

This was the day of Jennifer's great adventure. Because she plays the oboe, Jennifer (a) is always on the lookout for good reeds, preferably cheap ones and (b) is always having to declare at customs that she is importing vegetable matter. The first causes the second, but it always seems worthwhile.

One of the best places in the world for buying oboe reeds is France, and in particular the Glotin factory at Ezanville, just north of Paris, had made some of the best reeds Jennifer had used. An excursion to Ezanville hadn't been included in the plans on our first pass through Paris, but one factor which led us back was that Jennifer would visit Glotin. By visiting the factory she could inspect the cane before buying it, and thus select out the best pieces for the kind of reed she cuts.

I, on the other hand, do not play the oboe, and the only time I have blown an oboe reed was when I felt an urgent need to get a headache. (Playing the oboe – or indeed most such wind instruments – has one side requirement which occasionally is embarrassing: the need to buy cigarette papers without needing to buy tobacco. Tobacconists seem suspicious of people buying papers without buying tobacco.) So I was not going to go to Ezanville. I was going to stay in Paris. Even so, it was really only a little over a half-day trip up to Ezanville, so there would be a final half-day of other activity.

Jennifer's day can be described as a triumph of success in difficult circumstances. Because of the location of the Glotin factory at Ezanville, the trip normally meant changing from the Metro at St-Denis to another train – and exactly the best way of proceeding was not clear from downtown Paris. Since, however (shades of 79!) the trains were not running, Jennifer's travel was to be even more of a challenge.

It was easy enough to get the Metro to St-Denis. And at St-Denis there was waiting an impressive array of buses and taxis. Jennifer started with the bus drivers, asking whether they could take her to Ezanville, and each one said no, though in slightly different ways. This left only the taxis – an expensive alternative.

But when the first taxi-driver Jennifer approached also said no (or rather, NON!) she was nonplussed: what to do?

One of the bus drivers who had said no had done so in a somewhat elaborate way, so she returned to him to find out more about what was going on. It turned out that (a) the taxi-driver had only said no because Ezanville was out of his zone and (b) this particular busdriver had actually said that while he could not take her to Ezanville he could take her to a point at which she could change to a bus that would.

After that everything was easy. But it illustrated the risks of not pursuing a line of investigation thoroughly.

Otherwise the trip went smoothly and Jennifer returned to Paris in time for us to do some shopping in the Galeries Lafayette, and wander through the Tuileries, before having a Greek meal that evening. I had built up my strength for this by spending the morning sitting reading in the Luxembourg Gardens, an activity much to be recommended.

To Milan 21 January 1982

0832-1815 (actually 1845) 821 km.

This was another of those days spent mostly travelling. We left at about the same time of day as we had left Vienna to come to Paris – around 8.30 a.m. – but fortunately we did not have so far to travel – just over 800 km. In addition, we were not quite so tired, so we were prepared to spend the day looking at the scenery.

But so much for sightseeing! After days of sunshine in Paris, we now had a cloudy, dull day for travel, and although this was almost the only day we had which was like this, and although if you do have to have a cloudy day, it may be better to be spending it travelling rather than visiting interesting sites, the truth was that we had really been interested in seeing southern Switzerland (or at least I had – Jennifer had seen much of this part of Switzerland on her previous travels).

As we travelled through France towards Switzerland the weather gradually worsened, so that before we reached Switzerland the train was surrounded by mist and fog. I stayed optimistic, against all the approaching evidence. There wasn't only the weather obscuring the view, since night seemed to be arriving a little ahead of the schedule I had had in mind.

As a result, all I saw of the Alps on that train journey was a little from Montreux when the mist lifted a little, and then it was on into the darkness and Italy.

The train raced on through the early evening and then began to slow. We must have entered Italy, and indeed this was confirmed as the next station, at which we slowed to a halt, was Domodossola. We arrived a little late, according to the train timetable, and departed even further behind schedule. We did hope that our reservations in Milan were not going to have passed their use-by date before we got there.

In fact we were only half an hour late arriving at Centrale station, and 8.45 p.m. was still really early in the evening. Except that Jennifer was not feeling too well.

At the station we therefore didn't spend much time looking around

for alternative means of travel, and straightway took a taxi to what we hoped would be our pensione.

As it turned out, not only was this no great distance from the station; it was only two stops on the underground (something we would very much appreciate on later days). We were welcomed warmly, even though we were late, and I was sent on a Mission. Jennifer really wanted some milk to settle her stomach.

My familiarity with Italian derives almost entirely from half-remembered Latin – not a sound base in any case – and I hoped to spot a supermarket which would remove the language barrier: no such luck.

But almost opposite our pensione was a small store which in New Zealand would have conveniently been called a dairy. This was the next best thing.

It looked even better when I entered; there was a queue of citizens lined up to receive their dairy supplies, and I took my place at the end of it.

I then had an instant course in Italian. Pretty soon I knew about volumes of milk, the difference between pasteurized and non-pasteurized milk, the difference between glass and cardboard containers, and so on. The woman selling the milk interrogated the customers as to their needs, so all I had to do was listen to the questions and answers.

When I got to the head of the queue I had it made – uno litro etc., etc. But I wasn't going to get away with it; I was asked an additional question, one which none of the other half dozen customers had been asked. Was this because they had submitted to the interrogation and I was trying to avoid it? Or was there a genuine need for further clarification? I'll never know, but it seemed to be something about the source of the milk. I shrugged a bit, handed over what I already knew the price to be, and escaped back to the pensione.

But I figured I was going to be able to cope with shopkeepers in Milan.

22 January 1982

We had been advised a little about what to see in Milan. Although it probably isn't known as a tourist town (except for fashion tourists, who hardly count), Milan can easily supply the sight-seer with an overabundance of goodies, and of course the main problem is remembering after you've left that you overlooked something.

For our first day we had a very modest schedule. A friend of mine had told me about the Leonardo Da Vinci Museum, which was a technology museum (aka the Museo della Scienza) a short distance from the centre of the city. A very well-planned tourist brochure made it

obvious that Da Vinci's *Last Supper* was no great distance away, making a handy double.

By now we knew about the underground, something which was hard to avoid since one entrance was on the footpath at the front door of our pensione.. We took this down to the centre of Milan, from which we would walk to the two Featured Attractions. (The Milan underground proved to be absolutely wonderful – frequent, cheap, clean, and safe. Well, relatively.)

From the central square, which is dominated by the cathedral, it seemed like a short walk to the places we were interested in, both of which lay somewhat to the west of the cathedral.

What surprised us as we walked was how relatively narrow the streets were, but then it was time to be surprised by the location of *The Last Supper*. It was in a quite small building next to a church but the only surprise when we got inside was just how little we could see.

It wasn't just that, following the script of just about every tourist guide written, the fresco was in the process of being restored. We also found ourselves standing at the far end of a room (admittedly small) most of which seemed to be filled with scaffolding. Despite all this it was all worthwhile, and demonstrated once again that looking at reproductions in books is a poor substitute for seeing the real thing. Trying to describe adequately *The Last Supper* in words, however, would be a full-time occupation.

Next we went on to the technological museum. This was more impressive at the time than it was to become later, after I had seen a larger one elsewhere (see below), but it was certainly breathtaking. The artefacts of Da Vinci's were not great in number or quality, some of them being almost tucked away out of sight, but Da Vinci's technological mind and spirit were ever-present. The exhibits outside the main building (larger airplanes, for example) were worth looking at, too, but the trains were not in immediate line of sight from the main entrance and we therefore overlooked them.

This was a long enough day for us; we needed to build up strength for the next two days.

23 January 1982

This was an art galleries and museums day. But it was also the day on which I missed out on a great opportunity.

We hadn't been too well-prepared for Milan, in terms of what to see and do, but we did know that we would not be able to get in to La Scala to see an opera performance because we had not planned ahead. (In fact, this

is not strictly true; there are ways of getting in at more or less the last minute but I'll not trouble you with them now.) But we did want to see the museum which is in the theatre, so we planned to add to that excursion a couple of nearby art galleries, the Brera and the Poldi Pezzoli.

This was ambitious, but we had a busy schedule for the next day as well. If two galleries and a museum seems a small load by comparison with the busiest days in Vienna, it should be remembered that we were now over a month into our travels and were in a city with which we were unfamiliar. There was one additional small task to be carried out – I had to make the travel arrangements for going to Amsterdam.

We stopped off at a subway station short of the cathedral near a travel agent I had noticed while walking back to the pensione the previous day. Almost opposite was a bank where we could change some travellers' cheques. (There's nothing like the feeling of security you have in a foreign land when dealing with a large and substantial bank, and this one was backed by the Vatican. A couple of years later, when one of its directors was found dangling beneath a bridge, the Banco Ambrosiano was found to be a little less substantial. But who was to know???)

The people in the travel agency were very friendly and helpful, and the booking couldn't have been easier. The most stressful thing was carrying the bale of banknotes (with the lire at about 1100 to the Australian dollar) across the street. (We had more luck there than we did when trying to organize Jennifer's train booking down to Rome; it was not possible to get a seat at the time she wanted, and it took some doing to even get down there on the right day.)

Next, the La Scala museum. If you want to say you've been to La Scala, and either haven't the patience to sleep through an opera or the money to pay for the ticket, a visit to the museum is to be recommended. Part of the tour is a glance inside the theatre itself, so a quick study could easily prepare an accurate but fictional description of what it is like to see an opera there (from the back of the stalls).

The museum itself was dominated by exhibits related to Verdi and Puccini. But I couldn't help thinking that it was in some ways enough to be in the place where these great men had worked.

But the galleries called. Both the Brera and the Poldi Pezzoli were just along a tramline from La Scala, but we walked anyway (why miss any details?).

The Brera is probably the better-known of these two galleries, but the periods covered are similar (up to the end of the 18th century, although concentrating on earlier times); the main difference at the time we visited

was that the Poldi Pezzoli was much more restricted to Italian painting.

The Poldi Pezzoli was in some ways more attractive because it was more like a house filled with paintings (and, on the ground floor, armour and other decorative stuff which we didn't pay much attention to) than an art gallery. From the front entrance it hardly looked like a gallery at all, but as you moved inside it rapidly became a most attractive example of a 'modern' (in the sense of security, temperature control and so on) art gallery.

The Brera was larger and more obviously an art gallery. Anyone visiting Milan should take them both in, anyway.

We now walked back in the mid-afternoon to the Galleria to do some window-shopping before returning to the pensione.

On the side of the Galleria near the cathedral were stalls and tables and from some of these political pamphlets were being distributed. I picked up some and, extending my tiny Italian to its fullest extent, I deduced that a political rally was about to take place at a nearby sporting ground. There would have just about been time to get out there. I wondered whether it would be worth going out there just for the experience.

But as I've indicated my own Italian was minimal, and Jennifer had even less. So we just walked back to the pensione. And that's how I came to miss being there when Errico Berlinguer announced the divorce between the Italian Communist Party and Moscow.

24 January 1982

This was the day which tested our stamina. It was also one of the most enjoyable of the whole trip.

The schedule (!) called for us to finish off our tour of art galleries during the day and then visit Karel Thole at night.

The Castello Sforza was where we were to start. Provided we could make an early start there would be no problems. And it was only as we walked out the front door and down the stairs to the underground station that I remembered a problem: today was Sunday. In the backblocks (i.e. Australia) public transport tends to be at a minimal level on Sunday mornings and without necessarily carrying all one's own cultural baggage there is a tendency to assume that things don't differ much from country to country. Attitude towards public transport is of course one of the cultural factors most subject to variation amongst outwardly similar countries, and I discovered to my delight that the frequency of trains on the Milan underground is quite satisfactory and, with the price then at 200 lira a trip, quite a bargain.

We were to walk to the castle from the downtown area, a distance of just under a kilometre. It was cool but not cold. Although the Via Dante, which led out to the castle, was a fairly important road the footpath alongside it plainly was not regarded as a significant thoroughfare, and negotiating it meant dodging around holes and puddles. But it was worthwhile.

Visiting the castle itself was one of the oddest of experiences. It was one of those castles for which the word 'massive' might have been invented, and although it has been restored from time to time it still looked to my untutored eye as though parts of it were about to fall down (or rather collapse into a pile of rubble). But once you got inside the building it quickly became obvious that nothing was going to be collapsing for a few more centuries.

Outside a sort of medieval faire was taking place, and it seemed somehow more out of place here than in a more contemporary setting, perhaps because the castle was a reminder of the reality of the medieval world as opposed to the fantasized world of knights and chivalry upon which so many 'medieval fairs' are based.

We walked around an upper floor, looking down on the fair inside the four walls and upon the outer side of the castle as well. The original occupants were indeed able to isolate themselves from the real world, and the builders made sure of it.

Now we walked back down towards the centre of Milan again. Here we wanted to spend some time at the Ambrosian Art Gallery before going on for the afternoon's main activity. The planning had not been good; I felt just about medievalled out, and wasn't able to appreciate what was there (mainly works of Leonardo Da Vinci), and the library was closed. This one had to be put onto the list of places to visit again one day.

But there was plenty of contrast at our next destination, the Gallery of Modern Art in the public gardens, more or less on the way back to the pensione. We didn't know what to expect, and got more than we bargained for (at least I did).

There were three outstanding items here, in a small space that seems underrated to me. In one area I found some work by Segantini, the Italian who was associated with the Viennese Sezession, of whose work I had seen all too little. That took my attention quite strongly until I discovered a large canvas or two by Gerhard Richter in his photographic style. And that led on fairly naturally to a small exhibition of photographs by Lewis Hine. Discovering so many wonderful pieces in so small a space was a delight, and a welcome change from the excellent but somewhat unvarying artistic

diet we had been on.

Leaving the modern gallery near to closing time left us just time to get back to our pensione and get ready for our visit to Karel Thole, who lived about a kilometre south of the cathedral. Because we had not been to that part of Milan we decided to take the underground to the city centre and then walk; we were due at about 7.30 p.m.

It was cool but not cold as we walked south, and it was definitely growing dark as we walked alongside the park over which Karel's apartment looks, but it was certainly peaceful enough.

But Karel wasn't too happy when we told him we had walked there: 'It's so dangerous,' he said. There were junkies and so on all around, especially near the park. Perhaps living where we did in Melbourne made us not worry much about such things. Certainly that part of Milan was very quiet and lacking in action compared with our part of St Kilda.

Karel had a favourite restaurant back in the city which he wanted to take us to, so we were driven back, more or less along the roads we had taken, to a restaurant which served fabulous food, even if it was expensive.

There were just the three of us, which was just as well because the restaurant was very crowded. Anyone talking with the man who for years was the leading SF illustrator in Europe probably ought to be cautious, but whether it was our experience of the afternoon or Karel's courtesy we found ourselves talking quite a lot about art, about which Karel was obviously an expert while Jennifer and I knew almost nothing. Somehow it all worked out. And then Karel suggested that he should pay for the meal and give us a lift back to our pension.

Here was a further piling up of courtesy we could not resist; and then Karel suggested that we should stop off for supper at one of his haunts, the Bar Basso. And so it came about that, long after midnight, I found myself lecturing Karel Thole about the different ways Vermeer and the Australian painter Fred McCubbin handled light in their paintings of women. Fortunately for me Karel seemed to understand what I was struggling to say, perhaps because, having been to the world convention in Melbourne in 1975, he knew the difference between European and Australian light from direct experience.

Soon enough it was time to get some sleep for Monday's adventures.

Amsterdam 25 January 1982

This day was more of an adventure than I really wanted. My various efforts to contact Jan Timmer had at last been successful, and for a mere 650,000 lire I was flying to Amsterdam to meet him for the day!

Recovering from the previous late night was not something about

which there was much of an option, since the plane was to leave quite early in the morning. Jennifer at last had a train connection to Rome, so we would be able to meet there the following day.

I went out to the airport using a bus from the city terminal. It was slow getting out there, but never so slow that there was any chance of missing the plane. One of the reasons it was slow was that it was quite foggy.

And it was even foggier out at the airport. The fog was, however, just about the most interesting thing at the airport. Not much was going on, although one plane landed. Then, when the time had passed for my plane to leave, I began to think about alternative transport – and the cost of it. Several other flights were announced as having been cancelled, but ours was not. Eventually, more than half an hour late, we were called to board.

This meant boarding a bus to get out to our plane, and the fact that the fog made it hard for the bus driver to find the plane was scarcely encouraging. Then, once we had drawn up alongside a plane, we sat (or more precisely, in my case, stood) and waited in a bus which rapidly cooled. After cooling us down to near-freezing, the driver returned us to the air terminal. This was not at all encouraging, but nor was the alternative of taking off in dangerous conditions.

Back in the terminal we sat around waiting to be told of our fate which was, eventually, to be returned to the bus and thence to the plane which, this time, we boarded. I thought, perhaps optimistically, that it was a little lighter, though I was not brave enough to believe that the sun was coming out.

But the pilot and the airport officials were brave enough and we took off. For the passengers there was no such thing at that time as visibility but there soon was (and gloriously so). When we did emerge from the cloud it was to soar over the Alps (which I had never seen before) in bright sunlight. If only I had had my camera!

A little less than an hour later (but more than an hour late) we landed at Amsterdam (Schiphol). Back in December Jennifer and I had taken the train to Den Haag, so this time I thought that I would take an airport bus into downtown Amsterdam. It was a pleasant enough journey, but I must have been distracted by something because when I collected my baggage together at the railway station and set out to find a room for the night I noticed that I had left behind, on the bus, the purple and white beanie which Bruce Pelz had insisted I get, back in February 1976 when I was setting off for the US East Coast; I have had a cooler head than I would like ever since.

I had time to find a small room in which to stay that night quite near the station ('small' is an inadequate word; this was more like a cupboard with a bunk – but it was cheap and available), and then a salad roll before walking once again to Jan Timmer's office – this time certain that I was going to meet him at last.

In 1977 I had spent a year investigating innovative educational programs throughout Australia (and as a result seeing more of Australia than I had ever anticipated) and about the same time Jan had been studying the successful (or otherwise) implementation of such programs (mainly in the United States). Somehow we had come across one another's work and exchanged a letter or two, to the point where it seemed to me like a good idea to meet him.

We were able to talk at quite some length about the nature of educational innovation (his perspective was rather more theoretical, mine more practical – and indeed I was about to spend five years working in a progressive and certainly innovative school) and Jan gave me drafts of some reports he had been working on. He then invited me out to dinner that night and suggested – with rather a lot of hesitation – that we eat at the railway station. This was hardly an attractive-sounding idea, but Jan said he had a special reason (but that salad roll for lunch sounded as though it might have been inadequate).

I then spent an hour or so wandering around parts of the city I had not seen before (although not so far as on my previous visit of a few weeks earlier). I also listened to various Amsterdam radio stations on my portable receiver, but they sounded just like English or American stations to me.

I had not at that stage explored the main railway station at all closely, so I simply waited where Jan had asked me to wait, trying to look as though I was not hanging around the entrance to a railway station. When Jan arrived he started by saying that he would not have invited me here except that this was a rare (and soon to end) opportunity. 'The restaurant upstairs,' he said, 'is something special by comparison with other railway restaurants.'

This was certainly true. In quality and style it was rather like a restaurant car on a plush modern train, with silverware, obsequious waiters, and quite good food. The reason Jan wanted to bring me here to this large room above the main concourse was that the restaurant was scheduled to close that week. Apparently the citizens of Amsterdam no longer appreciated an old-fashioned place like this.

This gave us an excellent environment in which to continue our discussions, since the restaurant was indeed sparsely populated; but there

had to be an element of sadness in our meeting since it was not merely the closing of this old tradition, but also it was unlikely that we would see one another again.

I slept well that night, in preparation for my return to Italy next day.

To Rome 26 January 1982

It was an early morning flight – well, fairly early, so while there was plenty of time to get out to Schiphol there really wasn't time for anything else. I hoped that the flight would present fewer problems than the one which had brought me to Amsterdam – and here I was extremely lucky because of the kindness of the person seated next to me.

He worked for British Aerospace, and routinely made trips of this kind. For no obvious reason I could think of he offered me his window seat, which was on the right hand side of the aircraft (I had also had a window seat up from Milan).

From Amsterdam down to the Alps there was little to be seen from the window except cloud (which is common enough, I suppose) but then, just as we passed the Alps and headed down the western side of the leg of Italy the sky cleared and I (and all the passengers on that side of the plane who cared to look) had a splendid view of the Mediterranean; I hadn't expected to see so many islands (large and small) so clearly.

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when we arrived at the Rome airport at about midday, except that Jennifer had said that she might come out to meet me. In fact, there was a surprise, but not quite what I expected; going through Customs appeared to be an almost non-existent exercise, and I probably looked a little foolish standing around waiting for someone to clear me through. Eventually a young man waved me through authoritatively and I hurried through wondering whether there were any customs officials in uniforms and whether they ever bothered to check papers.

Jennifer had indeed come out to meet me on the airport bus and so, since she was now returning to Rome, getting to the right place and onto the right bus was very easy. On the way in (in bright sunshine, in great contrast with what the weather had been like in Milan) I suppose I was rather childishly excited because I anticipated with some eagerness seeing some of the antiquities which had interested me when I was much younger. And so seeing an aqueduct, and later rounding the Colosseum on the way to the main railway station, was rather like taking a trip into the past.

From the railway station it was only a short walk to the YMCA, where Jennifer had stayed overnight and which was to be my base for just

24 hours. As soon as my bags were stowed I wanted to be out and about.

Because of the location of the YMCA this meant walking (or mostly walking). It was hot only for a Roman winter, which doesn't mean much to an Australian, so walking quite a long way was very comfortable.

What we did was walk down to St Peter's Square via a series of stops to admire bits and pieces. One serious mistake was to not look at the Forum more closely; we peered down on it from a side road but didn't feel we had time to ramble about inside. This is one of the tourist's most common errors, I suppose – glancing at, rather than exploring, interesting sites.

It was just after we passed the Victor Emmanuel monument that I first felt the strong press of history, and this was through something very ordinary: crossing a cobbled road, I noticed a manhole which, in the traditional way, was labelled with the initials of the responsible civic body. In this case the initials were SPQR; after all these years the senate and the people of Rome still rule!

Much much further along and across the Tiber (even though it isn't called that any more) we reached St Peter's Square (which isn't square). Jennifer went into the Basilica while I stayed outside and gazed up at the circle of columns surrounding the square. The area was, it seemed to me, relatively uncrowded. It was an opportunity to appreciate weather which was not so cold as I/we had become used to.

The second cultural shock occurred while walking back to the YMCA when we realized that some of the names of places were more than just familiar from street maps but rather from our schooldays when we learned the names of the seven hills of Rome. There was a redefined sense of scale once we appreciated that we had to think of these mild elevations as having those historic names.

We had a light evening meal and then wandered around briefly before going to bed early. It wasn't just that we travelled to Toronto the next day – we had to visit the Vatican in the morning. It might mean that we would sleep on the plane, but we certainly ought to be prepared for some rapid movement early in the day!

Rome 27 January 1982

We had breakfast at the YMCA, in a large hall filled with potential sightseers even at that early hour. But at least it was cheap.

I could make no pretence that this was going to be a relaxed day with a trip to an art gallery or so, since even by my standards things were going to be rushed; we had to be back for our bags by about noon if we were to catch the flight for Toronto.

We scuttled down to Vatican City, having somewhat indistinct understandings about how to get to the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Art Gallery. We thought of the entrance as being around the corner from St Peter's Square, but how far around the corner was not at all clear in our minds when we set off; it was further than we had expected.

It also involved walking along what appeared to be side streets, though of course they weren't – it was just that they were so quiet by comparison with what we had experienced elsewhere in Rome for, just as everyone tells you (but you can't believe it), the car traffic *seemed* to be chaotic. Thus to find a street with only a few cars, moving in a more or less orderly way, was unexpected. The parked cars were laid out with the flair we had seen elsewhere, however.

I suppose the Sistine Chapel is *always* crowded. Perhaps we had expected too much, assuming that early morning would be relatively uncrowded (as perhaps it was) but the result, without doubt, was that we moved right along pretty smartly.

Years later I don't feel particularly guilty at having done the entire tour of the Sistine Chapel and Vatican Art Gallery in less than two hours. This was certainly an acceleration over the rate at which Jennifer and I had come to move through art galleries during this trip, but the painful reality for me (at least) is that I can't absorb a great deal about a painting at first sight; I think, or at least I rationalize, that I need time to adjust from any reproductions I have seen to the 'real thing' (which might in any case have been restored beyond recognition). Later I may be prepared to get to know a painting (or perhaps a piece of sculpture) more thoroughly).

There's a sense in which it is true for everyone, not merely the very rich who can afford to buy paintings, that great art is lived with rather than looked at. I have been lucky in the cities in which I have lived (Melbourne and Adelaide) that there have been great paintings which I could come to regard as part of my mental furniture, although in Adelaide there seems to me to be only one Great painting – Stanley Spencer's *Hilda Welcomed*.

And so our rapid transit through the Sistine Chapel and then slightly more leisurely passage through the Art Gallery was nearly in keeping with what we had done before. The Sistine Chapel exceeded my expectations – my anticipations, rather – while the Art Gallery was less awesome (in the old sense) (and the Raphael Rooms were rather disappointing; but then I have often definitely felt guilty that I am unable to be as enthusiastic about Raphael as are others).

The Art Gallery itself was overly organized (for me) with carefully defined paths to be followed. At least this made it possible to scoot rapidly

about on our accelerated schedule, gathering impressions as best we could before returning for our bags and then taking the bus out to the airport.

If Customs seemed too relaxed on my arrival, how great was the contrast in officialdom on our departure! Getting boarding passes was straightforward, but going through immigration to the gate lounges was a surprise – neither before nor since have I been confronted, as I was then, by two men levelling submachine guns at the soon-to-depart passengers as they emerged clutching their carry-on baggage! Had there been some political emergency of which we had been unaware? Or was this a standard procedure? We never found out, and meekly boarded our plane for Toronto – which meant that we were on our way home, with Toronto being but a stopover with which we were now slightly familiar.

But the great adventure, the discovery of new sights and sounds, was over.

Toronto 28 January 1982

Even though we were now very much Going Home, there would still be new things to see and do. After all, when we had passed through Toronto over a month before it had been unexpected and we were not prepared to make much use of the time – we had been just filling in time.

If we had had plans of any kind for this stopover, they would have been changed by the preliminary transit and by what we had experienced in the past month, for this time would no longer be one of discovery but one of re-acquaintance. Nevertheless it wasn't to be a boring time at all.

This time we were staying downtown, rather than out near the airport, and we had a full uninterrupted day to Do Things. The Holiday Inn Downtown overlooked the city offices, and was appropriately centrally-placed.

We were pretty tired, but a few telephone calls were in order. By the time those were completed our program was In Place.

29 January 1982

Next morning we needed to put that program into action.

Because we had had the earlier (though unplanned) stopover in Toronto we didn't need to get used to the city, but we did need to find a few new places. Fortunately we were now sufficiently tired not to try planning anything elaborate.

So an early step was to complete the bookings for the opera that night. *Lucia Di Lammermoor* as performed by the local company was playing, and this seemed a pleasant way to finish off the travel. Getting the tickets brought us down towards the lake, and so we continued that little bit further so we could say we had seen it. But this didn't work because all

we could see was snow and ice – quite a change from Rome!

For the afternoon we had settled on seeing *Reds*, newly released, at a cinema up near where Bloor and Yonge meet. Being up in that part of Toronto allowed us to visit a couple of places we were interested in, as well as following up tips from John Millard, whom we were to see later in the day.

That's how it came about that, as well as visiting the Hudson Bay Company store (just to say we had been there), we passed quickly through the lobby of the Metro Toronto library (just as impressive as John said it would be) and then around to Yorkville Village where we found, amongst the other interesting stories, the one John Millard has told us about – a shop devoted just to magazines. This wasn't a news-stand, but rather a place which sold just magazines which are likely to hang around for a while (deliberately) such as quarterlies. I had described to John my excitement at some of the things I had been able to buy earlier in Toronto, so he followed up with this suggestion. The store was owned, according to John, by an Australian. I made a few purchases, safe in the knowledge that the carrying from now on would mainly be done by someone else (namely CPAir).

We both liked *Reds*, but by the time it was over it was certainly getting cold. But we still had a whole evening to go, starting with going with John Millard to a Chinese restaurant, then going on with John to see *Lucia Di Lammermoor*.

The Chinese meal was all right, but we lingered perhaps just a little too long and as a result had to hurry off to the theatre. *Lucia Di Lammermoor* was okay too, but the Toronto Symphony, at least on this occasion, didn't seem up to the standard of the major Australian orchestras, with some of whom Jennifer had played.

But it was a fine conclusion to the trip. Spending time with other fans, especially when you discover mutual interests other than science fiction, is always fun, and it was great that we were able to have so much of John's time.

That evening we started packing. It was too late now to regret all those things which we hadn't done, and all the people that we hadn't met. But later there was one thing I did regret – it would have been so easy to have walked past Massey Hall where, on May 15 1953, one of the great jazz concerts was played by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach. But I didn't think to do it.

We finished packing the next morning and found ourselves at last at that point on a journey at which you begin to look forward to going home.

As it happened, it was useful that we had already had a departure from Toronto airport. It meant that we knew from the previous construction work that any purchases there would be difficult. They were, but then if all you are interested in buying is the paperback edition of Italo Calvino's collection of Italian fairy tales you can be relatively focused. The seats in the waiting lounge were so hard that we were relieved rather than disappointed when, at last, we were called to board our plane for home.

Round the World

Introduction

Poor Waldemar Kuming was supposed to get a CHICON report from me: this is, I suppose, a little too late to serve his purposes. We start on 12 August, 1982. I have a rather nifty round-the-world ticket which Robin Johnson has arranged, involving flights with Thai Airlines, Air Lanka, Sabena, American, and Air New Zealand. Jennifer is pregnant and will remain in Melbourne. My schedule is Eurocon, Silicon, and Chicon on successive weekends. I probably travelled further to get there than did any other attendee at Chicon. Please bear with me.

Travelling

The Thai Airlines leg was from Melbourne to Singapore, on Flight TG984, which seems to be the fag end of Flight TG983 from Bangkok. In Sydney we dropped off the ex-Bangkok passengers and took on a reasonable supply of outward-bound ones. I had managed to forget two important things when leaving: a supply of coins and a portable radio. I therefore bought a portable at Sydney Airport (\$21) and at about the same time began to regret the scheduling.

Originally, when I had booked the ticket, it had made a lot of sense to take a stopover in Switzerland. The Eurocon was to have been held in La-Chaux-des-Fonds, quite handy to Zurich or Basel, but then it was switched to Northwest Germany, near the Dutch border. Unfortunately my air ticket could not then be changed.

On my first night in Europe I was going to be sleeping in Hamburg, and Copenhagen or Frankfurt (other stopping points for Flight TG984) are each much closer to Hamburg than is Zurich. But it was all too late, rather like the departure from Melbourne. We left Sydney on time at 1240.

The flight to Singapore lasted just over seven hours. It was pleasant enough, and the fact that it was in daylight meant that I could get a look at some of the islands I had failed to see on the 1979 flight.

By now Singapore had a large and flashy air terminal which is *mighty* big. In walking the kinds of distance you do in such a place I found myself talking to a German grandmother from Stuttgart who, like me, was

changing to Air Lanka; she wanted to change her plans to include a stopover in Colombo.

She had had a run-around from the airline people in Sydney when she had tried to make the change there, and half-expected the same sorts of problems again. We eventually found the right queue, after trying several very long (and very wrong) ones. At the head of it she was assured that they would do their best, but that things were still a little uncertain as to detail. However, we both got seats on the Air Lanka Tristar we wanted.

I'd not been on a Tristar before, but Robin Johnson had assured me that they were pretty ace planes. That they may be, but the one from Singapore to Colombo that night didn't look too wonderful. I thought the food was good and the soft drinks more difficult to obtain than I could ever remember on any airlines (except for the various commuter airlines in Australia which operate without attendants).

When we arrived in Colombo I made the interesting discovery that Colombo Airport had a fairly small waiting lounge. Its size was about that of the lounges at Canberra, Australia, or Madison, Wisconsin. And there, just after midnight, Air Lanka rendezvoused its three Tristars.

The idea was, I gather, that this scheduling would minimize disorganization for passengers who would have easy onward connections. That might make sense provided the shuffling of passengers did not take very long, but it took a long time, and for someone who arrived on the first of the three and departed on the last... when there was only just standing room... for several hours...

After I had been lounging about for an hour or so, a Sri Lankan traveller began talking to me. He had been working for the International Labor Organization for about twenty years, and was now based in Geneva (a place I would have liked to include in my travels). He had worked in many countries, and was quite interested in telling me all about it.

It quickly became clear that he regarded the supply of electrical power as of great (if not first) importance in developing countries. He had been in Egypt from 1967 to 1970, and was very much impressed by that country's potential. He also felt that Zambia would have an assured future when the power of Victoria Falls was eventually harnessed.

In Sri Lanka the damming of the major river would be completed by 1984 and then Sri Lanka's power needs would be met. He felt that in the near future the smaller countries would have to begin to invest in agriculture rather than industry, and in this way they could gain power over the larger, industrialized, countries.

I mentioned the relative situations of New Zealand and Australia, and

the fact that New Zealand was much closer to his ideal than Australia was. Although he had spent a fair amount of time in the Asian region he had never been to Australia or New Zealand. We also discussed the use by the USSR of nuclear weapons to blast dams.

He warned me that we would be closely searched before boarding the plane, as a result of recent political disruptions in Sri Lanka, and suggested that we wait until most people had boarded. This we did.

(I had always travelled with Jennifer previously, except for lightning business trips to New Zealand and the United States of America, and this was the first time I was able to discover for myself just how true it was that you meet many more people when you travel alone.)

It is slightly uncomfortable to be frisked by gentlemen wearing machine guns, but all went well for me until they came upon the packet of white objects in my pocket.

‘What these?’

‘Oh, Koolmints. Have one. No, please do. Come to Australia and get more if you like them.’

It worked.

The next stop was Dubai, that place of the over-ornate air terminal. Over-ornate from the outside, that is. I had expected something quite extraordinary from the many photographs I had seen, but that expectation evaporates once you are inside and confronted with the usual rows of airline seats, bars, bazaar-style shops and plenty of security guards.

Dubai does not need so elaborate an air terminal as this, of course. The contrast with the surrounding landscape is strong, even at night when all one can see are the lights on the roads leading from the airport to, apparently, nothing.

This was the starting point for the continuation of the conversation with my Sri Lankan acquaintance. The question was what would happen to countries like Dubai when the oil runs out.

I thought that some of these countries might become quite dangerous in the last years of their oilrichness. He agreed, and cited the specific case of Libya, which was formerly dependent on Egypt for food and would, in all probability, be in that situation again. Since Libya could have nuclear weapons any time it liked, the situation could become very dangerous.

He believed, on the other hand, that various countries (including Libya) could recover enough land from the desert to become self-supporting in agriculture. (But it is important here to consider his own biases. He, with his family, owns a large chunk of land and will benefit significantly from the dam development in Sri Lanka. He is also a major

support for his extended family, and has to believe some things. However, during this period of two months' leave he had had to borrow his son's Renault 12, and managed to drive 6000 kilometres.)

The security check at Dubai was close, but by no means offensive. I slept for a few hours from Dubai. The ILO bloke had said that he would complain about the poor service on the flight so far, and things did pick up on the leg to Zurich.

I got talking to my neighbour and discovered that she was Gillian Klein, a South African who had been living in the United Kingdom for about twenty years. She was editor of a magazine called *Multicultural Education*, a subject of passing interest to me, so we talked quite a lot.

As we were passing over Turkey she also suggested I look out the window. It was nearing dawn, and there was the horizon – a thin orange line, ruffled by hills, and above it a startlingly bright white Venus. I took a photograph, but don't need it for the memory; Venus from 30000 feet over near-desert is thoroughly unforgettable. We talked the rest of our way to Zurich.

Zurich

There I managed to get through Customs in less than twenty minutes. I tried to find an Air Lanka office to book my next flight but there wasn't one. After carrying suitcases up and down stairs I decided not to worry and go straight to the city.

Zurich is one of those immensely civilized places which has a railway station at the airport. The train was quick and I got to the main station by 0900. I bought some Swiss francs and then organized some train tickets. I reserved a seat from Zurich to

Mönchengladbach for one week hence. I stored one of my two bags for a week and the second for a few hours.

At a railway bar I bought a Coke, and then wandered off down the Bahnhofstraße via the Tourist Office, emerging from which I helped a lady find hotel reservations. (Actually, Zurich being the place it is, she probably wasn't actually seeking a hotel reservation in the normal sense.)

The Bahnhofstraße is a fine wide street, with plenty of activity. Some pretty effective demonstrators from Iran, for example (50 Fr from me, anyway), and then past the statue of Pestalozzi (which was photographed by me).

As a concession towards duty I visited the Air Lanka office and did

my forward booking from Zurich to London about two weeks hence. Then I continued my walk down the Bahnhofstraße, as far as the lake. (My intention had been to buy more food on the way back, but Zurich is so fascinating that I found myself following a totally different path on my return.)

I sat for quite some time beside the lake (something I would happily do again, not for the contemplation of things to come, which I admit was an important part of my feelings on this fine morning, but for the sheer pleasure of it). But I wanted to do more than relax in Zurich, so it wasn't long before I was up and crossing one of the bridges across the Limmat via the Quai Bruecke, then climbing slowly along Roemistraße to the Kunsthaus.

The reason for my slow movement was not so much the gradient of the hill (even though it was more than a gentle slope) as the multiplicity of second-hand bookshops on the northern side of the street (the side I happened to be on). Travellers who are book collectors (or, as in my case, book readers) would do well to steer clear of areas with high book densities, since one cannot possibly do justice to these collections, at least in the way one would in one's own country. All that saved me from large expenditure was the fact that most of the books were in German.

By the time I got to the art gallery I was beginning to feel some pressure from the need to move along hurriedly – something I regret – and so paused only to take some photographs of the sculpture in the grounds (including a Rodin), rather than jog quickly around the interior, as had originally been my intention.

I dawdled back to the Limmat via back streets (mainly Kirchgaße) which twisted and turned around churches and more bookshops until, reaching the river, I turned upstream, towards the railway station. The dawdling seemed enjoyable but it has to be acknowledged that it is destructive to plans to do as much as one possibly can in a city; this is something to which I seem to be inclined in those cities I most like. I had been in Zurich for only a couple of hours, and already I was finding it difficult to contemplate leaving it, so that my actions oscillated between steps which hastened my departure (the rational me) and those which delayed it (the feeling me).

Along the Limmat I peered longingly at buildings I might never see again (except as I see them now, parts of the crowded memories of a golden day), then crossed at the Muensterbruecke. Then, back on the western (and Bahnhof) side of the river I ambled back to the station, passing through many delightful squares and passing buildings deserving

of so much more than my fleeting transient's flickering glance. And after two hours in Zurich it was time for a second Coke.

I was due to leave for Basel just before 1300, so I now had a bare two hours left in which to explore the Landesmuseum, which is just across the road (Limmatstraße) to the north of the Bahnhof. That visit, too, was rather rushed, but I did manage to see many of the parts I most hoped to see.

I was especially impressed by the large battle scene modelled in miniature at which one gazed through tiny telescopes mounted about the periphery of the exhibit, but also by the prehistoric exhibits generally, by the rooms preserved and/or recreated from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and by the display of historical scientific instruments.

By the time I was ready to leave there had been a change in the weather: through the windows of the museum I had noticed people in the surrounding gardens running for shelter and fondly hoped that it would all be over. But the thunder and lightning which now followed meant that I was due to get at least a little wet.

Zurich-Basel (105 km)

But the station was, after all, just across the road, so I didn't get very wet, and had enough time up my sleeve to check out the shopping mall adjacent to the station, Shopville. I bought a light lunch – a ham roll and a Coke – and took the train to Basel.

Sixty-three minutes later we arrived at Basel, a city I knew rather well. I telephoned Jennifer's friend's home; a surly male voice answered and then the telephone was quickly hung up. Since I had no time for more than a quick chat on the telephone this was no disaster. At the station I bought a Pepsi and a bar of chocolate. Chocolate is so good and cheap in Europe that it is almost by itself enough justification for living there. When the train arrived I was delighted to discover that no one else had reservations in the entire car (24 seats) which was one of those open-plan arrangements. I began to look forward to the trip north.

Basel-Hamburg (1097 km)

The trip north from Basel by train along the Rhine is one I've taken several times. But on this occasion it was a matter of going all the way to Hamburg, a much larger undertaking.

The first part of the journey – say as far as Freiburg – is very beautiful, and I tried once again to take photographs of the vineyards. By the time the train had reached Offenburg the clouds were returning, but they had departed by the time we reached Mannheim. Seventy-five minutes out of Basel, there were no more clouds and the interior lighting could be turned off.

From the railway station at Mannheim I could see plenty of trams (always exciting to me) which were similar in design to those in Zurich. Twice, between there and Hamburg, I nodded off, thus losing the opportunity to look at the German countryside (which had been so much part of my planning for this trip!), but I was sufficiently alert to buy a bockwurst and a Pepsi along the way. Just why a bockwurst bought in this way should taste so much better than any hot dog I had ever had anywhere isn't at all clear, but it did.

Hamburg

The train was ten minutes late when it pulled in to Hamburg's main rail station.

The whole station was undergoing extensive renovations, making it very difficult for me to find a telephone. Fortunately for me my contact, Tom Loock, had stayed at home a little longer to wait for my call, and he was ready to make arrangements to come to meet me.

But because of the redevelopment which was going on, and partly because (I suspect) I was rather tired, we had some initial difficulties working out where to meet:

'Can you see the big clock from where you are?'

'From where I am I can't see anything but scaffolding.'

And so on. But eventually:

'There's a small concourse overlooking the platforms: be there!'

So far as my bleary eyes could make out there were two concourses, and both looked pretty small. But by strolling to and fro between the two ends of the platform I finally made the connection with Tom, who presumably glowed with those special signs by which science fiction fans recognize one another.

We travelled by underground to Mundsburg and the pub at the British Centre where Elfie was waiting. This pub was also the base for the English Theatre of Hamburg, and naturally enough (for fans of *Minder*) there was Dave the barman.

The owner was named David, to make matters slightly confusing, and also there that night were a couple of actors for the next production (*Tunnel Of Love*, due to start on 26 August 1982), Di Wilson and Paul Creighton. There was some conversation, but not much, and we left at about 0045 to walk back to Tom and Elfie's apartment. It wasn't very far, and the company, the surroundings, and the weather were all fine. But I had travelled rather a long way that day, and was only interested in going to sleep.

I dozed rather than slept and then 'woke' at about 1000.

Tom and I had a light breakfast and set off for the main city area by underground; I bought a day ticket for 5.50DM. We walked past the Amerikahaus where the Communist Party was staging a rather militant demonstration, and through the university to Wrage, a bookshop at which Tom occasionally works.

In there we checked over the stock, with Tom picking out things he thought I ought to consider buying. While most of the books were in German there was a small English-language section which didn't, unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), have anything much of interest to me. Of the books Tom picked out I bought none, since his advice was that I could get them more cheaply elsewhere; in particular, a week later at Eurocon.

That decided, we had had enough of Wrage and walked out the door, turned around, and walked promptly back in and began to study the books much more closely; while we had been inside, quite steady rain had set in.

Around and around the shelves and tables we went until the rain had eased to a drizzle. Or enough of a drizzle to encourage us to take the chance that the heavy rain had ceased (which it had).

Tom guided me to the main shopping area via a traffic-free walkway which was slightly elevated and at times passed through buildings. My notes are inadequate to describe the walk, and in any case don't do justice to the care with which Tom worked to make sure that my short stay in Hamburg would enable me to see as much as possible. The highlights, as I can now recall them, were the following:

From the walkway, Tom pointed out to me over to the right, as it were, a rather militaristic monument which had recently been trashed (red paint) by the demonstrators we had seen near the Amerikahaus. Tom would rather that this decoration were done away with. It was balanced(?) by a more admirable statue of Schiller over on the left.

Not much further along Tom took me into what seemed at first glance a fairly ordinary bookshop. Not so. This one specialized in music

(specifically opera) and art. The collection on display was wonderful, and only the fact that anything I bought would have to be carried around the world prevented me from investing large sums (another factor, I guess, was the lack of large sums of money...). Amongst the cheaper and more attractive items was a poster of *The Doors of Hamburg* at about 20DM. And of other posters there were plenty.

In the middle of an old building I found myself in an ultra-modern (but McDonaldsy) shopping arcade. Tom knew the nooks and crannies of Hamburg, and made sure that I found out about at least some of them. Had a Coke.

While dodging around a shop we didn't particularly want to visit Tom took me aside to direct my attention to an art shop which had some works he particularly admired. I don't recall now the name of the artist Tom wanted me to take note of; it's all blotted out by my sight of a pile of the original editions of Gustav Klimt's fanzine, *Ver Sacrum*. As I recall, the price-tag was around 900DM, which I could have afforded had I spent no more money anywhere on the trip (an unlikely event), but I still think I did the wrong thing in deciding not to buy it. But this got us started talking about art, and led to Tom encouraging me strongly to do something I had half intended: go to the Documenta in Kassel.

We just failed to get to the Rathaus in time for a guided tour. But because Tom is a closet member of old-buildings fandom he made sure that I saw as many as possible. Off the Jungfernstieg (a beautiful street which I later saw in the television version of *Smiley's People*), a most admirable street for walking. I bought some slide film for 17.50DM, a very reasonable price.

The highlight was the visit to the Kunsthaus, which got to me right from the start, with the magnificent stairway inside the front door. Amongst the painters I most remember works by Runge, Makart and (of course) Caspar David Friedrich. And Tom drew my attention to some works by Otto Dix which had just recently been removed from safe storage, having been politically unsuitable during the 1930s and 1940s.

Part of this wandering was shared with Elfie, and by 1500 we were ready for a meal. Out towards Landersbruecke we stopped at a small place called Pappa Leo's where Tom had scampi, Elfie spaghetti and I scaloppine. I thought of ringing Melbourne at about this time, but the nearby telephones would accept only 1DM pieces, which would have made phoning a tedious business. By the time we got back to Landersbruecke it was too late. Perhaps this was because we stopped for an ice-cream on the way.

We took a bus back to the Loocks' apartment. A mid-afternoon nap was definitely called for, but by early evening we were off back to the pub at the British Centre, where we were to meet much the same people as on the previous night, except that Volker, a friend of Tom's who was going to Eurocon, was also there.

My prowess at darts has not previously been recorded in science fiction fandom for the most obvious of reasons, but Tom and I as a team managed to split four games against Paul and either of David or Volker. I dropped out early in the next game, and had a longish talk with David about his life in Australia.

Volker and I managed a conversation in broken English/mathematics (the latter being his field of work now and mine a decade earlier). Also present that night was Klaus the yodeller, who burst into song (or yodelling) more frequently than at the drop of a hat. Klaus had not been able to advance his singing career as much as he had hoped in Hamburg, and was now thinking of trying to change his luck by moving to Berlin.

We walked back to the Loocks' at about 1330. This was an excellent time to telephone Melbourne and find out how Jenny was and report on my adventures to date. At the home telephone number I got a redirection message. Now this was something we had planned. We had had a couple of nuisance calls in recent months, and the redirection was a notion we had to use either if there were any further calls or if Jennifer decided to visit her parents. So I tried her parents and Jim Bryce told me that, although it was nothing to worry about, Jennifer was in hospital.

Since this was not much more than 48 hours after I had left Australia, and Jennifer had then seemed quite well, I was rather surprised. The further detail was that although there was no risk, she was to have an operation the next day, and I could ring her at the hospital.

Naturally I was upset, and I am afraid that this turnabout also upset the Loocks, kind souls who had, after all, met me for the first time only 24 hours earlier. It was, of course, a dreadful night for me, and I inadvertently made it uncomfortable for the Loocks.

I hardly slept at all that night.

Next morning (Sunday, and gloomy) we set off for the Fischmarkt. It is very much the sort of place one should be enthusiastic about: full of life and action, crowded with people determined to enjoy themselves and to make others happy. The variety of stalls was much greater than the name would suggest, and there was always the Elbe to look at. But I was definitely mooching rather than enjoying myself.

By underground we went to the Reeperbahn but while this was more

lively, even on a Sunday morning, than many a similar street, it didn't really compare with Amsterdam. We walked around, and then went back to the Loocks'. Here we slept for a while, only to be awaked by a telephone call from Jennifer. She had had a miscarriage, but was now well. Our overall plan for this period had been that, should anything happen, Jennifer was to take whatever steps she could to join me in Europe, then stay in England while I went on to the United States and Chicon. She talked enthusiastically about this.

We worked out that to allow enough planning time she should next contact me on the following Thursday (Australian time), in Paris. She would have all the flight details, and I would have obtained train timetables so that I could work out where we would meet up on the Friday (European time).

Things in Hamburg looked a little better now, even though the weather was becoming cloudy. Tom took me for an extended walk around the generally expensive houses near the Alster, then along the Alster itself, sometimes in the rain. We also stopped off for an American-style ice-cream sundae at Tom's favourite spot. Now I felt at home and at ease. The worries which had been hanging over me ever since I had left Australia, though now resolved in an unfortunate way, were at least behind me.

Back at the Loocks', Tom and I worked on the best way for me to fit in my next and very busy day (I had a very short-term EURAIL pass, and I was determined to get maximum value from it). After three nights of the easy life, sleeping in a bed, I would be ready for the real life again. By leaving early next morning (around 0900) I would be able to visit Kassel, Goslar, and Hannover that day (Monday), arriving in Munich on the Tuesday morning.

Hamburg – Kassel – Goslar – Hannover – Munich (353+149+724 km)

But I didn't leave on the 0845 train. Trains are so frequent, however, that I was able to catch a suitable one an hour later, thanks to Tom's vigilant scrutiny of train timetables.

Tom took me in to the railway station, perhaps to make sure that I finally did get away. It was still foggy as the train crossed the Elbe, but the day improved as it went along. The train I took headed south through Hannover, but shortly thereafter (108 kilometres later) I had to change trains at Göttingen in order to take a short (about 70 kilometres) detour to Kassel. Between Hannover and Göttingen one travels fairly close to the Harz mountains, but in the afternoon I was to get much closer. To the east, then, this trip was one which involved for the most part gazing out onto

forests and mountains, while to the west, on much flatter land, there were occasional lakes, towns, and castles. It was a fascinating mixture, and the farms gained my attention as much as anything else because they contrasted so strongly with Australian ones; there's not much that's green on an Australian farm in autumn.

At Göttingen, from the station, I peered about for the famous university, but all I could see was occasional important-looking buildings; I took a couple of photographs anyway. I got to Kassel at about twenty past one in the afternoon. I was visiting Kassel mainly because *Documenta 7*, one in the series of modern art exhibitions held there every five years or so, was running, but I quickly discovered that the city itself is well worth a visit.

While the railway station is small, it was a most welcoming place with a good news-stand, and I stashed my luggage in a locker and stepped out for the exhibition area, which was very well sign-posted. After crossing some major thoroughfares it was a delight to walk onto a pedestrian mall which sloped gently down towards the town centre. It was decorated in a modern style with a series of imaginative breakpoints – seats, steps, statues, small fountains – that did not interfere at all with one's progress.

There were, occasionally, shops which had decorations which I admired as well, but I was mainly interested in getting down to the exhibitions. Not that I was going in; I had already worked out that I would come back after the Eurocon, bringing Jennifer with me, so that this was but a reconnoitring mission. This is a pretty hard stance to maintain when the area outside the main exhibition building (the Museum Fridericianum) is filled with a pile of stones put there by Joseph Beuys. The museum itself with the standard portico supported by six columns is itself a quite impressive pile of stones, and I walked past it (after checking what the cost of a ticket would be) with some reluctance. I did buy the two-volume catalogue for 85DM. Turning back, I could see across acres of lawn to the city centre – one building apparently faced with aluminium, with trams running along the near boundary. (And above, some clouds were appearing in a semi-threatening way.)

I walked under a tunnel where the opposition artists were pleading their case, past a large theatre and down to the second site – the Orangerie, first built in the early 1700s and, after its destruction during World War II, reconstructed by the state, being finished only a few years before. In front of the Orangerie stretched vast gardens whose magnitude I never appreciated until I took a look at a map.

But I couldn't afford to dawdle: I had to make another trip of about 150 kilometres to Goslar, a small town I was most anxious to see, and I wanted to do it in daylight. So I took a few photos and scuttled back to the railway station and caught a train through Göttingen to Kreiensen.

Of Kreiensen I saw little but the railway station. Goslar lies on a line which branches off to the east from the main north-south line, and the main excitement seemed to be changing trains. I was to do so several times there, so it is just as well that over on the eastern side, overlooking the station, was a rather magnificent three-storeyed house which, come to think of it, loomed rather than overlooked.

The trip to Goslar doesn't take very long – 45 to 50 minutes on most days – for a journey which is, however, only 43 kilometres. This gives you a good chance to look at seemingly-undeveloped countryside at some leisure, and to pass through a small town (Bad Gandersheim) which looked like a wonderful be an opera performance in the town just after I passed through. The railway station is of elegant stone and great substance. But most of the trip is through unadulterated countryside with villages separated by a couple of kilometres: easy walking distance, as some of the citizens demonstrated for those so lazy as to travel by train.

The Goslar railway station is less imposing, and somewhat more commercial. One's immediate impression was of thronging tourist buses waiting to take passengers somewhere, while all I knew was that I had to walk to the old town. There's not much that's old near the railway station.

I parked my luggage in a locker at the station, and set off in what looked a promising direction. This led alongside the railway line and, just as I was beginning to wonder which direction to pursue at a major crossroads, everything was resolved by the simple observation that everyone seemed to be walking in the same direction alongside a park, and then through increasingly crowded buildings whose age also increased.

Everywhere (or so it seemed) it was necessary to park cars close to the buildings, obscuring one's view of their footings. And then it got to the point at which the cars were less dense, and the old buildings more dense, and I was in old Goslar.

Goslar was all that had been promised me; though there had been a slight initial disappointment at all the modern buildings, this was only because I was looking at an outer shell, and once I reached the inner city the present could almost vanish.

It was late in the afternoon, and I knew that I had relatively little time here in Goslar but since I would be returning this seemed no loss. The age of the buildings seemed nothing beside their context; walking up towards

the porch of the old cathedral I noticed a tempting ‘Zimmer Frei’ notice in one house’s window, and for a moment Munich and Paris retreated into the distance. But then a car passed by, breaking the spell.

I looked at the Kaiserpfalz from a distance and determined to look inside later in my travels; if only I had guessed what was in store I might not have worked so hard at that.

Back at the Market Square I was in time to watch the performance of the Glockenspiel (at 6.00 pm and there are only four shows a day) and to look at the surrounding buildings (next time in Goslar, the following week, I was able to buy, in the Rathaus, a tourist guide which occasionally reminds me of Salient Facts) before hurrying back to the railway station to catch the train to Hannover.

Even though I didn’t yet have a copy of the Thomas Cook timetable, I had managed to find an appropriately-complicated way to get to Munich the next morning. Because of the train schedules, catching a train across to Kreiensen and then picking up a southbound train just wouldn’t work out. So I was taking a northbound train from Goslar via Hildesheim to Hannover, arriving in Hannover at around 8.30 pm. The lateness of the day meant that I didn’t see much detail of the countryside north of Hildesheim (i.e. the last half-hour or so), but up to that point there was a continuation of what I had enjoyed so much during this day.

At Hannover itself I was not expecting to do much at all, with a 75-minute wait for the train to Munich, but I did have time to wander around the railway station and around a block or two of the city near the station.

I telephoned my friend in Paris to make sure the accommodation was still all right there. And I wrote to my daughter.

Like all the European cities I passed through so quickly, this was a place I wanted to return to.

I don’t remember too much of the trip to Munich; just south of Göttingen the train passes quite close to the border between the two Germanies, and then the train traverses the Fulda Gap (which is where, as old-time readers of *Strategy & Tactics* know, the Red Hordes will flow in their unprovoked attack on the Western Democracies). But by then I was asleep, which was sensible, since the train arrived in Munich just before 7.00 a.m., and I had an extensive program worked out for that day.

Munich

I had come to Munich for one specific purpose, but as it turned out things were much more complicated.

The Munich Railway Station is a very cosmopolitan place; the following weekend Waldemar Kumming told me a yarn about some

visitors to Munich who decided that a railway station would be an excellent place to learn the local language and so spent many days there, learning by eavesdropping; they came away with a good smattering of Italian.

I loitered there for a while since, although I expected to have a busy day, I could not start until the Alte Pinakothek opened at 9.00. I tried to ring Jennifer, but she was apparently not yet at home. I put most of my baggage into a locker at the railway station, got some breakfast, bought a newspaper or two, and found myself in conversation with someone else interested in art galleries: a professor from Baghdad (Mohammed Ali Shakir) who was visiting several art galleries in association with a trip to the Venice Biennale. He described the problems of being an art teacher in Baghdad (which seemed quite considerable as I listened to them), but more particularly wanted directions to the Alte Pinakothek.

That was easy enough, and we parted, although I did see him once or twice later in the morning, usually at a distance.

I had decided to walk up to the art gallery, because I had plenty of time and because I wanted to see what those streets were like. I walked along Luisenstrasse past Koenigsplatz, the Glyptothek and the Technical University before turning right into Theresienstrasse where the Alte Pinakothek and the Neue Pinakothek are separated by a park (and a roadway).

I much admired the Koenigsplatz, and took a couple of photos of the buildings surrounding the square. As it turned out these, like most of my Munich photos, have a rosy tinge, resulting from an unfortunate accident which is to be referred to later on. I also photographed a building with an inlaid giraffe; this fortunately was less rosy.

When Jennifer and I had visited the Alte Pinakothek with Waldemar Kumming in January the lawns in front of the building had been buried in snow (and, indeed, I was not aware that there were lawns), but now they were superbly visible and green. Something else was more visible than when we had visited seven months before: the variations in the brickwork which are the result of the repairs after the Second World War.

This time I found myself eavesdropping on my fellow-tourists as I queued for a ticket; at the entrance to the Alte Pinakothek I found myself overhearing an Ugly American doing the sort of thing Ugly Americans do so well as she passed over money for her eintrittskarte: 'I don't know what these things are; I just got off the train.'

Having visited twice before, I knew what I wanted to see. This time no one was copying Albrecht Altdorfer's greatest work, so it was possible

to have an unobstructed view of his masterpiece *Alexander's Victory* or, to give it the full title which my guidebook assures me is its due, *Victory of Alexander the Great over the Persian King Darius at the Battle of Issus 333 BC*.

I've described our visits here in detail in the previous chapter, but could never do so adequately within the compass I'm allowing myself now. I refer you to the earlier pages for a more extensive description, nonetheless. I bought a handful of slides to remind me of some of the paintings.

On this occasion there was no opportunity to cross the road to the Neue Pinakothek; my schedule required a quick hour or so at the Haus Der Kunst (Staatsgalerie des moderner Kunst), at the southern end of the English Garden and quite close to the river.

It was a pleasant twenty-minute walk to the English garden, and I whiled away a few minutes watching ducks swimming in a pond. There was an exhibition of (mainly American) modern art in the gallery, but I especially liked Dalí's *Apotheosis of Homer*, some paintings by Gerhard Richter, and a couple more by Otto Dix; another hour or so of a rushed day was easily absorbed by this.

I had decided that I would eat lunch somewhere along the way between the Haus Der Kunst and the Museum but, as I should have suspected, I found myself so interested in the buildings I passed that I forgot about eating. (I don't think that there was anything about the buildings which made them outstanding by comparison with other buildings in Europe; this was just a mode I moved into in all European cities.)

In all that distance there was not one telephone which would allow me to try ringing Australia!

And so, having reached the river Isar and the Deutsches Museum at the same time, I turned back and, in this cosmopolitan city, had a yiros and a Pepsi for lunch.

The Deutsches Museum covers an island on the Isar and is the best and biggest museum of technology I have ever visited. This is the kind of place for which a guidebook is definitely needed, but even then it is off-putting to be confronted almost immediately with the statement that the museum has about 17 kilometres of corridors.

After nearly three hours of walking and gawking about this collection of technological wonders I felt that I had had enough, even though I had missed many things I had wanted to see. Part of the problem was that there were so many scheduled demonstrations that you knew you couldn't

manage everything in one day (or even two). And eventually you gave up.

This is in miniature the experience which visitors to Europe (or other strange lands) have continually to endure. It's particularly painful when it is concentrated, as this visit was. I went outside to rest in the courtyard at about 3.30 p.m. I thought I could relax by watching a mechanical fountain for a while (which I did). But the courtyard was also crowded with exhibits – one of which, a Dornier Vertical-Take-Off transport 'plane, was so peculiar that I found myself being drawn back into the technological spell I'd been in all afternoon.

This would never do; I had some time to kill, but not that much. I gathered myself together and stared into the river from the bridge for a while as a way of getting back into the natural world.

My train was due to leave a little before 9.00 p.m., so I really had a lot of time for wandering, although I wanted to be at the station by about 8.00 p.m. Walking up through the centre of Munich is probably time-consuming no matter when you do it; in January we had to contend with crowds and snow, while now it was mainly a matter of looking more closely at buildings, especially of course the old Rathaus which I had seen before but which I knew I wouldn't be seeing again soon.

I wasn't very adventurous in eating, settling once again for cosmopolitan fare (although this time it was Chinese): Rice Vermicelli, Singapore-style. I did drink again that concoction which seems peculiar to Germany, orange juice and Coke, aka Spetsi.

By the time I'd finished eating, the last of the workers had almost vacated the city, but there were still enough people around to make one realize that this was a busy place. It was also a pleasant place, friendly, varied, and worth far more than a rushed day's visit. I was fairly reluctant to leave.

At the railway station I checked that the train was due to leave on schedule, which it was, and then went to get my baggage out of its locker, where it wasn't. No matter how hard I looked.

Someone had opened the locker and removed the contents. I checked the notices in the locker-room, and none of them indicated any sort of early closing time; on the contrary, the lockers were available almost around the clock.

So I went to the office, where no one spoke English, and my fleeting German was adequate only to describe the problem and to elicit from the officials the suggestion that I had made a mistake and locked the wrong locker, leaving my own open. This seemed very unlikely to me.

A bystander was helpful and told me that nothing could be done

(which I knew; the train departure time was getting close, and there didn't seem to be much point in arriving in Paris late).

So I boarded the train, which just happened to be the Orient Express, leaving behind in Munich my clothing for the week, a camera lens, a hundred slides of Australian fans and their activities over the previous twenty years or more, the first roll of film from this trip, two volumes of the *Documenta 7* catalogue, and *Finnegans Wake*, a good read for a long trip alone.

I suspect that little of this was as valuable to the thief (or thieves) as to me. I only caught the train because it was, for a change, a few minutes late.

(Waldemar Kumping, source of all knowledge, later explained to me that this was a well-known [in Munich] trick; the thieves identify a bank of lockers, 'legitimately' make use of them for a day and take the keys to be duplicated and then, for a time, have open access to those lockers using the duplicate keys. This wasn't much consolation to me, but it changed my way of using railway locker-rooms.)

Munich-Paris (970 km)

The EURAIL pass is a wonderful thing. So far I had travelled over 2500 kilometres on mine, over a period of about five days. But you can also usually sleep quite comfortably, as I had done the night before and expected to on this trip to Paris. Things didn't turn out quite that way.

I thought, for a while, that I was going to have a compartment all to myself, but just before the train started a youngish woman (a little under 30, I would guess) brought her luggage into the compartment, and she too was travelling to Paris.

She was an American, and it turned out that she had also been visiting art galleries, and like me was hoping to see quite a few more. We both liked Europe, and we both liked travelling, so we talked for a long time.

Eventually, just before the train arrived at Strasbourg (around 2.00 a.m.) the question of how someone born in Tennessee (as she had been) came to have so great a commitment to Europe came up. Her father was in the US armed forces in Europe, and she thought it was a good thing that the US had troops in Europe. I did not and do not, so after a relatively heated exchange there was a stony silence for the remaining half of the trip to Paris.

At least there was a chance to sleep now.

And so I arrived in Paris, at the Gare du Nord, with another 1000 kilometres of train travel racked up, about four hours of sleep, and almost no luggage.

‘What would be Dermot Lyttle’s reaction?’ I blearily wondered as I lurched off the train at 6.45 a.m. But he wasn’t going to arrive for another hour or so, which gave me time to direct another American citizen to the Est station, and get some change from the Credit Lyonnais.

Paris – Basel – Zurich – Basel – Mönchengladbach (614+619+57 km)

He was surprised. I was, after all, carrying only a small shoulder bag, and Dermot knew that I had still to travel back to Germany, to England, and then back to Australia through the United States.

But he was very sympathetic when he heard my story, as we hurried through the early-morning Paris crowds back to his apartment out on Boulevard Sault in the 12th, near the Bois de Vincennes. We had to make only one change on the Metro, for which I was grateful, and at the apartment (only a short walk from the nearest subway station, especially if you haven’t got much luggage to carry) we planned how to use the time I had.

Much of it, of course, was given over to talking; Dermot and I had expected to be working together in Australia in 1982, so I wanted to hear what he was doing and he wanted to hear what I was doing. But there were some other things to be attended to.

This was Wednesday morning, and fairly early on Thursday morning Jennifer would be ringing just before she caught the plane for Europe. I therefore had to get the Thomas Cook timetable. Dermot thought that we ought to try to replace *Finnegans Wake* while I was in Paris. We both thought I could use a change of clothes. So that was how I spent Wednesday.

Dermot had to go to work, so he sent me to an almost-nearby department store (actually next to a large Metro station called Nation) where I struggled with strange purchasing customs in a foreign country, somewhat spurred on by necessity, and wound up with some jeans (manufactured in Brazil, as I recall) and other light clothes which lasted about a year before falling apart, which surprised me a lot since I only paid about \$20 for the lot. I then did a quick whip around of art galleries and bookshops, fortunately not buying much. But no *Finnegans Wake*, not even at Shakespeare and Co.

In the afternoon I dealt with the other necessary matters. The timetable purchase was, thank heavens, quite simple. Then there were

plenty of other Left Bank shops nearby which would be sure to have it. But no! Not even La Hune had *Finnegans Wake*!

(Next morning, willing to try anything, we went to the Paris branch of W.H. Smith and bought a copy of the Faber paperback edition for 84 Fr, which was not nearly as satisfactory as my old hardcover, but it was at least a copy.)

That night I leafed to and fro through the railway timetable. I knew that Jennifer's most likely port of arrival was Frankfurt, so I was able to work on the trains from there to Mönchen-gladbach. But she might arrive at some other airport, and I had to be sufficiently familiar with all the trains going to Mönchengladbach on a Friday afternoon or night to be able to give advice during the course of a Melbourne-Paris telephone call.

That night we had a meal which was quite the equal of the meal Jennifer and I had with Pascal Thomas earlier in the year, but which was much cheaper (at 30 Fr each). It was in a small place (holding maybe four tables and a dozen customers) on the boulevard Soult, and next time I am in Paris I'll certainly try to go there again.

Afterwards we walked through the Bois de Vincennes or part of it and this was the first time in this trip that I had seen an untended park; parts of the Bois de Vincennes looked rather like one of those large Melbourne parks which the local council doesn't bother with too much apart from some perfunctory watering of major trees. (Other parts, near the lake, looked quite splendid.)

There were plenty of dog-owners taking their evening exercise and spreading dog-shit all over the paths, but apart from that the evening was very pleasant. That night I had to get used to sleeping in a bed again; after two nights on a train, something I managed with ease.

The next day, Thursday, Dermot had to go to work. I was left in the house to field the telephone call and then, provided the call came through early enough, there was something I very much wanted to do.

Well, the call was an hour or so later than I expected, and there was some tension in my voice. Perhaps not quite as much as there was in Jennifer's, for she was leaving very soon. She would be travelling via Tokyo and Moscow to Frankfurt (Robin Johnson always makes one's travel interesting...) and would be arriving late in the afternoon of Friday (i.e. in just over 30 hours).

That did make my timetable exercise interesting! I thought that provided she could catch a train to Köln by five o'clock Jennifer should be able to make a transfer to reach Mönchengladbach just after ten. I would wait for her train at the Mönchengladbach station (somewhere neither of

us had been).

Well, risky as that plan might be, at least there was now a schedule for us to meet the next day. I could turn my mind to the other activity for the day – seeing a movie.

This was the week when *Porky's* and *Grease 2* were released in Paris (along with some local films, of course), but the film I wanted to see was Hans Jurgen Syberberg's *Parsifal*. Here's the capsule description from that week's *Pariscope*:

La version intégrale de l'opéra de Wagner: une oeuvre colossale, baroque, inventive, sur la thème de la quête du Graal.

That's an accurate description, and the cinema in which I saw it, La Pagode, was pretty baroque and inventive too, with an entrance shaped (obviously enough) like a pagoda.

Syberberg's interpretation of *Parsifal* is quite wonderful, and I didn't mind at all paying 30 Fr. to see it. I saw it again several times in Australia the following year.

Parsifal is a longish film, and the session didn't finish until just before 7.00 p.m. By the time I'd travelled back to Dermot's there was only just time to pack (little as there was...) and get to the station (Paris Est) for the 11.00 p.m. departure.

I'll spare the reader the fine detail of my trip from Paris to Mönchengladbach. You will recall that I had to go to Zurich to pick up some stored baggage. Everything went to schedule and I arrived in Mönchengladbach at about four in the afternoon on the Friday, ready for the Eurocon.

Mönchengladbach

There were two matters to attend to as preliminaries. One was finding the hotel – the Gasthaus Geröhof – which Roelof had arranged and, now that Jennifer was arriving, make sure that a double was available rather than a single.

Roelof's directions were excellent, but my German was once more tried somewhat beyond its capacity in attempting to explain in a mildly noisy bar that mein frau would be arriving later that night, but eventually we staggered to a mutually acceptable conclusion.

The second matter was discovering the outcome of the telephone calls in Paris. Robin Johnson's advice to Jennifer had been excellent, so as I later discovered she had had a comfortable trip to Frankfurt. That is where

things threatened to come unstuck for her, for my schedule for catching a train looked more and more unworkable as she struggled to get through customs, get some change and buy a ticket. With some energetic pushing and shoving she managed to achieve these.

At my end things didn't look quite so good either. The station was no great distance from either the convention centre or the Gasthaus Geröhof but when Jennifer didn't arrive on the expected train I wasn't certain what this meant: was she in (a) Australia, (b) Japan, (c) the Soviet Union, or (d) merely a little late and in Germany?

I decided that so long as I kept meeting the trains which had passed through Frankfurt until about midnight I would probably find her if she had arrived in Frankfurt at a reasonable time. Jennifer finally arrived at around 11.30 p.m.

Next morning we discovered that the manager of the Gasthaus Geröhof was ferocious when it came to breakfast. Waldemar Kuming and Roelof were both staying there, and one morning we all staggered down to breakfast at about the same time. It seemed a good idea to sit together, but the management was most upset at this; each person had an assigned place, and was this not good enough?

We supposed it was, but preferred to sit together. The breakfasts were giant affairs. The uninitiated first dealt bravely with many varieties of bread rolls and croissants and butter and coffee and chocolate, only to be presented with dishes of meat and eggs for which there had not been room on the table! This made midday meals unnecessary and evening meals problematic.

This is the way to treat fans at a science fiction convention! Perhaps convention committees should give more attention to this normally-unheralded aspect of convention life. Mönchengladbach has a population of about a quarter of a million and is situated in the Ruhr industrial complex. It must be distinguished carefully from München, which is rather larger and at the other end of the country.

(At least one Eurocon attendee failed to make the distinction in her travel plans and so arrived rather later than she intended at what was, despite some fits and starts, the most international convention I've ever attended.)

There were some grounds for confusion because, up until a rather late date, the 1982 Eurocon was to have been held at La-Chaux-des-Fonds in Switzerland. My 'plane booking took me to Zurich because that was close to La-Chaux-des-Fonds. At the last moment (or seemingly so) Pascal Ducommun found that it couldn't be managed there at all and some

German fans bravely volunteered their regional convention as a substitute.

I suspect, though I've no direct evidence, that this was achieved partly through the organizing skills of Jean-Paul Cronimus, one of the European SFS secretaries.

I was wholly in favour of Mönchengladbach as a convention site because the city had enough facilities to cope, and a splendid mixture of older, traditional buildings and ways of life and newer buildings and attitudes and an openness to visitors which always helps.

(For example, a new museum had just been opened, and although Jennifer and I walked past it every day on our way to the convention we somehow never managed to go inside. Besides, the gardens outside were spectacular enough for visitors.)

One always felt safe wandering around, no matter what the time of day, and if the convention was dragging, why, one could simply wander in to the old town and seek alternative amusement there.

Indeed, as the convention grew older Jennifer and I found ourselves part of an evolving international rat pack which roamed between the convention site and several watering-holes in the town; Pascal Thomas, Christina Lake, Roelof Goudriaan, Nils Dahlskog and Ahrvid Engholm are the members I remember, and I suspect we were well-treated by the townsfolk because the only words we seemed to speak were 'another beer'.

Individually, or as part of that group, we didn't attend much of the convention; the only items we attended as a group were two reports on science fiction in Poland (very amusing, in a way, for the problem with Lem's productivity and standard is that he makes life almost impossible for other Polish science fiction writers) and in the Soviet Union (where we managed to persuade the translator to operate using Russian-English rather than Russian-German on the accurate grounds that there were no German speakers in the audience except for Waldemar Kumming).

Apart from that, Jennifer and I only attended one other convention item – which was really a combination of a John Brunner speech and the awards ceremony. Wolfgang Jeschke seemed to collect somewhat over half of the awards on offer, which was a very reasonable share if he had done half of what one heard.

One very tangible example was the paperback series *Heyne Science Fiction Magazin* which appeared to be so far superior to James Baen's more-or-less contemporary *Destinies* as to make comparison ludicrous. I had bought the first issue in Vienna back in January, and now hastened to pick up numbers 2 to 4.

Although it does exploit the benefits of being able to use translations, the balance of contents seemed to me to be simply unexcelled. And Jeschke wrote extensively as well! What a vast threat he might be in English! (I note that Jeschke's work as translated into English does not appear to have done very well, however.)

Apart from that, our convention participation was limited to chatting to fans and friends old and new. I had plenty of lobbying to do about the Australian bid for 1985, and was distributing literature and tram badges with unequalled fury. My efforts were less well rewarded when I talked to fans from Eastern Europe, but overall it was great fun. It's great fun also to look at what the publishing of science fiction is like in other countries, and there were better displays there than I've seen anywhere else.

There were also plenty of chances to talk again (if briefly) with people like Tom Loock, Karel Thole and Cherry Wilder, and to meet new people like Nellie Pardoel. But most of the time was spent with the rat pack.

I am a curiously-poor reporter of science fiction conventions outside Australia, largely, I like to suggest to myself, because I attend so little of the program that I never form a coherent picture of what is going on. My Seacon report is typical, and for that one I attended a much larger proportion of the formal program than at any other.

In reporting on Eurocon I'm therefore somewhat handicapped: I can't report on what was said or resolved at the convention not because I couldn't understand the proceedings but rather because I wasn't there. But this was certainly one of the best conventions I can remember attending, and the circumstances under which it was organized make that even more remarkable.

I haven't said enough about the environment. The convention was held in a technical high school, but in a section which lent itself particularly well to a science fiction convention of this kind, with a large hall, a large but enclosed area outside it for talking, and several small rooms for meetings, connected by passages large enough for displays. For a convention of that size it was just great...

After Eurocon

Mönchengladbach – Goslar – Frankfurt – Kassel – Frankfurt – Freiburg – Basel (461+310+480+344 km) (With a little Rheinfelden on the side)

Jennifer and I had a few days of travelling before we moved on to

England for Silicon. I wanted to show her Goslar and Kassel, and that is where we went, using Langen as a base.

We could catch a train direct from Mönchengladbach direct to Goslar (provided we started early in the morning), and this gave me an excellent opportunity, the night before, to practise my German on the manager and make clear that we would not be needing breakfast. We eventually understood one another.

The journey is only just over 300 kilometres but it takes five and a half hours, with the result that we arrived in Goslar early in the afternoon. We would have to leave at around 5.30 p.m. in order to reach Frankfurt by mid-evening. This was still much more relaxed than my time there about a week earlier!

Because I felt I knew my way around we were much more efficient, and made only one big mistake – wanting to see inside the Kaiserpfalz. There was an admission charge which would have been bearable except that it entitled one to hear a long lecture on the glories of the German Empire; I at least hadn't come for that, but to look at the painted-wood ceiling.

We walked out partway through, feeling that we had had our money's worth, at least visually. Then, out behind the Kaiserpfalz, we found the sculpture which Henry Moore gave to the people of Goslar after the Second World War; there was enough light to photograph it, but then I dropped my camera, jamming a part of the mechanism and preventing me from setting exposures for a while.

At least this meant plenty of opportunity to amble about, not doing anything but pick up ambiance; going to Goslar yourself is about the only way you can find out about that.

We reluctantly caught a train for the longish journey to Frankfurt and Langen.

Next morning it was off to Kassel. The 200-kilometre journey takes just over two hours, so we would have plenty of time there.

You could buy a three-day pass to the *Documenta*, something which made a great deal of sense once you realized that the art works were scattered throughout three large buildings and the spaces between them.

In our case, with so little time at hand, we chose to catch a glimpse at least of everything that was visible. This meant that there was no chance to look critically or extensively at anything, merely to form an impression. In some cases, of course, you were trapped by a particular piece. I was impressed once again with the Gerhard Richter paintings on show, and I felt just as I had in front of Paulus Potter's *The Bull* when we rounded a

corner and directly in front of us were paintings by Stephen Mckenna and Carlo Maria Mariani. Mariani comments about his own work:

With my works I have proposed the rigorous re-reading and re-interpretation of a whole generation of artists, above all the German artists towards the end of the 18th century.

It was a pleasure to see paintings by some Australians which fully merited their place, and even, down in a basement, some of the props from Syberberg's *Parsifal*. We bought a catalogue, some prints, and two T-shirts (artworks themselves, you understand, not mere items of clothing).

One of the buildings was not wholly occupied with *Documenta*, and we took a look in the other areas. Lo, a room full of paintings by Tischbeins! Not just the Tischbein we knew about, W., but also J., etc., etc. The whole family must have painted madly, and no wonder Mariani has plenty to work with.

We still had half an hour or so to spare, so looked quickly at the technical museum before catching the train back to Frankfurt; this gulp of Culture was going to have to last me for over a week.

We spent a day recovering with Cherry and Horst before setting off again, heading south for Basel. In early-afternoon we got off the train at Freiburg where Jennifer hoped to meet up with an oboist friend of hers; we didn't find him, but an assistant in a photographers' store fixed my camera and it has worked well ever since. We did spend two pleasant hours wandering around before catching the train on to Basel.

We had relatively little time in Basel, but as it turned out we did have one unanticipated adventure.

That night we stayed up fairly late talking with Jennifer's friend, because Jennifer would have to leave in the afternoon of the next day, catching a train to London. We were both due to arrive in London in the morning to allow us to take a train up to Newcastle for Silicon.

But that left the whole of the morning free, and some of the afternoon. So we went on a journey up the Rhine.

Rheinfelden is only about 16 kilometres upstream from Basel – and only about 16 minutes by train. This meant we could take a somewhat leisurely cruise for an hour or so up the river, wander around in Rheinfelden for an hour or so, then catch an early afternoon train back to Basel, allowing Jennifer to leave for London later in the afternoon.

It was somewhat overcast as we walked down to catch the boat, so we were inclined to wonder whether it had been a good idea after all. Then there were our fellow boat-trippers, all standing in deadly-silent orderly

queues waiting to go on board.

But there was no alternative, and we did want to see another part of Switzerland. The trip could not have been better. As soon as the boat cast off the other passengers, released from the onerous duty of being Swiss, suddenly became a raucous singing, card-playing band of holidaymakers. That was something we hadn't expected.

The only interruption to the smooth journey was being lifted up through one lock, an event which Jennifer thought ought to be preserved on about half a roll of film. On the northern, German, banks of the Rhine were the fields of grapes which we might have anticipated had we thought about it, amongst which were scattered occasional small villages.

Eventually the boat pulled in at the wharf at Rheinfelden which we discovered was a town which spreads across the Rhine and therefore across two countries. We stuck with the Swiss side, walking through a tiny town square surrounded by buildings which looked easily 500 years old and before we knew it we had emerged from the other side of Rheinfelden into the neighbouring countryside; we beat a retreat to the edge of the town, pausing in a park to eat lunch (purchased from a nearby supermarket which did seem very much out of place). It had been a relaxing time for both of us, and just what we needed.

From there it was only a short brisk walk to the local railway station, and in no time we were back in Basel. As Jennifer had already packed she had no trouble catching her train for London via Paris.

I stayed on overnight in Basel, travelling across next morning to Zurich by train to pick up my baggage and catch my plane (remember that booking I had done in Zurich just under two weeks before?) to Heathrow and thence to Kings Cross station in time to meet Jennifer and catch an early-afternoon train up to the north.

Silicon

Miraculously all the timing worked out and we all met up with Chris Priest at Kings Cross. Jennifer had a rail pass, so her fare wasn't huge, but I had to pay something like £30-40 for a second-class return ticket. We arrived in the late afternoon and there was no room in the inn – I mean that my letters to the organizers booking a room hadn't reached them, for some reason. But there was space at a nearby hotel, and we stayed there.

Silicon is the kind of convention it is easier to enjoy than to describe (and this is what most fans ought to do anyway). It's very much a

participatory sort of thing, with few if any items which exclude those attending.

The only problem for me was that so many of the program (?) items were linked to science fiction; you were expected to remember plots of old sf stories, for example or, even worse, the plots of recent sf stories. This was pretty foreign stuff to me, but I could bumbly answer some of the quiz questions.

Silicon is also the kind of convention where you find a high density of BNFs enjoying themselves and NOT sniping at one another. It all worked very well.

One of the best-worked-out features of the convention was the banquet (?) on the Saturday night, which had been arranged at a local Pakistani restaurant where the management had contracted, for a fixed price, to bring food out until everyone could eat no more. I was impressed by some of the mighty eaters there that night.

On the Saturday morning we took advantage of the convention's slumbrousness to do a bit of sightseeing. This was not particularly spectacular, and when Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna heard about it they poo-pooed our feeble local efforts and said that we would have to see Hadrian's Wall. We had no objections, so that was set for the Sunday morning when, it was assumed, the convention would be slumbering again.

We took a train to Hexham, and from there were meant to catch a 'bus to the wall and to a ruined Roman camp. When the 'bus didn't appear we all four reflected on the fact that it was Sunday. Then we reflected on the fact that it looked like rain. We reflected separately and we reflected together. Eventually all this stuff must have had some effect because a 'bus did come, and we spent a pleasant time at the Roman camp, and a pleasant but windswept (if you know what I mean) time tottering along a section of the Wall.

Joseph pointed out how the terrain made it hard for the Picts and others to even reach the base of the Wall; I thought about the similar problems offered by the train.

Overall we were somewhat delayed by this stuff, and so only had a couple of hours before we had to catch a train back to London. Silicon itself I had enjoyed as much as Seacon. But some of the surrounding elements made it even more pleasant. This was about the last pleasure I was to have in England.

Jennifer was going to stay on in London with our friend Virginia (then writing for *The Observer*), returning to Australia a little after me, and

flying via Alaska. I was to fly to Chicago on the Wednesday.

Via Brussels.

Robin Johnson had impressed on me the necessity of rechecking my flight with Sabena, so that was a priority task for the Monday. I also wanted to ring Dick Smith, who was going to meet me at Chicago.

These two tasks occupied almost the whole of the next two days, leaving me in a less than happy mood; Jennifer remembers it more as a continuous rage.

The problems were few in number, but unsusceptible to easy solution. The first was that the suburban train network was running a little off-schedule, making it difficult to plan travel around London. The second was that the proportion of public telephones which worked was even lower than I had expected. I admit that I was probably spoiled by having just come from Germany. For example, at Kassel with Jennifer we had a few moments to spare before the train left, so I telephoned David Grigg in Australia from the railway platform to talk about how things were going.

This problem with London telephones made it very difficult to check up with people we were supposed to be meeting, much less ring Dick Smith in Chicago! By the end of the first day I had at last found a Sabena office interested in my ticket, but I hadn't made any progress at all on the telephone calls. We had dinner with Chris and Virginia, and I steeled myself for the next day of terror.

We wanted to do some mildly touristy things, so once again set off for central London, where we had the usual problems. In mid-afternoon I was finally able to speak to Dick Smith. I even managed to squeeze in a bonus call to Malcolm Edwards, but then he was in London.

It was thus in a somewhat steamed-up frame of mind that I left England in 1982 – not at all what I ought to have felt after the pleasures of 1979. Perhaps one day it will be possible to change those feelings.

To Chicago, and What I Did There

[Note: this section was mainly prepared in 1996, and reflects a change in technology and a change in audience – most of the section was initially given orally at a meeting of the Adelaide fan group, Critical Mass. The initial transcription was done by Yvonne Rousseau.]

Flying to Chicago was a breeze. Robin Johnson had explained that Sabena had a great system in Brussels which meant that I would get an easy seat

allocation – and it worked. As you left the inward flight you passed a small desk at which they allocated the seats for onward travel; then you were directed to the correct flight lounge where you sat comfortably waiting to board, thinking about the fact that those around you were almost all waiting for their seats to be allocated.

I don't mind at all little hops like the trans-Atlantic one, so I felt quite fresh when I arrived at O'Hare Airport. If Dick Smith and I had our signals right, he would be meeting me here.

The problem with arriving in Chicago for me was that I was arriving on the Wednesday and I was due to depart on the Monday morning, to come back to Australia, which meant things were going to be awfully rushed. Another problem was that I'd arranged to stay with Dick Smith, who's an American now prominent with the bid for 1999. Dick and I had exchanged some letters, but I'd never seen him and he'd never seen me, and O'Hare airport is one of the larger airports in the world. And so one of the things that Dick and I were puzzling about was how either of us would recognize the other in this vast sea of people that arrives on jumbos at O'Hare every hour.

For some reason, it worked – we must have had some aura, or sparkle in our eyes, and there was really no problem working out that that weird-looking fellow must be Dick Smith, and he worked out that that weird-looking fellow must be John Foyster. But Dick, unfortunately, wasn't just looking after me for a night; he was also somewhat involved with running the convention. That meant things were a little bit tight, as far as time was concerned.

Therefore, one of the first things we had to do was quickly go and do some stuff at the convention and, as it happened, that meant driving on that freeway that goes through a building in Chicago – I'm sure you've seen movies of it. Anyway, it's pretty weird to be going – well, it was for me in those days – to be going along the freeway and suddenly go through a hole in a building and out the other side. (But Dick also took time out to make sure that I was driven through architecturally more interesting parts of Chicago, something which is pretty easy to do when you live in Frank Lloyd Wright-ridden Oak Park.)

That preliminary experience of the hotel, which was down by the Chicago river, was interesting because it was the first time I'd been in one of the big American hotels that have a sort of five- or six-storey atrium. This is in fact an area which is extremely suitable for science-fiction fans provided that there are sort of tiers up the six floors where fans – science-fiction fans – can stand and sort of look up and see, oh there's someone

that you want to talk to. Now, if only they'll stay still while you get a lift and go up to the fourth floor, you'll be able to track them down...

This is because the key thing that we're not aware of in Australia is that the science fiction convention – the world science fiction convention overseas, with many thousands of persons – can lead to a situation in which two people who know each other spend three or four days trying to meet up. That happened to me in 1979 in Brighton when I wanted to meet up with Ethel Lindsay. It wasn't until the Sunday afternoon that we actually located one another. And that was only about two to three thousand people – it was quite a small convention.

The Los Angeles convention in 1996 will have more than five thousand people. Now the single most important thing in a large science fiction convention is, of course, being able to meet the people that you intended to meet.

One of the things that helps you to do that is the program. The program lists where all the famous science fiction writers are going to talk about particular activities, or they're going to autograph books, or they are going to sing silly songs, or whatever it is that they're going to do on the program. You then take your choice and hope that they are there.

Now quite often, of course, there are ten – twelve – twenty different items going on at the same time and for anyone, therefore, it's quite a problem to perhaps go to the two people whom you most want to hear – two writers as alike as, say, Lois McMaster Bujold and Bill Gibson. If they're on at the same time you have a real problem getting to hear both of them speak. And so one of the things that happens at a world science fiction convention is that you go to the program because you want to hear a particular speaker – a favourite writer, or perhaps the topic is interesting: how to make Martians out of single-cell entities, and so on.

Now I must confess that in terms of reporting to you about what happened at the 1982 world science fiction convention, I'm a most unreliable reporter. Quite apart from the fact that it was fourteen years ago, I really didn't go to very much of the program, but I suppose it would be only sporting to devote a little bit of time to telling you about the parts of the program that I did go to. Yes, there was the business session – we'll talk about that later – but I did go to one item where I was meant to talk about Australian fandom and what a wonderful thing it was. And what we found there was that the slide projector that we asked to have wasn't there. Now when you've got your stack of slides you can't really hold them up and ask everyone take a quick dekko... Mind you, of course, there were in attendance only about the number of people presently in this room,

because not too many people at that convention were terribly interested in Australian science fiction fandom. And so that item might have sort of passed off into oblivion.

But there were evaluation sheets handed out to the audience by the committee at the convention at the end, which asked for ratings on the item and, later in the convention, we were given feedback about how good or how bad the item was. And I think we were advised that we should have been better prepared, but we had our own views about what the problem was there.

I also went to something that passed, I suppose, for something like the opening of the convention. But I was a long way down the back, and it was fairly boring, and not very much was happening, and so all I can recall was that there did seem to be applause for the opening of the convention at some stage. Most people, of course, at the convention weren't at the opening of the convention.

The room wasn't big enough, for a start. And indeed at most world science fiction conventions now there would be very few of them at which there is actually a room that could hold all the attendees if all the attendees wanted to go. You just can't do that. And mostly, of course, people don't want to be all there together doing the same thing, because the interests that science fiction fans have are so diverse. So those were two particular items that I went to on the convention program and there were, I guess, two others.

I did go to the business meeting and it was just as well, because the Australian contender – I mean, all the contenders for 1985 – had been warned that they would be expected to make a presentation. And I think we were told we would have ten or fifteen minutes to give a presentation. It was just a preliminary.

Now, of course, politically that's not the kind of time in which you're doing all the back-room stuff, so there's a sense in which it's important, but it is a lead-up to the actual presentation and is therefore mildly important. So I went to the business session, which is usually – and on this occasion certainly was – held fairly early in the morning.

And I really disgraced myself by sitting up the back of the room next to Mike Glyer, who's chairman of the 1996 world convention. And he and I made smart-arse remarks about how badly run the convention was so far – the kind of thing that everyone talks about anyway but we just joined in the fun. And we also tried to work out ways of subverting the rules running the convention.

One of the ones that we did pretty well on was a rule about the semi-

professional fanzine award. There was to be some rule change about eligibility and one of the people who was obviously pretty anal, and was into rules in a big way, had come up with this complicated rule for which category you got into. So after the description was given – it was, you know, you had to publish so many issues in the year, have so much circulation, blah blah blah blah – and, if all that happened, then you got into that category.

So, after the definition was given, and Glyer and I were making these rude remarks as usual, I pointed out to Mike that the daily newszine of the world convention, of which he was the editor that year, met the conditions for a semi-professional magazine because it had the circulation and it had the numbers and, what's more, if he wanted to win a Hugo, he was very well placed to encourage people to vote. But, of course, anyone who becomes chairman of a world science fiction convention is entirely honourable. So Michael didn't take advantage of this golden opportunity to add to his Hugo collection.

Anyway, the time came for the presentation of the 1985 contenders and we were sort of warned in private, and then told publicly, that strangely enough the business session was running a little late and because this wasn't, you know, the real bidding session, could we just cut it back to five minutes.

And so, because 'A' for Australia comes first, I was invited to make the presentation on behalf of Australia – but could I keep it down to five minutes.

Now although the business session of the world science fiction convention is, of course, an immensely important event, the number of people attending the business sessions is pretty small, and the room in which they're held is pretty small. So I didn't have to go down to a microphone or anything. I just stood up where I was and said, 'Mr Chairman, in five minutes I couldn't even begin to tell you how wonderful a 1985 world science fiction convention would be in Melbourne.' – and I sat down. At that, there was stormy applause because the business session had just picked up four and a half minutes.

This also made it hard for the following contenders to give long presentations. So the long and short of that was, Australia won the convention the following year and then ran it into the ground in 1985. But that's not the story I'm going to tell you.

And then I did go to one other program item, and if you add all of these items together, you'll find that it probably comes to about two – two and a half – hours, tops, out of Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and

Monday. But the item that I went to was an item about fan funds.

Now fan funds started forty years ago when money was collected to take British fans to American conventions and vice versa. And it's a tradition that's gone on ever since. Now if you're in this meeting, you've almost certainly been tapped to make a donation to DUFF or to GUFF.

DUFF was a con trick that we well-known Australian con men set up in the early 1970s, because in 1970 we began to plan to run the world science fiction convention in Australia in 1975. And one thing we needed to do was have more interpersonal exchanges between the two countries and so the logical thing for us was to set up a fan fund to exchange people between the United States and Australia. So the Down Under Fan Fund was born, and amongst the nominees for the first year were people like Andy Porter and Buck Coulson – both of whom are still active in fandom – and the ultimate winner, Lesleigh Luttrell. And Lesleigh came out to the science fiction convention in Sydney in 1972. So this panel about fan funds focused on the TransAtlantic fan fund, but also they were going to spread more generally. And I was interested in this item because not only had I been the administrator – the initial administrator – of the Down Under Fan Fund but I'd also gone to Brighton in 1979 as the winner of the inaugural Getting Up-and-over Fan Fund which exchanges fans between Australia and Europe (and vice versa). And Mr Orszanski, here present, is another GUFF winner.

So I was quite interested in this discussion about fan funds – went along and sat down like Jacky down the front. You know how it is when you're interested in an item in the convention and you're not quite sure whether you want to be up the front so you can hear what's going on or up the back where you can make smart-arse remarks – and so I sat down the front, not knowing too much about what was going on behind me. And so there was a point during the panel when I was suddenly shocked out of that sort of semi-daze that you're in when you're pretty interested in what's going on but (on the other hand) it's been a long day and it's not necessarily the most exciting stuff you've ever heard – to hear one of the people on the panel saying, 'And, of course, there have been other fan funds beside the transAtlantic fan fund and, for example, right in this room now you have the first winners, of GUFF – down the front, John Foyster – and Lesleigh Luttrell for DUFF coming down from the back of the room.' I looked around, and there was Lesleigh who I hadn't seen for six years, because I visited her in Madison in 1976.

So she came down and sat next to me down the front, and we talked to each other, and I assume that the panel continued but I certainly don't

know anything about it. And I'm assuming that most of the people in the room didn't think we were all that rude to be sitting right down the front, talking away to each other very noisily and ignoring the people speaking and ignoring the crowd behind us. So, you see, that is one advantage of a program item – sometimes you wind up meeting people that you want to meet but you didn't expect to actually be at that item. That's quite a plus.

Well, now I'm afraid I'll have to say that that completes my discussion of the program at the science fiction convention. I'm sure there were awards for Hugos, and I'm sure there was a masquerade ball and no doubt many famous science fiction writers gave important speeches (and much rubber chicken was eaten) but I did not hear any of that. I wasn't involved.

One of the reasons I wasn't involved was that a key activity for a bidding committee at a science fiction convention is running the bidding parties. Now, running bidding parties is a full-time occupation for several people, and for this particular convention I had taken a suite, which actually consisted of three rooms, and we ran parties for three successive nights. When I say 'we' I refer of course to myself and my rooming companion, a Mr Peter Toluzzi. In those days Mr Toluzzi was famed – and for all I know, still may be – for his interest in exotic chemical substances and young women. And some people were inclined to wonder how it would work out if he and I were room mates.

Well, I have to tell you that it worked pretty well, because we were rarely in the suite together. The schedule would normally call for me to be involved in running the room party through till probably four o'clock in the morning – at which point I would go to sleep, and then wake up at nine or ten o'clock the next morning, to go out to forage for provisions for the next day's party. And around about that time, Peter would crawl back to the room. And he would then occupy it for the next few hours while I was out foraging for food. And then occasionally Peter would show up early in the party – perhaps ten, eleven, twelve at night – before more important things engaged his attention.

So therefore there are a couple of phases to this business of running a room party. And probably the actual party itself is the more pleasant of the two. But stocking up on provisions can be not too bad. The only problem is, of course, you're not quite sure how many people are going to come, what they're really going to be interested in, and so you tend to just go out and buy as much as can be crammed into the back of a small car – which is what you've usually got at your disposal.

I was lucky enough for a couple of days to have Lee Smoire – an

American fan who's since moved to Australia – available to help, and Lee really did a huge amount of work driving around some of the back streets of Chicago (a subject to which I shall later return), looking for cheap places to buy lots and lots of soft drink and nibbles and stuff of that kind, and also (from time to time) a drink that was not so soft. So that would usually occupy a couple of hours of the day and then – well, you'd actually start off with the hour or two that you would have to clean the room up to make it acceptable for the maid to clean it. Thereafter you would have the period of getting the stocks, and then you would lay it out and by then it would be time for your obligatory appearance at some program item – just turn up and see what was happening. So the cycle of the day was quite complex, and into that you squeezed your associations, whatever they might be, with other people at the convention.

Now, the parties themselves, as I say, would run from probably nine o'clock at night until four o'clock the next morning, and in that time you would hope to have a substantial turn-over of people. If they stayed for an hour or two to discuss things, that would be fine but, by and large, you wanted to have through-put to establish the good will and bonhomie of Australian science fiction fans and the great goodness of the 1985 (as it was then) bid for the convention. Now, in that, we were substantially helped by our American friends. Dick Smith, for example, did a great deal for us. We had some videos of movies to show, and one of the three rooms of the suite was given over to showing boring movies of stuff about Australia and stuff on fandom, and Dick manned that room quite a lot of the time. It was really quite remarkable that he was willing to put so much effort in, and it doesn't surprise me therefore that he is willing to put in so much effort for this year's bid. But then in the other rooms you had the various guests of one kind or another.

Now, the hotel, of course, was quite large and although (and you will have experienced this if you've been involved in Australian science fiction conventions) – although science fiction convention committees always say to hotels, 'Block-bookings – complete floors for science fiction fans – because we run parties late', no hotel ever believes you. So there are always people on the floor who are not part of the convention. And sometimes you create problems.

But let me say that we were very lucky in 1982. We were running quite late parties, but there was only one occasion on which strangers came bowling up to the open doors and the people lying out in the corridors outside, and it was these two chaps who came along wanting to know what it was all about. And so I talked to them a bit, and it turned out that they

were doctors, who were attending a medical conference – no doubt, a scientific tax-deductible conference, quite unlike a science fiction convention. And they were quite interested, and they stayed for two or three hours, and I seem to recall discussing with them the complexity of the American accent and how I was beginning to be able to distinguish a number of regional variations in the accent (not the dialect), and they were able to give me some fine detailed pointers on how to tell someone from Delaware as distinct from someone from, say, South Carolina.

So that was an interesting exercise, that people – total strangers, nothing to do with science fiction – could walk into a party like that and feel quite comfortable. And that made me feel that we must have been doing something right in the party, because it was open to all comers, as it were. One of the tricky parts, of course, was that there were certain all-comers who were more important than other all-comers. In particular, the only real opportunity I had to approach the guests of honour – the proposed guests of honour for the 1985 convention – at any length was at those parties. I had, of course, invited them by letter beforehand. But what that meant was that during the course of the party there would be some furtive sidling up to one another, and I'd just have a little bit of a chat with Gene Wolfe about this or that, or a little chat with Ted White about this or that, and certain assurances would be exchanged about what would happen *in the event that...* And that was quite fine, but it meant that because those people knew that certain things had to be said, they would come to the party and hang about for a while, and this, of course, did attract other people to the party: 'Oh, Ted White's up at such and such – Gene Wolfe's in such and such a party,' and lo and behold, you would get an increased party attendance.

And, of course, therefore you should be particularly grateful to your potential guests of honour, who are already doing you favours before anything is announced – a year before you have even won the bid.

And the other thing, of course, that happens is that, in situations like that, if the people know something about Australian fandom – know there's an Australian party – perhaps they even know you – they'll come along to the party and they'll talk to you about it, and you might wind up in that way meeting an old friend or a relatively new acquaintance or even someone that you haven't really had a lot to do with but that you've admired.

For example, in the case of the 1982 convention, there were a number of people who came along to the party – or the parties, because there were so many of them – and I was just overwhelmed, because I'd really liked

what these people'd done in science fiction fandom, and here I was meeting them after all this time, and I think – just to give two examples – of Lee Hoffman, who was one of the great science-fiction fan editors, forty-odd years ago, and of Steve Stiles, who is one of the great cartoonists. And they just came along to the parties and they mixed in and talked with everyone about what was going on.

But, of course, there were occasional signs of debauchery – and not all associated with Peter Toluzzi – because we had a couple of youngish women who were interested in giving back-rubs, especially to half-naked males. And I'm delighted to say that the prominent Melbourne science-fiction fan Merv Binns agreed to have one of these semi-naked back-rubs, and I have photos to prove it (which I unfortunately have not brought with me tonight!). But that did help the attendance a little. And then there were the people playing with balloons somewhere in the room, and I couldn't quite work out what that was all about. But those parties went on and on for hours and eventually one had to say, 'Well, thank heavens they've all gone,' and start, as I say, the two hours of scraping off the heavy dirt and leaving just a little residue for the maid to deal with.

So parties were obviously a key part not only of a bid for a convention but it's also a key part of the life of a science fiction convention. And you will know this if you've been to science fiction conventions in Australia. The only difference in a world science fiction convention, I guess, is the parties are maybe a little bigger and maybe you'll obviously get a lot more people going through those parties.

Now, the other kind of thing that happens at a convention like that is that you do get to meet people, and do things with people, that are quite unplanned and which are quite interesting in themselves. I should imagine that there would be nothing more boring than a convention of that size in which you go into it, you look at the program, you plan everything out, and rigorously you then attend all of those items, you schedule yourself for a few parties and go to those parties... I have no doubt there are people who do that, but it's not something I've ever been able to really consider myself doing, and it certainly didn't happen on this occasion. I'll give two examples of the kind of thing that happened that was quite unexpected – one of them in some ways irrelevant and sad but important to me at the time, and the other one not irrelevant or sad at all.

In 1982 Kelly Freas's wife Polly was very, very ill and it was a time when she needed (in order to keep going) to drink large amounts of carrot juice, and the hotel didn't seem to be able to provide appropriate amounts of carrot juice. So Lee Smoire and I went together on a carrot-juice run, to

buy stuff for Polly Freas. Now, whether the carrot juice did anything for Polly Freas, I don't know – but it certainly did something for me, because Kelly Freas, the artist, was one of the aspects of science fiction that really got me involved. When I started reading science fiction, forty years ago, Kelly Freas was probably the premier illustrator of science fiction magazines. He had a marvellous artistic line – really, an advertising line, I guess – and his illustrations were everywhere. And to be able to do anything, in any way, to help Kelly Freas was just a wonderful thing – maybe unimportant to him, but for me it was a way of returning something to someone who'd given me so much pleasure over the years. And, of course, as you know, Kelly Freas is still working quite hard on science fiction illustrations.

The other thing that happened that was quite accidental was that after Lesleigh Luttrell and I met at the panel item, we decided we were going to stick around together for quite a while, and one of the things that we did (because she knew Chicago quite well, living over at Madison) – was wander down late one afternoon, down towards Lake Michigan and around the fountain that's there near the James C. Petrillo Music Shell. But one other important thing about going down near the James C. Petrillo Music Shell was that the Chicago Jazz Festival was on, and it was a free festival. The Mayor Jane Byrne was promoting this as being very important, and it was important because she was up for re-election against Richard Daley's son, and I think she lost, but so it was very important for this kind of event to be on. And so Lesleigh and I walked around and looked at fountains and boats and she told me about where this this bit fitted and where that bit fitted. And then we wandered over to listen to jazz for a while, and we stayed there for a couple of hours, listening to minor jazz artists, like Alberta Hunter and Miles Davis – for nothing, in Chicago. And, as I say, absolutely none of it planned – it was just one of those things that happened.

Now, of course, if you get four thousand people – five thousand people – who are sort of like-minded, then adventures like that can happen quite easily. And so if you do find yourself in a world science fiction convention, whether in Australia or elsewhere, almost certainly something of this kind will happen to you. You will have the chance to go out and do something wild and mad and unplanned, and I've given you one example of that. Another example (but not necessarily terribly wild – and not terribly mad either, though but it wound up with some interesting consequences) was that, because of people I knew before the convention, having met them in '79 or elsewhere, there were opportunities to go out for

meals together.

And I remember particularly a meal I went out to with some of the West Coast people, who were all of them older than I was but all people that I admired for their long, long contributions to fandom. So – Terry Carr, Robert Silverberg, Bill Rotsler, and another guy that is perhaps less well known in science fiction fandom and perhaps is in many ways more interesting, Sid Coleman. We went off to a restaurant, and I remember walking with Silverberg, and Silverberg saying, ‘I’m always worried when I go out with these guys because they know that I don’t like spicy food and I’m absolutely certain, you know, they’re going to find some place which has really spicy food.’ Well, when we got to the Mongolian restaurant – it certainly looked from the menu as though there was going to be some spicy food. And there was.

But, of course, there’s also (big city like Chicago) plenty of room for variety, and you can choose what you want, so one of the dishes that we had was Frogs’ Legs Mongolian-style. (Are there really frogs in Mongolia, I wonder? It’s an interesting concept.) But, so Frogs’ Legs Mongolian-style was one of the things that was available, I remember, from that menu. And by and large I have to say that, yes, the food was a bit spicy. But it was one of those occasions when lots of stories are told about other people.

One of the worrying things about, I think it’s Alta Vista, amongst the search engines on the WorldWide Web, is their little tag line in which they’re suggesting how to use it. They say, ‘For good food, use “deep-dish pizza” + Chicago.’ This is obviously a computer nerd’s dream of good food. I did not have any deep-dish pizza in Chicago but, apart from the Mongolian-style frogs’ legs – well, my first meal in Chicago was actually at a sushi bar, which is where we went on the Wednesday night. And I must say – having flown from London to Brussels to Chicago, and then raced around Chicago quite a lot that day with a guy named Jim Rittenhouse, who needed to do certain fannish things, as well as going initially to the convention site – I was pretty tired. So when at, sort of, eight or nine o’clock we went out to eat, and we went to a sushi bar, and sat down in the sushi bar and looked at all this raw fish, and I was thinking: ‘Haven’t slept for a lot of hours.’ – I was not all that enthusiastic about having sushi.

I also discovered very quickly that even in 1982 there were techno-nerds around and the group that I was with were techos, and they liked talking about little bits of silicon that did things, and so I had this stuff pouring at me from the outside and I had raw fish getting at me from the inside, and I really didn’t know which was more distressing. However, the

fact that I was in America at a science fiction convention (or potentially at a science fiction convention) soon let me cease worrying about those things and I was able to enjoy the experience as much as possible under the circumstances.

The other good food I had was pastrami on rye. And pastrami on rye in Chicago I would have to recommend. I got that because I said to Lesleigh, ‘Well, one of the things I’ve got to have is pastrami on rye.’ – and so she took me to a place she knew in downtown Chicago where I could get pastrami on rye. And it was just fine, and I must say that I have been addicted to pastrami ever since.

So here is the moral of this tale, if you like: ‘beware of conventions that lead to addictions’ – because sometimes a really highly peppered pastrami can give you a bit of indigestion. So you must be aware of the dangers of enjoying yourselves and learning new things of that kind. This then was one aspect of Chicago that I hadn’t really expected – the food side. As for Chicago itself, you see, I hardly saw it, apart from looking out from my hotel window. Wandering around I didn’t see too many deadbeats in the street, and the cops had used all their loathing of young people almost completely up in the 1968 riots in Chicago, so it was a quite pleasant place in 1982.

And one of the other things I did – and I recommend this to be done when you’re associated with a science fiction convention – is I went and bought some books. I actually went into a bookstore. Of course, at a science fiction convention you have the hucksters selling all their wares all over the place, and so you can buy any amount of science fiction and that, therefore, led me to say, ‘Well, maybe I’d better look for something else.’ – which I did. I went to a downtown store in Chicago. I thought, ‘This is pretty nice – and, gosh, aren’t the books cheap!’ – because, of course, this is one thing that I think our English-speaking friends in other countries don’t quite understand: that the premium that we have to pay gouging, mean, malicious booksellers in this country is quite alarming.

In any case, I walked into this bookshop and thought, ‘Well, there are so *many* things that I could buy here that I *want* to buy right now, it’s ludicrous. I can’t possibly contemplate buying all that I want to. What should I buy, just to prove to myself that I have been into an American bookstore and bought American books?’ And I’m afraid the answer wound up being four J.D. Salinger paperbacks in a uniform edition. So that’s quite a nice little set of books that sits there, but they weren’t expensive. But they’re very nice editions to have.

And there was one other thing about the convention that I guess I

have to mention and this is something which people in this room don't know much about. The thing that has long tied me to American science fiction fandom has been the regular exchange of our fanzines through amateur press associations. The earliest of these was the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, established in 1937 by Donald Wollheim and some of his friends. And I've been a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, on and off, since the middle 1960s. So in 1982 one of the things that I was able to do was to go to a little informal party – a gathering of members of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association – most of whom, of course, are much older than I am. Some of them have actually been around, and active in the organization, since 1937. Some of them, of course, have died since.

If you have been insular and only know science fiction fans in your own city, or in your own country, you never have that pleasure of meeting people that you've corresponded with for years and, in some cases, decades. One of the things I'll be looking forward to when I go to Los Angeles in 1996 is meeting someone who happens to be the secretary-treasurer of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association at the moment – a man named Robert Lichtman, with whom I first had contact in 1963. We've never met. But we'll be able to meet now. So you can see that I had contact with him before most of you were born.

Science fiction fandom is something that really cuts across age ranges. At a science fiction convention you will see seventy-year-olds talking to the seventeen-year-olds. And there is a spirit there that it is hard to imagine anywhere else. So that was, I guess, the last chance I had to see some of my acquaintances from the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.

Nowadays, of course, the world of the Internet is so marvellous that when things go wrong with your sending your fanzine to America, you simply e-mail a formatted attached version to your friendly neighbourhood friend (fannish friend) in America, and he runs off the copies for you. And that's what happened to me in the last week. I saved my membership of FAPA by bundling up a formatted fanzine, attaching it to an e-mail, and sending it off to the official editor.

The science fiction convention is a unique invention, in the sense that it brings more people from more different backgrounds together than just about anything that I can imagine. It does so for non-commercial purposes. I made the point earlier that this is not a tax write-off – something that hotels find it hard to understand. The science fiction convention at the large scale is the opportunity – the best opportunity that you have in your life – to meet people with whom you have a great deal in common. So if

you go to a science fiction convention in Australia, that's great – there'll be one, two, three, four hundred people there, and you'll find people who are of interest to you. If you go to a world science fiction convention, which nowadays doesn't cost very much, there'll be four or five thousand people there, and you will have interesting adventures and you might even acquire tastes that you didn't have before, but whatever happens, it will be worthwhile. So if there is a world science fiction convention in 1999 in Melbourne, make sure you're there. Thank you.

AfterGuff: Three Unordinary Years, With Footnotes

Footnote 1

My activities in science fiction fandom for the three years from August 1979 to September 1982 were dominated by the 1979 GUFF trip and its aftereffects on me. Its immediate effect – taking someone from Australia to a World SF Convention in England – was the traditional one, but as I have tried to show in the Post-GUFF section of this report, there were longer-term effects as well.

In particular I became once again interested in conventions as a way of expressing interest in science fiction, and I found that I loved travel and in particular travelling in Europe. But those things faded after 1982, and in this short chapter I'll write about the effects of GUFF on me after 1982. Later I'll reflect briefly on fan funds in general.

There are a couple of matters which need to be dealt with briefly first. GUFF has, over its seventeen-year history, been notably unsuccessful in generating trip reports; unless something extraordinary happens this will be the first full report published, and that almost two decades after the event. If nothing else, this gives later GUFF winners a record which will be easy to eclipse.

This is somewhat surprising in that so many of the GUFF trippers have been quite prolific as fan writers. Joseph Nicholas was, in 1981, the first to venture south under the auspices of GUFF. It is hard to imagine anyone more likely to produce a voluminous report, but it hasn't happened. Joseph has mentioned technical difficulties at one time or another, but my simple mind grasps at the most elementary of explanations; GUFF directly affected Joseph's life in a long-term sense when Judith Hanna joined him in England, and his priorities changed.

In my own case a few short paragraphs may suffice to indicate why this report has been delayed. My involvement with the 1985 World SF Convention in Melbourne, to which I shall refer in more detail below, was a major source of delay. From the middle of 1981 to August 1984 I chaired the bidding committee and its successor, and anyone who has been involved in running such things will know just how time-consuming that sort of activity is.

The other factor, ultimately tied up with the '85 convention itself, has been alluded to briefly earlier in this report.

Some readers may have felt that Jennifer Bryce and I shrugged off rather lightly the miscarriage which led to her joining me for the Eurocon in August 1982. We were, I'm afraid, rather too experienced in this area to set much store by it.

Our first son, Christopher, had been born and died on one day in January 1981, and our travel to Europe at the end of that year, whatever other reasons might have lain behind it, was part of our efforts to recover from that experience.

Angus, our second son, was born and died in March 1982, just after our return from Europe. The events of *August* 1982 consequently seemed quite minor to us.

Our third son, Colin James Henry, lived from October 1983 to February 1985, and his life had a far greater impact on us both than any of the experiences recounted here. I have written about that elsewhere, and don't intend to take the matter up here. But it did contribute to non-report-writing, as you might guess. James's life also led indirectly to my severance from the 1985 convention.

All James's life was spent in hospital, which obviously placed great demands on the other aspects of one's life; but working towards the 1985 convention got rather hard for me for reasons which went well beyond the impact of James's life.

Just *why* was I working on a world science fiction convention at such a time? The context is given in this section from earlier in my report.

At SEACON in 1979 the group of Australian fans who were present made substantial efforts to boost the Sydney bid for the 1983 world SF convention (I ought to point out that Sydney fandom was not generally represented at SEACON, and most of the pushing was being done by fans based in Melbourne). No effort which involves getting both George Turner and John Foyster into fancy dress can be regarded as trivial.

But Sydney fandom's efforts before and after SEACON were not enough to win against any competition at all, and this had become obvious by early 1981, with voting to close late in August 1981.

As this became clear, I and a number of other Melbourne fans felt that a bid from Melbourne for 1985 had a chance of success. Whereas our bid for 1975 had been successful partly on the basis of the novelty of it all, any bid for 1985 (to be decided

in 1983) would be on the basis of a track record. With a track record and the experience we had had boosting Sydney, we thought 1985 was a genuine opportunity, and accordingly we launched a bid for 1985 at the 1981 Worldcon. The immediate response was favourable, but we wanted to go further than getting merely a response.

With the experience we had behind us in running the 1975 convention, we could afford to devote a much larger proportion of our effort, in the early days of the bid at least, to drumming up support for the bid from quarters which had tended to be ignored by most previous bidders. In particular, those of us at SEACON had been taken by the interest of the European fans and, with Roelof Goudriaan working on creating links between European fandom and non-European fandom, the time seemed right to work with the Europeans.

By the middle of 1981 I was ready for a decent holiday; both Jennifer and I had had a rough year and I was going to change jobs at the end of the year. We had been wanting to return to Europe as a result of our 1979 experience, and this was a good time to do it. At the same time I could try to meet with European fans and talk about the Australian bid. Through Roelof's and other contacts I had a list of people I wanted to see, and this to some extent dictated our itinerary.

One result of the bid was the two trips to Europe described earlier, the second of which led to me being at Chicon in 1982. When, in the following year, Melbourne's bid for the 1985 Worldcon was successful, we all changed into high gear.

This was a little trickier for me than for most committee members. Since late July 1983 Jennifer had been in hospital receiving medication which we hoped would allow her to carry this baby a little closer to term than 23 weeks! By the time the site-selection ballot results were announced we had a reasonable routine in place, so the change in gears was fairly smooth.

Because the 1975 arrangements had been so smooth (except for the art show: see below) we were going with the tried and true combination which had been used then: the Southern Cross Hotel as a site and Air New Zealand as a carrier. As it turned out this was not as successful a move on our part as might have been hoped.

Some changes in management and staff at the Southern Cross meant that there wasn't much corporate memory on their part of the success of

1975. This meant going over again all the groundwork which we had hoped to avoid; no, this isn't a business convention, block-booking means block-booking, and so on. What was more difficult even than this was that the Southern Cross was planning some remodelling, and the new arrangements would be in place 'about' the time of the 1985 convention.

So what were we booking? On what could we plan? In general in late 1983 the answer was 'trust us', always at least fighting language, if not completely deceptive. We would have to be flexible. But on one point it seemed unwise to be flexible.

At the 1975 convention there had been a major security breach at the art show (I think this has been written about elsewhere; if not, read this as a warning). On the last morning of the convention the convention staffer coming on duty for the art show reported immediately that several paintings were missing, and had apparently disappeared overnight; hotel staff security, supposedly operating for 24 hours a day, did not report any incidents and the movements log showed no activity. The paintings were 'missing' for several hours until they were at last tracked down to a Melbourne fan without any formal responsibility in the area who had thought it would be a 'good idea' to look after these paintings (some of the most valuable in the show) and had no trouble persuading a hotel security man to let him take them out through a back door (apparently clouding the man's mind at the same time).

We were therefore already sufficiently worried about the security at the Southern Cross, with its multitude of access doors, and discovering that the physical layout was in fact indeterminate encouraged us to look to alternative forms of secure display.

In recent years we had been rather successful in running conventions at the Victoria Hotel, about a block from the Southern Cross, and its convention area was about the right size for an art show (perhaps with some other events as well). It could also be very well secured, with very good crowd control. Some initial plans were therefore made to use the Victoria as the overflow hotel and also as a site for the art show. Final decisions on this could be made in 1984.

Running the convention at two hotels was not, however, something to be taken lightly. Late in 1983 it seemed the best option. Otherwise things puttered along. But by then James had been born and life was a little tricky; but not unmanagably so – at the beginning of 1983 I had been able to take on another political hobby (working with Koori friends to wrestle control of a government-funded project away from white control, a project which was not completed until early 1985).

Some of the convention committee members may have had some apprehension of the stress under which I was operating, but others appeared either to not understand it or else to relish it. For my part I found it increasingly difficult to work with friends who talked a lot but didn't get around to doing things; especially when, from time to time, that which had to be done actually had some urgency about it.

One area in which I began to have differences with some committee members was in relation to who did what; these committee members had the view that if anyone volunteered to do something for the convention then, if they happened to be a friend of yours, you gave them the job. I found this particularly annoying because from the beginning of our bid I had pushed the view that people should be given responsibility only for tasks in which they already had proven experience and not, for example, because they happened to be someone's friend.

(I ought to add that this policy wasn't popular with those who thought that the right way to do things was to work with your friends, no matter how often they screwed-up.)

Early in 1984 it was becoming obvious that things were going wrong; I returned from one of my periods away with the Koori community to discover that a meeting of the convention committee had been called and held without me being told about it – a difficult situation for a chair!

By August 1984, when I was scheduled to leave for the Los Angeles world convention, and those negotiating with Air New Zealand apparently decided they were too busy to get around to telling me by (literally) the last day available for advance bookings that Air New Zealand would provide a free ticket (but, I note, the same people had plenty of time to tell other members of the convention committee about it...), the situation had clearly become unworkable from both sides and the Worldcon committee and I parted company. A year later I was recovering from a bout of pleurisy and was unable to attend the convention at all; on balance, in the light of reports I heard about the convention, this seems to have been a lucky thing to have done.

Footnote 2

Science fiction fans have been travelling the world for decades, meeting up with friends made by correspondence and making new friends. In earlier years a significant proportion of this travel was paid for by voluntary contributions through funds such as GUFF. As the amount of international

travel by science fiction fans has increased, the question has been raised (and continues to be raised) as to whether there is any longer a need for fan funds.

I have tried in this report, by putting the report of my fan fund travel into a larger context, to indicate at least by one instance that the impact of a fan fund can (and, I hope, often does) extend beyond the immediate goal of taking someone to a science fiction convention in another country.

To give only the most obvious example, it is highly unlikely that the world science fiction convention would have been held in Australia in 1985 if I had not travelled to Brighton for SEACON.

Other consequences were perhaps less direct, but were perhaps more far-reaching (at least from the inside!). Many of them, of course, are simply the result of getting older.

I support the maintenance of the fan fund idea; there are times when the outcome is perhaps less than the organizers and donors expect, but overall I believe the benefit is there.

What seems to have been missing in recent years is the ‘special purpose’ fund, in which money is raised to help a nominated person; the Willis and Berry funds are old but glittering examples, and *The Goon Goes West* retains in my mind the status it had when I began writing this report: the archetype of a spontaneous response to fannish travel by one of fandom’s great enthusiasts and, for that reason, something we can never emulate but which establishes a standard for us all.

Science fiction fandom remains, I believe, a sociological mystery, despite occasional sorties from academia. We might not understand it, but it maintains a grip upon us which is hard to shake off. We take part in it because it’s there.

Acknowledgements

Many people provided hospitality, friendship and assistance during the travels describe herein; I hope that my gratitude emerges sufficiently clearly from the text. Those who donated funds towards GUFF, and the GUFF administrators (Leigh Edmonds and David Langford) in particular, contributed voluntarily towards making the travel possible, and I thank them for that.

Others made specific contributions which I should like to acknowledge separately. My mother, the late Lin Foyster, provided the funds for travel in Europe in 1979, thus making possible a significant expansion of what could be done and leading indirectly to the later activities described here.

Elizabeth Darling kindly illustrated chapters 2 and 3 of the report, lifting the text significantly.

Jennifer Bryce helped me even more than is indicated by the text, and checked my memory of the events recorded here.

Yvonne Rousseau has edited the whole text and also transcribed from tape chapter 6 and part of chapter 8, making possible the final appearance of this report.

Irwin Hirsh, who was himself a later GUFF traveller and administrator, has been a second conscience, and has tried to keep me on the true path of science fiction fandom.

John Foyster
August 1996

Publisher's Note

John Foyster's platform on the 1979 GUFF ballot was as follows:

Attended Australian SF conventions since 1958: chairman of 1966 and 1971 conventions. Published many fanzines since 1961 including *The Wild Colonial Boy*, *Satura/The Gryphon*, *Exploding Madonna/The Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology*. Coedited (with Edmonds) *Norstrilian News* and *Boys' Own Fanzine*. Guest edited *Australian Science Fiction Review* and *SF*

Commentary. Member of SAPS (1962-1972), FAPA (1969-1972, 1976-), OMPA (1969), ANZAPA (on and off since 1968). Won Ditmar for best fanzine (1970) and best Australian SF (1973). Initiated DUFF (1972). Twice founded The Nova Mob. When backed into a corner about his SF criticism pleads guilty but insane. Dislikes motor cars.

Nominators: Christopher Priest, Peter Nicholls, John Bangsund, Carey Handfield and Robin Johnson.

Stranger in Stranger Lands first appeared in 1996 as a spiral-bound A4 print edition published by John Foyster from Rundle Mall, Adelaide, South Australia. The Acknowledgements above were printed on the copyright page.

Towards the end of his life (he died on April 2003), John worked on a new edition. "My report on the trip was ready by 1996. But that was not really what I intended and eventually I was able to plan a report which included photos. This report is therefore a second edition."

This second edition takes the form of fourteen landscape-formatted PDFs with two columns of print and many photographs, as well as Elizabeth Darling's above-mentioned cartoons. "The PDF files are in a format I like, but I have not been able to persuade everyone else – indeed almost no one – how much better this format is." The second edition is hosted online by Bill Burns at eFanzines:

- <https://efanzines.com/JFGUFF/>

For those who prefer the plain ebook format, the unillustrated third edition which you are reading was prepared by David Langford in October 2024 – based on the text of the second edition with the omitted Acknowledgements restored and some further corrections of mangled sentences which were checked by Irwin Hirsh against the first edition.

The End

This free ebook is exclusive to the unofficial TAFF website at taff.org.uk. If you enjoy it, a donation to GUFF is a fine way to express your appreciation.

Table of Contents

Stranger in Stranger Lands

Contents

Getting There Isn't Anything Like Half The Fun

Two Daze in London

Seek On! Seek On!

Why Fanzines?

Travellin' Fan

Round England

Post-GUFF

Round the World

AfterGuff: Three Unordinary Years, With Footnotes

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Stranger in Stranger Lands	2
Contents	3
Getting There Isn't Anything Like Half The Fun	4
Two Daze in London	21
Seek On! Seek On!	39
Why Fanzines?	57
Travellin' Fan	67
Round England	82
Post-GUFF	93
Round the World	166
AfterGuff: Three Unordinary Years, With Footnotes	209
Acknowledgements	215