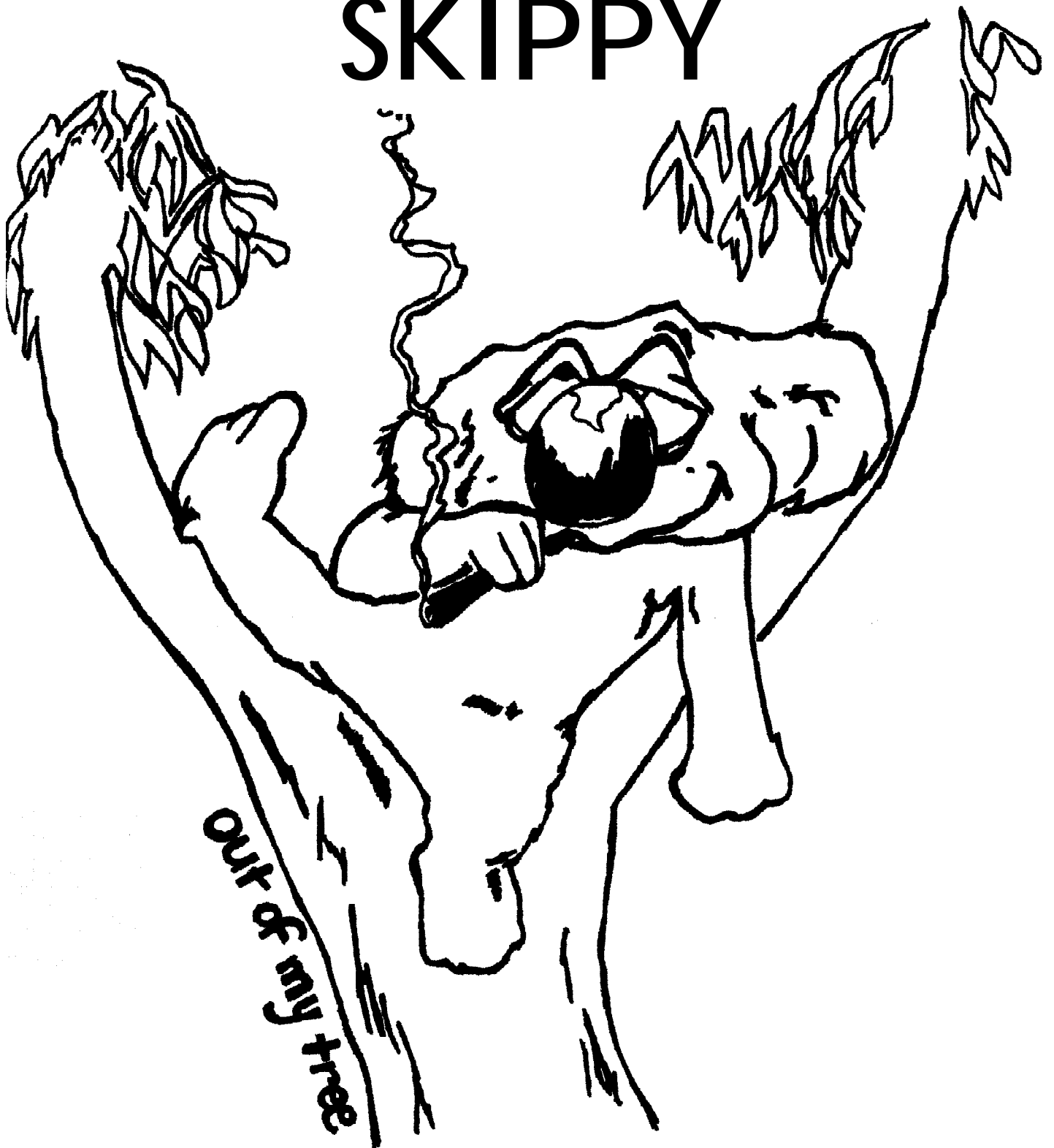


# A BRIGHTON BELLE MEETS SKIPPY



# A Brighton Belle Meets Skippy

is the report of Eve Harvey's GUFF trip to Australia in 1985. The individual installments were originally published in the following:

- Part 1 : Wallbanger 12, March 1986
- Part 2 : Wallbanger 13, August 1986 & Thyme
- Part 3 : Wallbanger 14, November 1993
- Part 4 : Wallbanger 15, February 1996
- Part 5 : Guffaw 2, August 1999

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Minimum Price

(all proceeds go to boost the GUFF funds):

UK	£3 + 52p 1st class or 40p 2nd class postage
Australia	A\$7.50 + A\$3 surface or A\$ 6 airmail postage
USA	US\$5 + US\$2 surface or US\$3.50 airmail postage

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## WHAT IS GUFF?

GUFF, stands for either the Go Under Fan Fund or the Get Up Fan Fund -- depending on which way the trip is going. It exists to transport sf fans between Europe and Australia (and vice versa) thus furthering links between the two groups.

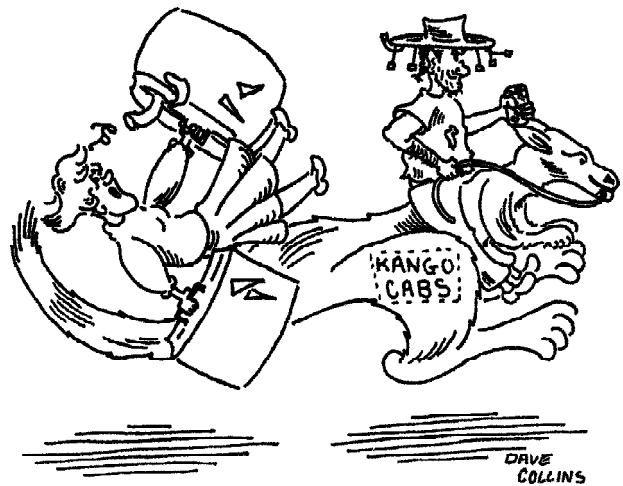
GUFF was first conceived by Chris Priest, in the euphoria following his 1977 visit to Australia, as a Europe/Australia equivalent of TAFF (UK/USA) and DUFF (USA/Australia). Having had the idea, Chris quickly passed it on to Dave Langford to do the 'dirty work' of raising sufficient funds to bring an Aussie Fan to Seacon'79. As you can see from the list below Dave's sterling efforts were successful and the fund continues to this day.

## GUFF TRIP HISTORY

- 1979 **John Foyster**  
Seacon'79, 1979 Worldcon, Brighton
- 1981 **Joseph Nicholas**  
Advention'81, Adelaide
- 1984 **Justin Ackroyd**  
Seacon'84, Eastercon, Brighton
- 1985 **Eve Harvey**,  
Aussiecon 2, 1985 Worldcon, Melbourne
- 1987 **Irwin Hirsh**  
Conspiracy, 1987 Worldcon, Brighton
- 1989 **Roelof Goudrian**  
Swancon 14, Perth
- 1990 **Roman Orszanski**  
Confiction, 1990 Worldcon, The Hague
- 1992 **Eva Hauser**  
Syncon '92, Sydney
- 1995 **Ian Gunn & Karen Pender-Gunn**  
Intersection, 1995 Worldcon, Glasgow
- 1999 **Paul Kincaid**  
Aussiecon 3, 1999 Worldcon, Melbourne



# A BRIGHTON BELLE MEETS SKIPPY



Being a really cool, laid-back, suave and sophisticated account of the summer hols, 1985 of Eve & John Harvey, starting with, for the first and only time, an explanation of the title for those of you who aren't acquainted with my background, the history of British Rail or even British TV imports. The Brighton Belle was a special, super-duper, revamped Victorian train that plied its way (before it was axed) between my hometown of Brighton and the great metropolis London. It was in, effect a mini Orient Express. Skippy? One of those obnoxious creatures from the Champion and Flipper stables; a bush kangaroo that 'single-pawedly' saved an obnoxious little lad and his cohorts every week. To plagiarise Hitchhikers', if there's one thing the world hates it's a smart-ass, so it's no wonder the Australians were only too keen to export him. Why such a title? Why not? It may not be as ideologically sound as Joseph Nicholas' would have been but at least it's more visible.

## A PINT IN THE NEW TOWN

You could make the mistake of believing our trip started on Friday, 16 August 1985 – the date we departed from Heathrow. However you'd be **wrong**. It started one Saturday morning in early January when I received a letter from Sally Beasley offering crash space in Western Australia should I stand, win & make it over to Perth during the trip. Hell, someone wanted to see me! Until this time we knew we wanted to go to Australia to meet as many Oz fans as possible, but I'd felt a bit shy at standing for GUFF – why should any of them want to meet me? It's difficult to explain, and this isn't the right place, but suffice it to say that letter made me feel warm all over, chuffed and honoured; and also brought home to me that this race was real. We might actually get to Aussiecon II!

Out came the newspapers – who's advertising cheap flights? Numerous phone calls later, courtesy of The Tokai Bank, I called John. "How'd you like to see Singapore?" "What?" "You heard me." "What!" "We can get a stopover in Singapore!" "What!!" An exemplary practitioner of the oratory art is my husband.

Now when I get excited I make lists. When I'm nervous I make lists. When I'm worried I make lists. So I made lists. How much it'd cost if I won GUFF; how much money we could save to cover John's share of the expenses; how much it'd cost if I didn't win; how much we could save if we starved, if I gave up smoking and John drinking . . . sure you get the idea.

Then came **THE** day. VC Day. Vote counting. The phone rang and John answered it. "Hello Joseph" 'I'm out', I mouth to him, 'take a message. PLEASE!!' (Coward? I just happen to think yellow stripes suit me.) "Sure Joseph, here she is." Judas!

After I put down the receiver, we took the news in the traditionally reserved manner of all Her Majesty's subjects.

We jumped around for a mere five minutes, and only the nearest ten houses knew

### **WE'RE GOING! WE'RE REALLY GOING!!**

Then we realised it was almost closing time, so we proceed to celebrate in a similarly subdued manner round our local pub, the New Town, continuing back home later and finally staggered into bed about 1 a.m. mumbling "we're going".

Pleased? Of course not – it wouldn't be cool to be pleased. Ruin our image.

The intervening months were also suitably reserved; my countdown being calculated in hours, minutes and seconds only during the last week. The hardest part of our preparations was the Herculean attempt to eat the contents of the freezer before we left. For once we managed it, but I wouldn't recommend sweet & sour cocktail sausages followed by 150 vol-au-vents (note to myself: must remember to use snacks bought for parties actually at the party). I didn't even start to write this until 2 weeks, 4 days, 9 hours and 15 minutes before our plane was due to take off.

**DATE:** *Wednesday, 14/8/85*

**TIME:** *23.30*

**PLACE:** *Bed, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey*

Less than 48 hours to go and we've just heard on the news the latest theory on the cause of the recent Japanese Airlines 747 crash – the tail could have fallen off. If that's so, all 747s are likely to be grounded. Just our luck – our first ever trip on a 747. So we're sitting here trying to figure out whether to pay the extra premium on the travel insurance to cover for delays due to mechanical failure.

**DATE:** *Friday, 16-17/8/85*  
**TIME:** *Various – depending on exact time zone*  
**PLACE:** *Somewhere between Bahrain & Singapore*

Today is the day, was my first thought on waking up at six o'clock this morning – we're actually going! But disappointingly I didn't feel too excited. So we locked up the house, turned off the gas, water & electricity and went to work. It wasn't until about 11 a.m. that I began to feel the four hours' sleep I got last night, and Alex (my assistant) commented, "You're not bouncing around like a demented kangaroo any more, what's the matter Eve?". It was then I realised just how excited I was.

Being uncharacteristically organised, we'd dumped the largest suitcases at the airport last night, so all I had to do on arrival was collect them and check in nice and early to get good seats. Aha, the best laid plans of mice & men... We'd forgotten about the bag John had taken into work. "I'm sorry madam, you can't check-in part of your baggage." Damn. Oh well, John should be here soon and it's still early. As usual John wasn't here soon. His characteristically elastic timescale stretched 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Still, we're on holiday so I didn't moan much. It was quite fun anyway, watching the multi-racial mêlée.



We're allocated a seat at the front of the plane and I thought an enormous reel of Sellotape would have been handy to stick the tail back on again – just in case. I could get to like flying Qantas, free booze throughout the trip, real knives and forks to eat your plastic food with and videos too. Mind you, I bet it's not 2010 or Beverley Hills Cop that we see. And I'm right with a choice between The Witness, Beverley Hills Cop and A Soldier's Story we get the latter. I knew it wouldn't be the one we'd heard of.

Actually, it turned out to be a pretty good film even though the write-up, as is often the case, would have put me off if I'd had the choice. Halfway through a 19-hour flight, racial prejudice in the deep south of the USA, prejudice within the forces to boot, doesn't really grab my interest.. But for once the filmmakers had got the recipe right.

I remember reading a book about Hiroshima when I was in my teens. I think it was by a guy called Karl Bruckner and was entitled 'The Day of the Bomb'. It was the reminiscences of a young lad many years later (ten I think) who's sitting at his sister's bedside as she dies of radiation poisoning. The chapter talking about the actual dropping of the bomb had an enormous effect on me. It merely stated the date, time and number of people killed. Far better than reams of detail.

## SINGAPORE SLINGS AT RAFFLES

**DATE:** *Saturday, 17/8/85*  
**TIME:** *23.00 local*  
**PLACE:** *Singapore*

Well, here we are lying on a double bed each, sipping our Southern Comfort, in the Boulevard Hotel, Singapore. This is the life! The first thing we did on arrival was to switch on the TV to see what programmes they show here. It's so interesting to see foreign television. Of the four stations two had William Shatner; in one he was Captain Kirk playing at being an American cop (T J Hooker) and in the other some army person from the American Civil War period. The only other English-speaking channel, had a group of women obviously doing a current affairs programme about women's rights and women's lib in Malaysia. The unusual factor in this panel was its composition – three female panellists and a male chairman.

**DATE:** *Sunday, 18/8/85*

Today we were tourists. Jimmy, Jenny and Johnny from Jetabout Tours took us first to the store in town with the biggest backhanders – but hell we got a free ride into town. Then we thought we'd take one of those dreadful guided tours – usually we avoid them like the plague, but with so little time here we could at least get a potted view of Singapore.

The most amazing thing about this place is the contrast. Or rather, the contrasts. Firstly there's the culture shock – here the distance from home is obvious as soon as you step outside the front door of the air-conditioned buildings. Never before have I felt such humidity – 36°C and about 90% humidity. And what do you see in this weird, alien environment? Modern skyscrapers, departmental stores and traffic driving on the 'right' side of the road (and by that I mean on the left). Not only that, but from every corner you hear the good ol' mother tongue.

So there's one contrast – a little bit of home in an alien world. The next is the Chinese factor – the Mandarin heard amongst the English, the oriental architecture hidden away round the corner, dwarfed but not daunted by the concrete, glass and stainless steel of a 20th century city. To a certain extent the 'familiarity' of it all made me embarrassed, especially as we toured the old colonial districts. How pompous of a nation to so emphatically leave its footprint deep into the roots of another culture.

I felt much happier in the older, eastern areas of the city. The Chinese temple was the most spectacular. Not in its physical appearance, scruffy is the best that can be said, but in its accessibility. For once being guided round like sedated sheep paid off, since we'd never have realised you can just walk into the temples at any time. I'm not a very religious person myself, but I do tend to feel more comfortable with religions that don't imply that worship is something special, private and outside the scope of everyday life. Under western Christianity we have to 'dress up' for church, going once a week for absolution. In this temple you just walk in when you feel like it - no closed doors or feeling of trespass, no proprietary 'God's House'. Whilst Jenny was explaining the powers of the various gods featured on the different altars, a woman was using

the fortune sticks, a keeper was laying out tables for the next day and a woman and her son put down their shopping bags to lay a small token of food for their ancestors. All of them carried on regardless of us. Plates of food were littered on every ledge, on the pavement outside and as we walked around the town, we saw many more. Not food for beggars, as I'd first thought – even though we hadn't actually seen any – but meals for ancestors' ghosts making their annual return to this world.

The next place on the whistle-stop tour was the Botanical Gardens and would you believe it, whilst we were there the heavens opened and we had first hand experience of a tropical rainstorm. I've never seen rain evaporating immediately it reaches the pavement – it looked like dry ice. We left rain at home but wherever we go we seem to take it with us. Egypt gets only about ten days rain a year and they got most of them when we were there.

Since it was still pouring down in the evening, we decided to eat in the hotel with George, a tame Aussie we met last night in the bar. We had hoped to 'go native' and eat out at one of the open-air markets, but the hotel, though not as foreign, was still interesting. Doing my usual trick of ordering whatever I've never heard of before, for dessert I had 'Shaved Ice with the Usual Trimmings' which turned out to be an enormous mountain of ice flakes with a sort of sweet sauce through it. Underneath were cubes of jelly, jellybeans, sweetcorn, red kidney bean jelly – the most amazing concoction. John didn't fancy any of it at all, but to be honest it didn't taste that bad. We're now back in our rooms and watching 'Cover Up'. Really unusual this oriental TV.

We're slowly being primed for our arrival in Australia – the flight was full of Australians and most of the people we seem to be bumping into here are Australians. In particular, Duncan and Elaine, on their way home after travelling around the world for about three months, and George, who has just come out of Perth at the start of his world tour – the first time he'd been out of his home State. I don't know how these Aussies can afford it. The most amazing thing about these three Australians was their astonishment at the concept of our wanting to go to Australia for a holiday. OK, we didn't admit to the real reason for our visit – explaining that would have been too complicated. Everyone seems to assume that if you're going to Australia you must be going to see relatives or something. And they actually said, "Nobody goes to Australia for a holiday." I wonder why this is?

**DATE: Monday, 19/8/85**

We had a phone call from Han at 9 this morning. John had been incredibly efficient before we left and telexed him, a business contact of John's firm, to let him know we'd be passing through, hoping he'd take the hint and act as our native guide. Unfortunately John forgot to say exactly when we'd be arriving! Still, we've made contact now and he's promised to take us for a 'proper' Szechwan meal, which should be fun.

We spent the day walking off our enormous breakfast. This is my favourite way of sightseeing, just walking the streets. Round the harbour, alleyways, markets, and main commercial centres – everywhere. Stopping, of course, for liquid refreshment every mile or so (the humidity, you know).

It was after one of these short sojourns that we made the acquaintance of the Merlion, an amazing national symbol for an amazing nation – a white lion with a fish's tail spitting into the sea.



John practised his bartering skills to great effect, and after only 1 hour I came away with a blouse, skirt and jacket, but without the tablecloth, dress, shawl, dressing-gown, silk and free gift they were trying to put together as a job lot. At last I could change my clothes, having only considered Australian winter when packing my wardrobe.

We'd had some practice of the art of haggling during our stay in Egypt, but here it is so much more comfortable. In Cairo I always felt a little apprehensive about bartering too strongly – not quite sure it would be taken in good part, no matter what the tourist guides said. Perhaps it was the language barrier, I don't know, but it wasn't always much fun. Singapore's a completely different matter, though. You still know the traders are out to get as much as they can from you, but somehow the feeling is of a chess game rather than a fistfight. When John succeeded in buying only what we'd come into the shop for, and for a price we felt reasonable, I sensed approbation from our opponents rather than antagonism. Mind you, John's always commenting on my fanciful imagination, so I could be talking out of my.... well, you know what I mean.

Returning to the hotel, feet killing me, we're now enjoying a nice ice cold Southern Comfort whilst watching a cookery programme, would you believe, describing Keema Curry Singapore style. John's reading the notes in the Singapore telephone directory on how to handle nuisance calls!

**DATE: Tuesday, 20/8/85**

We had a good night with Han yesterday. The food was nothing spectacular, about the standard of a London Szechwan, but the restaurateur was obviously one of Han's customers (his company makes the ranges and equipment for restaurant kitchens) and so we were treated to a guided tour backstage. Tell you one thing, I don't think I could ever order Sea Cucumber – not now I know what it looks like in the nude. Following a visit to a club/disco, we were escorted back into our hotel at 3 a.m. and the temperature was still in the 30s. After the air conditioned inside, it's like walking out into a fully centrally heated world. I've never experienced anything like it before. Now (11 a.m.) we're frantically trying to get packed because Han is going to take us to lunch for what he says is a typical Singapore curry. God knows what this means or what state we'll be in for the plane tonight. I wish we hadn't been so strenuous in our assurances last night that we really do like experimenting foodwise, and aren't in the slightest like the other visitors he's had from Britain who only trust steak & chips. It was the gleam in his eye when he said, 'If you're sure', that worries me.

Later that evening...

## SOUTHERN COMFORT IN A BORROWED GLASS

**DATE:** *Thursday, 22/8/85*

**TIME:** *03.00 Hrs.*

**PLACE:** *Victoria Hotel, Melbourne*

Well, we're on the plane, still alive and able to enjoy yet more Qantas hospitality. I really appreciate the friendliness of the stewards (surprisingly there are not many stewardesses, haven't they got many women in Australia?). John called the steward a few minutes ago for another glass of wine. Although it's only our second, I felt a bit embarrassed and jokingly said, "It's OK, we're not really alcoholics, just training". (I know it's an old joke, but the oldies are best since they've stood the test of time – that's my excuse anyway.) I think this tickled him, since at the end of the meal he asked, "Well, do you want a coffee, or a bottle of wine?" "Both", quips I, so both we get! That's what I call creature comforts. He's now gone off with my guidebook to Australia.

The lunch today was something else. True to his word, Han showed us the other side of Singapore. We were escorted to an eating emporium by Roger, Han's assistant and warned we'd be joined by the whole workforce – we got the feeling everyone wanted in on the act to see these mad English who were willing to abandon the safety of European Singapore. The first shock was no flocked wallpaper. It couldn't be an Indian restaurant without flocked wallpaper. White tiles from ceiling to floor just aren't a viable substitute. Then there were the Formica-topped tables instead of the usual paper over-tablecloths.

We sat down at the long canteen-style tables and watched as a square of banana-leaf was placed on the bare tabletop in front of each of us, a dollop of rice placed in the middle, and the various bowls of curry brought out. Iced sugar cane juice all round (looks like washing-up liquid) as we awaited the piece de resistance – fish head curry. Boy it lived up to its name – two whole fish heads, about 1ft across complete with eyes and all other accoutrements. Eating with our fingers was no problem, using a banana leaf as a plate was fun, but I must admit to refusing the greatest delicacy – the eyes – which are sucked out of the skull. Our faces must have been windows to our inner feelings as we watched this spectacle, because the brains weren't even offered; Han was given this honour. Despite this squeamishness it was the greatest curry I've eaten in my life, with no exceptions. Took me ages to get the yellow of the turmeric out of my fingernails though. Looked like I'd been dipping them in iodine.

After lunch we spent our last few hours in this enchanting place saying hello to new areas, and goodbye to those we'd previously visited. Once again it rained, and we were forced to shelter in the famous Long Bar at Raffles Hotel – the home of the Singapore Sling. A last reminder of the luxurious lifestyle led by our colonial ancestors; soaking in the same atmosphere enjoyed by Somerset Maugham as we sipped our cocktails – an atmosphere redolent of affluence and serenity, but no air conditioning. Give me the modern, plastic, air-conditioned Boulevard Hotel any day!

Three days wasn't long enough. We saw some sights, tried some unusual foods, bartered for some purchases, had a slight insight into the real Singapore, but didn't really get to know the place. Must go back again for much longer. Now we're winging our way overnight to Australia – a mere 9-hour flight. It's amazing how quickly you can get blasé. Before Friday, we'd blanched at the thought of the flight across the Atlantic, but now, seasoned travellers with all of one 19-hour flight under our belts, 9 hours is a mere hop and a skip. Watch out Australia, here we come.

My initial impression of this strange place that has monopolised my thoughts and stretched my imagination for so long was one of DISAPPOINTMENT.

Disappointment number 1 came even before we'd stepped onto Australian soil. "Ladies and gentlemen", the pilot had said, "we are beginning our approach to Melbourne, the local time is 6.00 a.m. and the outside temperature is 1 degree C." Hell, why couldn't the Aussiecon committee have chosen Singapore – it was at least 30°C when we left there only nine hours before.

Disappointment on arrival – no bear hug from Justin Ackroyd, my local friendly GUFF administrator. Having suffered the indignity of being sprayed against undesirable alien freeloaders, I was looking forward to having my ribs cracked in that inimitable Ackroyd style. What is this spraying malarkey anyway? There we were, all ready for disembarkation after landing when two immigration officers came on and proceeded to spray us all with some sort of aerosol. The excuse given was that Australia has to be extra careful about importation of unwanted diseases etc since it's an island. What on earth is Britain? A minor irritation – the spraying, not Britain (they could at least make it smell nice, or better still not at all). Of more import as we filed through the arrivals door in Melbourne airport was: a) were we being met?; b) if yes, by whom?; c) if no, how do we find the bus and do we know where to get off? Our first sight was a sea of faces, none of them belonging to Justin or anyone else we knew, but just as panic was about to set in, deliverance was at hand in the shape of a little sign, way, way at the back of the crowd, that simply stated GUFF. This was how we made the acquaintance of those life-savers and all-round good people Clive Newall and Lync. Once again, as with Sally Beasley's initial letter way back in January, I was... I don't know... humbled sounds too trite, honoured too pompous... but here were two people we'd never heard of who'd been willing to get up at the crack of dawn and drive all the way out to the airport to welcome us. That, for me, is one of the essences of fandom.

Disappointment nos. 3, 4 and 5 came during the drive into Melbourne. As we chatted with our chauffeurs, John and I were peering out of the windows to ensure we didn't miss a single nuance of this strange country. After all, this was not only the farthest we'd been away from home, it was about as far as we could go without starting back again (well, almost). After about 5 minutes we turned to each other and almost simultaneously cried, "It's the M4 from Heathrow to London!". If you looked carefully differences were apparent, house styles & vegetation etc, but the general impression was unmistakably British. To add to this feeling of déjà vu, we were driving on the 'right' side of the road, and fell foul of an identical traffic jam to that which typifies the M4 as it nears London. That was disappointment no. 4 – with all the wide open spaces we'd heard about I'd never imagined that there would still be traffic jams. Then no. 5 – on the horizon we could

eventually espy some skyscrapers, shrouded in grey cloud – Melbourne? Surely not, too reminiscent for my liking of the view of London I used to have commuting the 50 miles from the coast each day – before the pollution lobbyists started getting somewhere. One of the newest and least densely populated countries of the world and they have to copy our mistakes!

As we swept into Melbourne proper my disappointments began to fade. Now this was different. Wide streets – at least twice the width of London's main thoroughfares; widely spaced office blocks so you don't even notice the height; gentle, if not sedate traffic; and trams! We passed Minotaur Books, to discover it's just a bookshop. It's funny how places you hear about seem to develop an almost mythological aura, and a common-or-garden bookshop, a slightly upmarket Forbidden Plant, somehow is not what I expected.

These downbeat thoughts were swept from my mind, though, as we pulled up outside the Victoria Hotel. We were here. The usual pre-con adrenaline started flowing and the 1-hour's sleep on the plane seemed like ten. We were at a convention. The reception area was strewn with bags, bodies, porters – yep, we were at a con. Even the similarity with any British con hotel couldn't dampen the excitement. Our first sight as we entered through the doors was Bob Shaw! The magic had started! (It's very pleasant not to feel obliged to add the mandatory proviso – the real one – since no-one here knows the fake.) Poor Clive and LynC, they must have wondered what on earth had happened. There they were, official welcoming party for these strangers, who suddenly start hanging round the necks (well, the female half of the duo did) of strange men and then have the audacity to introduce them to him, in their own home town. They braved it well, and then again when the Conspiracy Committee in the guise of Chris Donaldson, Paul Oldroyd, Jan Huxley and Chris Hughes strolled by. That magic again; we'd been in the country two hours, at the convention for 30 minutes, and here were seven Brits standing around chatting as if we were all back at a UK convention.

Bob warned us that no hotel rooms were ready yet, but the poor overworked lad on reception couldn't even confirm that one was booked for us. No room, no Justin and no sleep. Great start. Clive and LynC had to leave and so we decided to kill some time by breakfasting in the coffee shop next door (never known a hotel without its own breakfast catering facilities) and swap aeroplane anecdotes with Paul & Chris. Unfortunately the shop was just closing, so we repaired to the coffee shop in the hotel, meeting up with Terry Hughes from the USA. It still amazes me, here we were, spanning three continents and chatting as if nothing unusual had happened at all. Since we still didn't have a room, after breakfast we accompanied the Conspiracy mob to the Southern Cross where they were due to Conspire some more, and I wanted to get my hands on Justin.

One of the most depressing places in the world must be a con hotel during set-up when you yourself are not involved in the organisation. A large hotel is the same lonely place the world over; gophers rushing around purposefully look the same whatever their nationality; the hanging around waiting for something to happen is as boring in Melbourne as London.

Eventually Justin was found and bearhug delivered, but not until I'd first treated Carey Handfield as if he were a complete stranger. Admittedly we'd only met him a couple of times on his trip to England last year but I should have known him. It's weird how difficult it is to recognise people when you're either not expecting to see them, or you're meeting them out of context. Back at the airport, Clive had given us a note from Justin scribbled on a Minotaur bag detailing his likely whereabouts and we'd made enquiries at the ops room for directions. A very nice guy had provided these and added that Justin was there at the moment. Strange, I thought, how did he know we were looking for the big J? Must have been our English accent. He reminded me of somebody but I couldn't at that time place the face. It wasn't until quite some time later that I realised it had been Carey.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in the usual half-life that typifies pre-registration at any large con – the aimless wandering around waiting for something positive to happen whilst all around is purposeful rush. A hotel room materialised for us, so something was looking up. Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna were met and assignments for dinner made and then the registration desks opened. I'd missed the chaos of Seacon '79 registration, so this was my first experience of the birth of a worldcon. All looked well organised, fans were wandering around with large brown envelopes, tables were positioned here there and everywhere, each manned by people pawing over computer printouts. All very impressive. We tacked onto the end of one of the several long queues in front of the registration desk, only to find we were not only in the slowest moving line, but also the wrong one! The committee had very conscientiously split registrations alphabetically, and had labelled the various positions. Unfortunately the signs were tacked to the tablecloths hanging down the front of the tables, thereby ensuring that they would be obscured as soon as one person was being processed.

As we successfully neared the front of the queue – the correct one this time – we had the unexpected pleasure of another tri-continental link up as we saw the familiar face of Joyce Scrivner sitting behind the desk. In the general mêlée, faces were put to many of the Aussie names I knew – far too many to relate. In particular, we made the acquaintance of Marc Ortlieb, who previously had merely been a name and a voice on the telephone. On meeting him we experienced that sinking feeling of realising people had actually taken us seriously when we'd offered to 'do anything'. This was followed by panic when I found out that my first panel was to be in the main con hall immediately after the opening ceremony ("How to enjoy this Convention"), and that John was to be moderator (their version of Chairman) on a panel which consisted of people he'd never met before supposedly providing a "Survivors Guide to Room Parties".

And then all of a sudden it was evening and we were standing on a street corner with the two J's and Grant Stone, who hails from Perth, deep in important discussions on the topic of where to eat. Just as we had decided on the Golden Orchard in Little Bourke Street we saw in the distance an apparition singularly like a Colin Fine struggling under the weight of his luggage. That ol' fan magic was working again – we'd last seen Colin at the One Tun in London, and here he was, arriving from

Adelaide in a famished condition at exactly the right time to accompany us on our first foray into the unknown realms of the Australian culinary arts. Well, Chino-Aussie actually given our destination in China Town. On this expedition John and I discovered our first real cultural differences, the good and the bad. The good delighted us – the BYO (Bring Your Own – alcohol) restaurant. These exist in the UK, but are not the norm, occurring on the rare occasions when a restaurant can only get a licence for liquor to be consumed on the premises, not for sale as well. Given the sometimes exorbitant prices for wine in restaurants, it is not unusual for the booze bill to be as high, if not higher, than the food element when a group of us go out in the UK. Here, the prices in the Bottleshop (see how quickly I picked up the local language – so much more descriptive than Off Licence!) at first glance looked the same as at home, as did the restaurant prices. But at A\$2 per £1 I realised how much I was going to enjoy this trip.

Having delighted in the novelty of BYO, we concentrated on the important business of the evening – eating. By about 9.30 we had cleared all the plates in front of us and were just deliberating on a further order when the waiter pre-empted us with the news that we should order anything else immediately since the kitchen was closing. **AT 9.30 P.M.!!** Admittedly, we did manage to stay until 10.30, but by that time all chairs apart from ours were up on the tables, the waiter was wearing his anorak and had already conspicuously taken black rubbish bags from the kitchen out through the front of the restaurant.

This was dumfounding! I know John and I moan occasionally because last orders in many London restaurants are about 11 p.m., which restricts the choice if you want to eat after the cinema or theatre, but that's mainly because we're looking for a cuisine other than Chinese, Greek or traditional steak house. It would have been more understandable if we'd been out in the backwoods, but we were in the centre of one of the largest cities on this continent. If this timing is the norm here in Australia we're going to have problems. After all, eating out is a social occasion to be savoured over several hours, not a mere re-stoking of the boiler.

Cogitating on this unexpected hurdle, we made our way back to the Victoria to meet up with Justin. We'd seen very little of him during the day since he'd been tied up with organising the book room, but he'd promised to spare us some time in the evening. I mustn't be too harsh on poor Justin, he was good company during the evening as we sat on the stairs outside the closed hotel bar – closed even to residents! Yet another peculiarity, they don't seem to have heard down here that one of the privileges of being a resident is the ability to get alcohol at any time of the day or night. OK, the more inconvenient the hour the heavier the supplement, but at 11.05 p.m. there should be no problem.

Since there appeared no way that the hotel would be persuaded to take our money, we decided to drink our own duty free. We sat around chatting for a while with the people there until Bob Shaw and Charlotte Procter turned up. Bob didn't want to sit on the steps so Bob, Charlotte, John and I went over to sit in the lounge area. Amazingly the bar staff were perfectly happy to supply us with clean glasses, which can't be bad – the next best thing to keeping the bar open. We sat around talking, plying Bob



& Charlotte with our Southern Comfort and Canadian Club.

The cast list was ever-changing, as is typical of fan nish gatherings. Justin came, then Clive and

LynC. We sat around drinking and chatting some more.

The cast changed again as Clive & LynC left, to be replaced by a certain Ian Nicholls, and finally Justin departed. It was only an hour ago, but even now I



can't remember what we were talking about. Why is it that the most interesting of conversations are always the hardest to recall. Charlotte captivated me, coming from Birmingham, Alabama, she has this amazing Southern Drawl and has a mean way with an anecdote. The more she drinks the funnier her anecdotes get and the better she tells them. Again that ol' fan magic, a meeting with someone new who almost immediately becomes an old friend.

We eventually rolled up to bed at 3 a.m. and now it's 4, making it 42 hours with 1 hour of sleep – not quite the preparation I'd planned for the convention, but I wouldn't have had it any other way. I think from my experiences so far as a fan fund winner – all one day of them – administrators shouldn't get involved in the organisation of a convention when they are host to their counterpart. It's frightening to arrive in a strange country, especially one like Australia where there's so little contact through fanzines etc. You feel you've got to meet as many people as possible in an attempt to repay the trust and honour bestowed by those who've parted with their pennies to send you there, and a native guide becomes almost imperative during the first day or so. Having seen the care taken by the UK TAFF administrators, in particular Rob Hansen when Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden were over, I had anticipated similar help from Justin. Conversely, too much organisation can somewhat restrict the chances to meet people. A certain amount of freedom is necessary to allow the candidate(s) to see all parts of the fandom they're visiting, not just that part inhabited by the local administrator.

Justin was so involved in organising the book room in general, and Minotaur's table in particular, that he had no time to relax at all. John and I were basically left to find our own way, which is OK once the con has begun since there's a certain structure provided by the official and social programme, but during pre-registration it's hell. I must blame myself as well, though, there should be no fault attached to people's belief in the persona of self-confidence used to cover for exactly the opposite.

Thinking back over the whole day, if my early disappointments are indicative of those to be experienced during the rest of our trip, it's going to be pretty bloody good!!

## NO DRINKS IN THE SOUTHERN CROSS

**DATE:** *Thursday, 22/8/85*  
**TIME:** *13.30 Hrs*

We've made it a 100% record now. Woke up this morning and it's raining. It rained when we went to Cairo, rained in Singapore and now it's raining in Melbourne! I wonder what it's doing at home?

We started off this morning with what was supposed to be a quick meeting with Bob Shaw, Charlotte Procter and Jim Gilpatrick down in the bar of the Victoria. John had already begun worrying about his panel timetabled for 5 this afternoon with Peter Toluzzi, Charlotte and two people we've never heard of, Art Widner and Richard Hryckiewicz. I was doing my best not to panic over mine. Charlotte and Justin were two of my co-panellists (with the same Art Widner as moderator) and we'd had a brief discussion last night but given the quantity of liquor consumed that could hardly be deemed serious preparation. Still, John was more important, so I let him worry whilst the rest of us tried to make sense of the Programme Book – all 40 pages of it! The logistics are going to be hell, even worse than the 'three-ring circus' Pete Weston had been so keen on for Seacon '79. Not only are there nine streams of programme, but they are situated all over Melbourne. Well, perhaps a slight exaggeration, but in the Southern Cross – the main con hotel – there's Australis S, Australis N, Ballroom A and the VIP; then there're the Fan Lounge and Art Show down the road in the Victoria Hotel; about a 10 minute walk in the opposite direction from the Southern Cross is the Sheraton which is hosting the more media-orientated items in the Banquet Room, Treasury and Board Rooms; the film programme is in the State Film Centre located another long-short walk away; and finally there's 'Other'. All this means we're either going to get incredibly fit as we dash from one to the other, or we're going to see



very little of the programme. No-one would take bets on which of the two alternatives would win out.

Jim Gilpatrick's niece – talks with a Texan drawl and has the figure of a cuddly teddy bear – what more could any girl ask for? More than you'd get with Peter Toluzzi, that's for sure. John managed to get his panel members together – Charlotte, Peter Toluzzi and Richard Hryckiewicz (luckily he assured us he's known as Dick Smith, although he was pretty patient with John as he – John that is – practised the pronunciation). He, too, seemed an interesting guy, but I must admit my first impressions of Peter Toluzzi aren't too good. I remember Lucy Huntzinger being somewhat miffed with his attitude when he was over in the States but I don't think that tainted

my opinion. He just seemed the sort who was only interested in what he had to say, and not much else. Bob Shaw's dry wit might not be to everyone's taste, but Peter seemed too impatient for Bob to shut up so that he could get on with the anecdote he wanted to relate. Perhaps I'm wrong, I hope so, but even though he said all the right friendly words, the feeling wasn't there and he left me with a strong impression of oiliness.

It's 1.40 now, the opening ceremonies are scheduled to start at 2p.m. over in the Southern Cross and I'm worried. John's taken all morning organising his panel, which isn't due to start until 5 o'clock this afternoon, leaving no time for me to get prepared. Hell, it's not as if he's in the main con hall like me, his is only a fanroom panel and nobody expects them to be as professional as a main programme item – it's just not fair. I bet everyone stays after the opening ceremony and I just know I'll dry up. He should have known that and been a bit more considerate. Now there's no time left to even meet Art Widner. It's going to be awful, I just know it. Why, oh why, do I have to do it?



**DATE:** *Friday, 23/8/95*  
**TIME:** *04.25 Hrs*

We made it – baptism complete. Both John and I have made our first Australian public appearance (well, two for me actually if you count the opening ceremony) and we're still alive to tell the tale. I've just replayed the tape from this morning and I was feeling pretty sorry for myself back then. In fact, I was very near tears when we got to the Southern Cross since I was herded into the main con hall so quickly that I had no chance at all to arrange even a two-minute chat with Art Widner. In my usual way I began to feel even more hard-done-by and was incredibly short-tempered with John, but luckily he's pretty even tempered, and knows me too well to rise to the bait. Or perhaps he realised how selfish he'd been and was feeling guilty. What the hell, it doesn't matter now.

Instead of shuffling to the back of the hall we were shepherded to the front row, where I was ordered to stay since as a 'celebrity' I was to be forced to sit up on the stage with the real big names; Gene Wolf (Guest of Honour), Robbie & Marty Cantor (DUFF winners – USA/Australia), Nigel Rowe (FFANZ winner – New Zealand/Australia), Bob Shaw (Shaw Fund winner!), Ted White (Fan Guest of Honour) and David Grigg (Chairman).

This notoriety still sits strangely on me – I'm no-one special – but it does make you feel good. Almost as good as when people honestly compliment your fanzine. The only drawback is that if you're stuck behind a table on the platform, you can't sneak out early if the proceedings get boring, nor can you sleep, make rude comments to your neighbours, or indulge in any of the other pastimes so useful for survival on these occasions.

The convention was opened by the Minister for the Arts, Race Matthews who not only is a science fiction reader himself, but provided continuity in that he had opened Aussiecon 1 a decade before. His was a reasonably interesting speech, as speeches go, detailing his



background as an SF reader which paralleled that of most of us. What was interesting, though, was his professionalism. As a politician, and a Minister of State (I wonder if they are called that here?), he obviously knows about speech-writing, and definitely has access to numerous researchers, if not speech writers. His talk was peppered with references to magazines,

books etc, but instead of saying, "I think it was in a New Worlds about 1965", as most of us would, he had exact issue, date, content and editorial details. Quite a performance.

I must admit to only listening with one ear, however, since the majority of my attention was drawn by the audience. As usual, once I'm up in front of a horde, my knees stop knocking and the butterflies disappear, so the sight of what must have been about 1,000 people all seemingly staring at me wasn't so frightening. What was awe-inspiring was the realisation that I could see not a single glass in a single hand. Not even a soft drink appeared to have been brought. The lack of people wandering around with a drink (alcoholic or otherwise) in their hands had already impinged at registration and whilst milling around before the opening ceremony, but I'd thought it due to my lack of observation. Now I could study carefully from my vantage point, and I still couldn't see a beverage being imbibed. I don't think I have ever seen this at a UK convention, in fact I'm sure I haven't.

Immediately after the opening ceremony my first panel started (luckily to a much diminished audience) and when it came to my turn to speak, I mentioned this point; that I was the only person in the room at that time with a drink. Afterwards someone came up and explained that it was because of the peculiar licensing laws in Victoria, which make it illegal to be seen drinking in public, and hotels are public places. So apparently people don't wander around with a pint in their hands. (Sorry, 'midi' or 'pot' – I can't get used to ordering a 'pot' of beer, it just doesn't sound right.) How very peculiar, if it's right, but that still doesn't explain the lack of soft drinks.

Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself. I had a chance to make the acquaintance of Art Widner in the hiatus whilst the majority of the audience were leaving, but no longer felt any panic for that very reason – the majority of the audience were gone and it would be far less of an ordeal to sit and chat to the 50 or so that remained. What the panel said I can't really remember – the usual platitudes about going up and actually talking to people rather than expect the 'big names' etc to pick li'll ol' you out of the crowd. We chatted for about 45 minutes, none of the audience voted on our performance with their feet, lots asked questions. The panel title, 'How to Enjoy this Convention', had obviously appealed mainly to the first-timers, which was as it should have been since that's who it was aimed at. Charlotte explained her rule of 2 and 6 for survival – 2 meals and 6 hours of sleep a day which sounded good, but very difficult to meet if you're actually



successful in your attempts to enjoy the convention (the sleep quotient anyway). At the end about ten people came up to chat to us which was very encouraging, but having stressed how people would be only too willing to talk if you had the courage to approach them, I had to break my own word since John and I were forced to make a dash down to the Victoria Hotel for his panel. Thank God it'd stopped raining.

This was to be our first expedition to the Fan Room in the Victoria, and I choose the word 'expedition' with great care. Following directions, we started down the corridor at the side of the lifts and were met with well-positioned signs. Down the corridor, and round the bend, "Don't worry, you're going in the right direction", the sign reassured; down the stairs, along a corridor, through a couple of double doors, "Still on the right track"; down some more stairs, "Almost there", and hey presto – a Fan Room, deep in the bowels of the hotel, low-ceilinged, non-air conditioned and adorned with water pipes. On arrival we realised the signs had not necessarily been foresight on the part of the committee, more their own version of the piece of string to ensure a safe exit! To be perfectly honest I can't remember much of John's panel, I was still coming down from my own, but being a 'Survivors Guide to Room Parties' it consisted of the usual fannish competition to outdo each other in the anecdote stakes. I remember forgetting to take any photos of John in his hour of glory, and being chewed out by him afterwards; "I remembered to take photographs of you", he complained in that little-boy hurt voice he uses with such success. I did remember to switch on the tape recorder, though. Peter Toluzzi continued to reinforce my first impressions, again appearing more interested in his own anecdotes than those of the other panel members. Considering the devious route there, a fair-sized audience attended and participated.

Afterwards we made our way back to the Southern Cross to arrange a small group for dinner. Unfortunately our plans went somewhat awry – I blame John, if he hadn't been so long round the bottle shop getting supplies for the room parties, it wouldn't have given the chance to Alyson Abramowitz, Rick Sellick (Chairman St Louis in 88 bid), Ben Yallow, Chase Jager, David Taylor (Cincinnati in

88), Debbie Woodruff, Lise Eisenberg, Greg, Allan and Gayle time to join Justin, Jim Gilpatrick and us. I know Charlotte Procter had extolled the virtue of tacking onto groups on their way to dinner as one of the ways of meeting people, but I don't quite think this was what she was meaning. The trouble with such a large group is that it's impossible to hold a conversation across a table large enough to seat all. Lise spent most of the time updating me on latest developments in New York – well, what else would you expect in Melbourne? The worse time came as the bill arrived. At home, if a large group go out, tradition is that the bill is merely split evenly. Not so here, apparently. After 25 minutes Lise had still not managed to work out the individual bills for the eight of us on one side of the table (major disadvantage of dimly lit restaurants – solar powered calculators don't work). John proceeded to throw money in to make up the balance and eventually we were released. I think we'll try to keep our dinner parties small for the rest of the convention!

The one benefit arising from the delay caused by 'The Great Calculation' was that we missed Marty Cantor's 'Jellybean Party'. Whilst waiting for the pre-opening ceremony to start, we'd had the chance to meet Marty and Robbie, although more Marty than Robbie. I mustn't make snap judgements, but I'm not sure about Marty. He appears a little too like Peter Toluzzi for my liking, saying all the right things, but with a certain amount of condescension. I'll have to wait and see if my first impressions are proved wrong, but neither John nor I were particularly heartbroken at being forced to miss what, according to Marty, is a worldcon tradition and the event to attend.

Arriving back at the Southern Cross, raring to find the room parties and meet more people, we started wandering the corridors. It was reminiscent of the maze at Hampton Court – miles of identical corridors, groups of lost people exchanging queries as they passed. Not the Hampton Court query of "Where's the exit", but a fannish version, "Where are the room parties? What's happening?" At one stage we met Ted White on his way over to the Victoria to see if things were better there.

Eventually the native drums told of a publisher's room party, and in desperation we went in search of it. Randall Flynn, a native Aussie we'd known for several years during his sojourn on UK shores, was sitting outside. Having glimpsed the crowd inside the room (seemingly the only room party at the con, it was bound to be somewhat full) we joined Randall in the corridor. It sounds ridiculous, but even though he's been around UK fandom for several years, we had to come all the way to Melbourne to get a chance to talk to him for any length of time. He's an excellent raconteur when he's in the mood, and luckily he was in that mood.

I mentioned in passing that I was lifting up every toilet seat, just in case; I'd seen Clive James's 'The Return of the Flash of Lightning', and had no intention of providing a free meal for a black widow, funnel web or any other foreign spider. He kindly reassured me that winter was not a favourite time for spiders, and continued with a dissertation on other Oz fauna. Three in particular. First there was the unicorn possum, a flying possum similar to a flying squirrel. The unusual aspect of this little marsupial is its bony horn which could be lethal if a person was

caught out in the bush without a hard hat as a result of its habit of gliding down from the trees at low level. According to Randall, ancient aborigine skulls were being found with distinctive holes, smaller at one side of the skull than the other, which apparently is the typical trademark of these horns.

Next he told us about the Murray River cod which, not surprisingly, is a large fish with an enormous mouth and great teeth that lives in the Murray River. This is fine since no-one does very much in the Murray River, but when it's been raining heavily, the river level rises and the fish can get onto some of its many bridges. This means anyone walking over the bridges has to be very careful because the fish can take off the bottom half of a leg before you know what's happened.

By this time Bill & Mary Burns had joined us, listening as avidly and disbelievingly as we were, especially when Randall got onto the third animal – the tree kangaroo! Apparently this is a normal, though small, kangaroo; feet just like its larger cousins', not particularly made for an arboreal existence; a tail just like an ordinary kangaroo's, not prehensile like a monkey's. Obviously this animal has not been designed for a safe existence in the trees – even the normal small front paws aren't useful for very much. It's not surprising, therefore, that the major cause of death is falling out! We all laughed, of course, which was Randall's intention, but then he surprised us by saying that one of the three was actually true! *(See end of the book for correct answer.)*

Bill Burns retaliated with the hoop snake which, when threatened, would curl itself up into a ring by putting its tail in its mouth. It would then roll down any slope very quickly, uncoiling like a spring once sufficient momentum had been gained and thereby leap up into the air. If any hapless soul was within reach, it would wrap itself round their leg and they would only realise what had happened as they felt their leg being pulled!

This was too much, so we decided on a change of scene and raided the Minneapolis in '73 bid party up on the 15th floor. Previous reports had said it was unbearably crowded, but luckily the numbers had thinned somewhat by the time we arrived. Whilst standing around chatting with the ubiquitous Conspiracy Committee, I again fell foul of the 'good' advice I had given earlier on my panel. A little Australian guy – I can't remember his name, came from the Canberra area I think – wanted to hear my impressions of Australia. It was his first convention and he knew two people there so far. He'd listened to what I'd said about coming up and talking to people and thought he'd try it on me. He had got it right, too. From his open-ended question I began to expound, providing him with my considered opinion based on the whole of 43 hours I'd spent in his country. In mid flow I became aware of a disconcerting habit he had which almost stopped me dead. I managed to continue for a while, but soon it got the better of me and I just had to make my excuses and go. Which was a shame, I hope I didn't seem too unfriendly, because he was quite sweet. The trouble was he mouthed the last few words of each sentence a split second after I'd finished saying them. It was really odd. To make things worse, he wasn't merely mouthing the words, he was repeating them quietly to himself. It was similar to the faint echo you get sometimes when you're

on a long distance call. Once I'd noticed it just couldn't ignore it, so I ran.

I went off on a hunt for John but found Colin Fine instead. I was just bemoaning the fact that John had disappeared with my bottle of wine, and Colin was denying any knowledge of his whereabouts, when John grabbed me by the ankle. He was sitting at our very feet. Quite



observant is our Colin (and me, of course)! I joined him, Thyme editors Roger Weddall and Peter Burns plus a small group sitting on the floor and again had one of those typically fannish wide-

ranging conversations that are impossible to describe, even if you can recall all the topics covered. I don't know what sort of impression I gave; I wasn't drunk, no way was I anywhere near drunk at that stage, but I was in a very happy mood for some reason. I'd felt low earlier and perhaps the pendulum was swinging back now that the panels and worries were over and done with until tomorrow. The delight at finding a room party which wasn't too crowded so that we could sit down on the floor in comfort had a lot to do with it. Whatever the reason I was in a good mood which means I was talkative, I was bouncy, and I fear I regarded myself as the life and soul of the party. I hope not, because I know my limitations as a raconteur, and without that skill the tendency is to sound overbearing. It's too late to worry about that now – the damage, if there was any, is done. Perhaps it wasn't so bad anyway, John says he thought I was merely rising to the level of my novelty value.

Since all around were native Australians, the conversation centred on differences and similarities both in fandom and ordinary life. We explained about TAFF and the write-in campaign for Martha Beck which led on to the topic of Jim Barker and SEFF (Sweden-England Fan Fund).

The Martha Beck episode was based around fears of one-sided ballot swamping for a write-in candidate; Jim was a write-in candidate who actually won following two-sided ballot swamping (in both the host and sending countries). One of the official candidates – Steve Green – had started muttering 'Martha Beck, Martha Beck' darkly under his breath but Jim was being quite fair; not wishing to steal Steve's thunder he'd offered to share SEFF with him – Jim'd take the trip to Sweden, and Steve could be the administrator afterwards.

From fan politics we strayed onto Australian politics of which we knew nothing, so for once I was quiet; that led to differences between the Australian and English legal systems, especially in relation to women's lib – you name it, we talked about it. At some stage Justin joined the group, and I was pleased to see he was much happier than earlier – obviously the book room organisation had been getting him down a bit.

It was around this time I fell in love with Roman Orszanski

who introduced himself with the words, "What a lovely accent"! I've never had anybody say that to me before. Then he requested me to, "Say some more". This is what happens to suave, sophisticated John Jarrold in New York, it's not what happens to me in Australia. I went all coy – I know this may be hard to believe, but I got completely tongue-tied. After an opening gambit like that, what else could I do but take this gentleman to my heart, even if he did fall asleep in the middle of some of my funniest stories.

Towards the end of the room party we'd collected Ted White who'd come back from the Victoria as there was even less happening over there, and Bob Shaw who was always around where there was alcohol. Jim Gilpatrick wandered in and out of our conversation at various times. And then Joyce Scrivner decided it was time for the room party to finish so we started to make our way back to the Victoria. En route we picked up another follower in the shape of Eric Lindsay which made the group Eric, John, Roman, Ted, an Australian (somebody Boot, Bob Boot I think), me, Jim and Bob Shaw.

Somewhere along the way John realised he'd still got the meal vouchers the convention very kindly supplied to moderators. This was a novel idea – instead of having a hospitality suite for panel members to meet, the committee had organised vouchers for use at the local 24-hour Pancake House. Each moderator was supplied with sufficient for his/her panel, and could then make arrangements for discussions over free coffee and pancakes. The only flaw was in the logistics. The Pancake House was a little too far from the Southern Cross to make these meetings convenient, but at 2 in the morning it seemed the best idea in the world.

Talk about chalk and cheese, last night we were bemoaning the early closing of restaurants, but finding somewhere to have pancakes at that hour is something we could not do in London. I don't think we could find anywhere to eat at that time, except maybe a private club of some sort, or a motorway service station. But who wants to eat there? Anyway we gorged ourselves on pancakes and coffee but unfortunately they weren't licensed. Bob Shaw, never one to imbibe soft drinks when alcohol was available, tried Eric Lindsay's overproof rum. I don't know whether it was the hour, or the latitude, but that's the first time I've seen Bob beaten. Mixed with coffee he could just about stomach it, but that only proved his stamina and years of hard training.

Eventually John and I made it back to our room; he's writing up his notes as I dictate this, though he's a little behind the times since he's still in Singapore. After a cup of tea we are just about to turn out the lights for the so-called early night we'd promised Randall Flynn; it's now 5.00 a.m.! One day down, another four to go before Aussiecon II's finished. If the rest follow today's pattern I'm going to need a holiday afterwards. All this enjoyment can be very harmful to your health – good conventions ought to have a Government Health Warning.

So far the con has lived up to my expectations – not the organisation, or the programme, they aren't central to my enjoyment, the people are. These Aussies may not appear to value fanzine activity as highly as we do in the UK, but they still have the essential fannish qualities and are 'real'

fans in my book. It was definitely worth the trip out here.

Roll on tomorrow (or to be precise, later today)!

## HAM COLESLAW AND GREEN CHARTREUSE?

**DATE:** Friday 23/8/85  
**TIME:** 11.00 Hrs

Before we go off to the convention again, time for a few more initial impressions of this familiarly strange land.

Melbourne is cold, a sort of wet spring, and yet we see people wandering around in shirts and blouses – so Justin isn't the only one who is disgustingly hale and hardy. When he stayed with us he was always in shorts and I knew then that these Ozzies had some obnoxious habits – but living in a land renowned for its sun, you'd think they could have the common decency to feel the cold at least a little. Where is this sunny, warm climate that we've been promised?

As for the hotel, it's small and has obviously seen more prestigious days, but has retained some remnants of its previous grandeur. Someone told me yesterday that this area of Melbourne used to be the red light district, and the Victoria was the only safe haven for the country folk who came in for their 'big city' shopping trips – obviously the habit hasn't died yet.

Both days so far we've come down at lunchtime to get our breakfast and found the coffee lounge full of octogenarians (complete with purple hair rinses – well not the men, they don't have the hair) having their coffee and cake.

The only trouble with breakfasting at lunchtime in the lounge is the menu. Today I had cheese and ham croissant with bean and black olive salad while John consumed ham coleslaw with brie. It fills a hole but a rather peculiar breakfast.

Listening to the tape I made last night, I think I may have given the impression that no drink was to be seen around this con. Not quite so. At room parties people wander around with a bottle in their hands just like at home; except for one idiot wearing a bath robe, clutching his room party bottle – green chartreuse – yuk. That's something you don't see very often back in Blightey, thank goodness. Can you imagine what his mouth must be like next morning? Or perhaps it's better not to. (Later I found out that this was my first exposure to Julian Warner).

## CHAMPAGNE AND A CUP OF BLEACH!

We started our second fun-packed day with a trip to the fanroom. Well, it's in the same hotel and that way we could get our fannish fix to provide the strength to face the world

outside and the trek up hill to the Southern Cross.

Sitting outside was Marty Cantor who had been banned from the fanroom itself since it was a designated no-smoking area. As we were passing the time of day he was moved on again because the delicate fumes from his aromatic tobacco were still drifting into the room and choking the inhabitants.

Like lemmings throwing themselves off the edge of a cliff (though apparently they're not supposed to do that in real life) we followed him up to the lounge for a chat. It didn't take long for me to form an opinion about this person who had been voted the best representative of American fandom.

We decided a drink would be rather pleasant, but found it wasn't permitted to take glasses out of the bar to the lounge area. Another of these funny Australian laws – the licence to sell alcoholic beverages is only for certain areas and the lounge isn't one of them. For a nation renowned for their drinking prowess, they sure make it hard for a person to sit down and enjoy a convivial chat over a pot or two. So the drinks were left on the bar, which worked out quite well; after a few words with Marty out in the lounge we'd dash back to the bar again for another few sips and return to hear yet more pearls of wisdom imparted to John on such topics as how he (John) could raise money for GUFF (*remember, I was the GUFF winner, John was just a freeloader!*) – it was such a new, young fan fund, you see, and didn't have the same depth of experience as DUFF; how to produce a Hugo-nominated fanzine; and lots, lots more. Eventually we managed to drag ourselves away to plan what I was to say on my next panel – Regional Differences in Fandom.



The moderator, Paul Stevens, had a superb idea to get us relaxed – he turned up with a bottle of champagne and

champagne flutes for the panelists. Normally I don't like champagne, but as you can't get booze around this place I happily sipped away at it. I think this is a tradition we ought to copy back in the UK.

As for the panel discussion, well Marty Cantor told us a lot about his version of fandom. Robbie, having recovered from the 1-minute mile required to get between the different venues, elaborated on the Canadians. Nigel Rowe and I were occasionally allowed our ten pen'orth, and other than that I have little to say. Rather like too many other fanroom panel items I've attended – a good idea for a room party discussion, but didn't translate well into a more formal structure.

Before all this, however, we had visited the hotel's laundry room with John's white suit and my blue jumpsuit, being very careful to keep them in different washing machines. After the panel we returned to find that someone with little patience and even less brain had taken them out of the

machines and put them on top of each other, so John's brand new, worn-only-once, white suit and t-shirt were nicely speckled blue! Through the panic, we had a brilliant idea. Bleach. The ever-helpful housekeeper (I wonder if UK hotels have housekeepers?) kindly donated a cup of the necessary and after a mere hour of scrubbing we were rewarded with success. Vorsprung durch technik.

With all scientific innovation there are positive and negative side effects. The first visible spin-off was that we had the cleanest hands in the convention – whether we'll have hands tomorrow, clean or dirty, is another question. Another was that this all took so long we missed Ted White's Fan GOH speech.

The banquet – and we found we'd been allocated seats



next to Marty & Robbie Cantor. I must admit to changing the name plates to make John sit next to Marty while I talked to Nigel Rowe, the FFANZ winner. Irwin Hirsh was also on our table – he looked much younger than my mental picture of him. Perhaps it's his name – somehow Irwin sounds middle-aged to a Brit; or maybe it was his writing style. It's strange how you develop a mental image without knowing what factors contribute to it.

After the banquet we went on a party search, starting with the Britain in '87 party. I was hijacked before I could even make it through the door by a group of people sitting in the corridor. They were led by Joyce Scrivner with Jack Herman, Cath and various other people I can't remember now. As I came along I was ordered to stop, was formally introduced to each person in turn and commanded to sit down in the corner. Being the good little girl I am, I did as I was told. And I met Perry Middlemiss, which was excellent since I'd been sending him my fanzine for the last two and a half years without even knowing whether they were getting through to the right place. They were, and he still wanted to receive them, so that's good. I know I'm the worst culprit here, but it is dissatisfying when you slave over your issue, and then send it out into the bright blue yonder, with no knowledge of whether a) it gets there and b) it's then used to line the cat's litter tray.

I didn't mind being kept from the room party, but became twitchy due to the gulf between my location and that of the booze. I was accompanied, as always, by my trusty hip flask of Southern Comfort, but no ice, a disaster!. A knight in shining armour came to my rescue with a plastic cup full to the brim with ice – goodness knows what was in the cup before, but I wasn't complaining. Suitably supplied with the resources any intrepid fan requires, I

stayed and chatted for some time.

Eventually I made it into the seething mass of the '87 party, homing straight for the drinks table – not for my own needs, you understand, but because I knew I'd find John there.



And I did, deep in discussion with Terry Hughes.

Somehow I ended up on the floor (sitting, not collapsed) talking to this guy – a policeman – who had a voice any heavy breather would kill for; the sexiest, velvety tones ever imagined! As usual a group of varying constituents sat around chatting about this and that – the state of Australia, whether New Zealand would declare war on France if the French had been involved in the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior and the consequences. It's amazing how philosophical you can get in the wee small hours. The conversation rambled on to cover Hiroshima and Nagasaki, about my mother and her experiences in Germany, about immigration into Australia. I'm sure we solved most of the problems of the world, but unfortunately I'd switched my tape recorder off so no one will ever know.

About 4.30 a.m. we started back, mob handed, for the Victoria, via the Pancake House of course. For this time in the morning it was doing a roaring trade and they weren't all convention members. I wonder what they thought of us?

I got to bed about 6 a.m., which would have been OK except that the Fan Fund Auction was due to start at 10.30 am. So I set my alarm for three hours later, and woke up feeling like death.

## DOPPLEGANGERS

**DATE:** Saturday 24/8/85  
**TIME:** Sometime

John and I vowed to have an early night tonight. Even the walk up the hill didn't wake me up. I hated everybody, I didn't want to know, I dumped my stuff off and watched while Joyce Scrivner, the ubiquitous Marty Cantor, Jack Herman, Nigel Rowe, Justin and John auctioned their stuff.

John was atrocious to begin with because he was actually feeling as bad as me. But gradually I began to wake up and John's auctioning got better.

A mid-day siesta was definitely called for, however on our way back down the hill to the Victoria we were accosted by group of fans including a guy who was the splitting image of John Bishop. (We'd already seen somebody who uncannily resembled D West.) John Bishop is a barrister who was teaching law part-time at the same college I taught at back in the 70s. Nick Strappoppop... (you know who I mean) stepped back in amazement when I explained. He trained as a lawyer and was taught litigation by a man called John Bishop who was doing exactly the same. So we devised this theory – Catford College in South London and wherever he did his course are exactly opposite each other on the globe and have some peculiar relationship to each other that causes doppelgangers to appear. Now isn't that interesting – you could write reams about that – must think up some good doppelgangers that could appear. I don't think we'd got it quite right, though, since we kept on seeing other doubles who I'm sure have never been near Catford. (I wonder if a cat used to cross a river there – but I'm sure there's no river now. Just a thought.)

Turned on the tv and I was overcome with a feeling of unreality – am I really in Australia? When they're previewing the programmes on Channel 10, "On 10 tomorrow" sounds so much like 'on Thames tomorrow' (a London regional independent tv company), I have to keep on reminding myself that I'm the other side of the world. At the beginning of the news they don't start with "G'day" but "Good evening". They were just discussing a plane crash at Manchester; now do they mean Manchester England, or do they mean Manchester Australia? **(It was Manchester, England, that horrendous crash where so many of the passengers burned to death.)** After that item they continued with the plane crash theme, apparently a Yugoslav Airlines plane had problems with its undercarriage and had to circle for a while to dump fuel, before landing on full emergency. We flew Yugoslav Airlines to Cairo and were delayed for over an hour because they had problems with the nose-wheel. I wonder if there's something about Yugoslavian wheels?

Back to the Southern Cross for the masquerade – saw a guy who looked exactly like Paul Kincaid. Another look-alike – Linda Strickler-James.

The masquerade – I could see Jake the Peg from the waist up only. Virtually no American entrants, they seem to have completely avoided this convention. Blake's 7, Jerry Anderson – anything to do with Jerry Anderson seems to be well received here, apparently they don't get it very much so if you want to make your million, bring some stuff over.

Another look-alike: Eric Lindsay, in both looks and character, doppelgangs for Brian Stableford.

We came back to the Victoria about 10.30 p.m. to form yet another one of those ever-changing discussion groups. Inaugural players were Bob Shaw, Charlotte Proctor and Jim Gilpatrick. They were replaced later by John McDowell who is at his third convention and Neil Kaden,

who isn't. Quite suddenly it was 4 a.m. – some early night!

## HIJACKERS!!

**DATE:** Sunday, 25/8/85  
**TIME:** Afternoon

Images of a Sunday.

Having an invigorating discussion with Irwin Hirsh about paper sizes.

Another doppelganger. Sitting at the back of the main hall during Gene Wolfe's GOH speech was Simon Ounsley with his feet up on one chair and his head deep in a book, taking no notice of what was going on around him at all.

Meal out with Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown, Charlotte Proctor, Joseph Nicholas & Judith Hanna, plus Bob Shaw. Bob thinks that eggplant tastes like warm socks but nobody could either agree or disagree, not having the experience he obviously has. Discussion topics covered rubbish bins, the pros and cons of Bob holding a signing session out in the street in the rain, Eric Lindsay's computer full of mouse shit and Alan Greenaway – but I don't want to know that... **(your guess is as good as mine as to the relevance of that comment, but I decided I'd leave it in to give you food for thought.)**

Sitting next to Fred Pohl and his wife in the Hugo Ceremonies but not having the courage to speak to them, and then realising Mrs Pohl was falling asleep halfway through.

**DATE:** Monday, 26/8/85  
**TIME:** Early hours of the morning

Once again in the Pancake House en route to the Victoria. **(At this point my dictaphone appears to have been hijacked. I have no recollection of this scenario and so will relay verbatim the comments recorded by a somewhat drunken John Harvey – admittedly, a vary rare animal.)**



John Harvey: 20 past 5 on Monday, 26th of August, sitting in the Pancake House; Joseph's just getting up and standing there – oohh, very nice, hand on hip...

Joseph Nicholas: None of those notes are going to make any sense whatsoever.

John: Everyone got that... well, believe me they will.

Joseph: Obviously, without a secure knowledge of marxist doctrine and the highest principles of scientific socialism you will be unable to consume the remainder of that hot coffee.

John: I certainly will.

Ted White: You will have to tell me about your great love for Marty & Robbie Cantor tomorrow.

John: What? Who? Oh yes, we will do.  
And there goes Terry, and Lise Eisenberg.

Ted: What's that there, a micro-cassette?

Eve Harvey: Yeah, it's my trip notebook.

Ted: Is it going to get published?

Eve: Yes... If I can ever understand what the hell we're recording!

John: Who's that? What's her name?

Eve: Lynn James...From Hornchurch, Essex.

John: Really, when did you move out here? Fourteen years ago? Fourteen years ago she moved out here and discovered SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM! And never looked back! And here we have Roger... Roger Whatsisname... and ol' Roman Polansky... and over the other side... oh yea, I know, Roger Widdle... Hey everyone, it's Roger Widdle...

Roger: It's Roger Weddall.

John: All right, Roger W-e-dd-a-ll, but I think it's Widdle. I'm desperate for a widdle. Mind you, there's a group of three anonymous fans behind the...

Fans must present a really weird image to the outside world. Here we were in the Pancake House at 5 a.m. with Roger Weddall and Roman Orzanski playing chess on the table, continuing on the chair when the food turned up.



Walking back at 5.30 a.m. from the Pancake House down to the Victoria Hotel, we passed the steps at the end of the shopping centre, just opposite the gymnasium, and saw a man stepping up one step and down the other continuously. How weird. It reminds me of sitting on the seafront at Seacon '79 at a similar time of night, watching a guy roller-skating along the promenade in his shorts, listening to a Sony Walkman. Some peculiar people are out at night.

***(I think I've discovered time travellers. The Australian was obviously a traveller from today who's hooked on the latest***

***craze of step aerobics, whereas the guy in '79 was previewing the portable cassette recorder fad.)***

## FIZZY BEER, FUNNY FANDOM AND FUCKING CHICKENS

**DATE:** Monday  
**TIME:** afternoon

Came to the fanroom having sat in the lounge of the Southern Cross stirring our beer with our swizzle sticks to get rid of the horrendous fizz the Aussies put in it, for the Is Fandom that Funny? discussion. The panelists were Paul Stevens, Bob Shaw, Terry Hughes and Joseph Nicholas, but it turned into the 'who has the best anecdote' competition. Larry Niven entered the frame with a



somewhat turgid tale about Harlan Ellison. Harlan was at some convention or other giving the after-dinner speech when he announced he was getting out of the ghetto of science fiction etc, etc, etc. I think he'd received several Hugos, and possibly that he was going to give them away. Larry Niven had received one as well, and he was carrying it when he entered a lift with some neos. They said, "Ohh, what's that? Is it one of Harlan Ellison's?" So, to try and get back at Harlan because he (Larry) hadn't agreed with a single thing he'd been saying about science fiction, he gave them Harlan's suite number and told them if they wanted one too, to go up there and ask Harlan - he wouldn't mind at all. Larry never did find out if they followed his advice.

Back up the hill again to the Southern Cross for the closing ceremonies - we must have walked miles this convention and we only made it to two of the venues! It's sad that the convention's over - is there really a world out there that we used to inhabit in a different lifetime?

I was promised there would be no requirement for me to make a speech at the closing ceremony. Ted White was called up and I was still feeling reasonably safe, I mean, he's a guest of honour. He's given a little present and said thanks. Then Bob Shaw went up and said a few words... Oh well, they won't expect me.... Marty & Robbie Cantor were next... Oh dear, shit, what-do-I-say, what-do-I-say? I don't know why, but I became quite calm. So I get up there, I kiss David Grigg which raises some applause, and I just say my little line about missing my favourite convention in England (***Silicon***) to be here but

I'm sure glad I came, and everyone seems to think this is great. I get down off the stage, my hands start shaking, my knees go, I feel like I'm going to spew up and I can't even light a cigarette in this non-smoking environment. Why do I always shake afterwards!

So that's it, the end of my first Australian convention.

Bon mots, grandiose summaries, pithy observations, all have to wait because we're going out to a sumptuous French restaurant – Fanny's – with Sally Beasley and Dave Lockett. Some customs are easy to slip in to when you visit another culture, and cheap meals is one John and I took to like ducks to water. By our standards, therefore, this was incredibly expensive – starters were A\$13-14 the main courses A\$19.50-20 and then people who know their stuff got hold of the wine list. This was *not* going to be 'a carafe of house wine please'. The conversation spanned one end of the table to the other (this meal following the normal convention definition of small – there were 13 of us by this time) on the latest developments in Western Australia – who's sleeping with whom, who's getting divorced from whom. Somehow this linked quite logically to cockroaches, with everyone trying to outgross each other with tales of bad hotels, bad cockroaches, bad people, and then the conversation seemed to get on to perversions. Having told my little anecdote about ducks flying backwards (see previous Wallbangers), Amy decided to outgross me and somehow all conversation died throughout the restaurant just as she gave her punchline "I ain't fucking no chickens". Don't think we'll go back there again.

## TEQUILA, WINE AND SOMETHING ILLICIT

**DATE:** *Monday 26/8/85*

By the time we returned to the Southern Cross on a room-party search, the hotel management had had their way with the convention. Yesterday evening they were apparently telling people not to sit on the chairs in the lounge because they were needed for the customers. Then, they moved on to the fact that they didn't care whether or not you were residents, you were *not* staying. It all seemed very familiar somehow. A worldcon in a plush hotel. Hotel management who obviously felt their image was being demeaned by all these dirty fans. Being thrown out of a hotel at which you were a resident. I wonder if there's a special school for hotel managers similar to the bus drivers' school, which teaches you the precise moment to let the clutch out to ensure maximum spillage, and exactly how slow to go as you reach a bus stop before accelerating past the long queue (it must be raining, of course) with your empty bus.

The thing is, fans are so very understanding of this type of behaviour – in most instances anyway. We won't mention Greg Pickersgill's retaliation when the management of the Heathrow Hotel (Skycon, Eastercon 1978) decided to lock all the toilets. We sf fans flatter ourselves on our imagination.

Anyway, back to how careful everyone was being at the

Southern Cross. The main room parties were held in suites which were at the end of the corridor. You entered through a set of double doors into a little ante room, through another set of doors into the main part of the suite. So there was a double barrier to prevent noise filtering out to the corridor which should have been sufficient. But even so everyone was making sure that they closed one door before opening the other, walking around the hotel going, "Shhhhh" and whispering, whilst hiding bottles and glasses under coats (remember, the corridors are not licensed in Australian hotels). I felt sorry for the con's security people who got the hassle from the hotel. But as I said before, that's the trouble when you go to this type of hotel, and for large conventions you have to go 'up market', or rather to hotels that feel they are 'up market'.

'Last night of the con' parties are usually frenetic, but all this hassle had totally killed any enjoyment, so we wandered back to the Victoria to see if there was anything better over there. As usual this turned into a major expedition as we gathered people on the way, and had discussions every hundred yards as we met somebody else. When we eventually made it to the Victoria, Eric Lindsay managed to get the management to open the fanroom. Throughout the convention people have been complaining about its inconvenient location down in the bowels of the hotel, but now we see the advantage, no noise is going to filter up into the main part of the hotel – well, not much anyway. Very good of the Victoria management.

About 20 people decanted there, complete with a bottle of Tequila and Ted White's special brand of tobacco. I just knew how John would feel in the morning, so I returned to our room to start packing.

Earlier in the day we'd sorted out a hire-car for the next day, unfortunately causing a bit of hassle to Jean Weber. At first we were going to Sydney, then Canberra, but finally decided to take a couple of days off the treadmill of conviviality to recharge our batteries before driving round to Canberra. I love fannish company, but need some time to myself occasionally, and the thought of a couple of days isolated from the frantic schedule was too tempting to be missed. The problem is this means we'll be arriving in Canberra when she's already got guests, and it would have been better if we'd kept to our original schedule. Still, I really do need some time just with John.

This being an 'ambassador' for UK fandom is really hard work. You've always got to be on top form, and I feel it incumbent on me to be nice to people. Hell, they paid for my trip so how can I be anything other than grateful. And I may never see them again, so if something is organised for my benefit, it's unfair to be anything less than 100%. Maybe I'm taking this all a little too seriously; perhaps I should just view it as a holiday that I've earned and so deserve to do what I want. Trouble is I can't convince myself. I feel honoured that people not only have paid to get me here, but also that total strangers are willing to entertain me. And after all, if I don't like them I won't be here for very long, so what's a little politeness and care for other people's feelings going to cost me?

Going back to our change of plans over Canberra, there is a benefit, Leigh and Valma Brown will be there and

we've only had the chance to see them for the one meal.

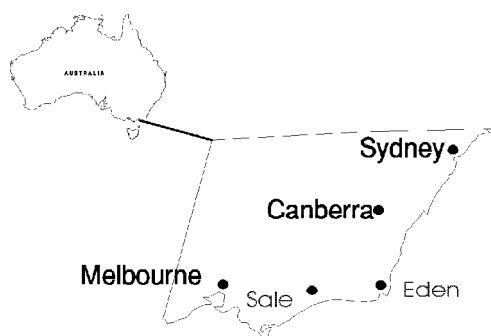
With all these thoughts floating round my head, I went to bed with my teacup full of wine, ready to be followed by my teacup full of tea or coffee, and read some trip reports to see how it should or should not be done.

## ASPIRINS GALORE

**DATE:** *Wednesday 28/8/85*

I missed a day because I was in a right strop. That bloody Ted White. Neat Tequila and illicit substances gave John a 'morning after' never to be forgotten. Well he won't if I have anything to do with it. Not only did I have to do all the packing, but I had to virtually push him down the road to the car hire place. And then I HAD TO DRIVE, IN A STRANGE COUNTRY, IN A STRANGE CAR, AND WITH NO SENSE OF DIRECTION!! You wait till I see you again Mr White. If it wasn't for the fact that at least the Aussies drive on the 'right' side of the road, you'd be a dead man now!

John didn't really surface until after I'd fought my way out of Melbourne. You wait, when he's compos mentis enough to understand I'm going to get my money's worth out of this escapade (*and believe you me, I'm still getting at him to this day!*).



We stopped for the night at Sale and experienced our first motel. It was quite funny really. We drove up to a reception booth rather than a hotel entrance. What do we do? "Ah," I said, "in the movies you get out and register, then drive round to your bungalow, let's give that a try". And sure enough, that's what you do at a motel. We had dinner in the motel restaurant, which was so eminently forgettable I've forgotten it and went to bed, ordering steak and eggs for breakfast. (Well, that's what everyone has in the movies.) Not an experience I'll hasten to relive. Burnt soles of shoes are not appetising at the best of times, but especially not first thing in the morning.

John drove us down to Golden Beach which gave me the opportunity to watch the Australian countryside roll by. Yesterday I was so hassled I didn't have much chance to take note of what we were passing. My only memory was of huge trucks with chrome fenders and exhaust stacks either side of the cab. Just like in the movies. Reminded me of *Duel*.

"Hey John, did you see that. All the sheep in those fields are facing one way as if they're praying to Mecca."

The bare, or dead, trees dotted all over the landscape reminded me of the hand on cover of Chris Priest's novel *Indoctrinaire*.

There is so much space here, and the towns have so few inhabitants. Sale, one of the largest cities in this area had a population of 14,900, though perhaps it was 149,000 but that's classed as a city!

We passed the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) shooting range. Isn't it strange how every other army or whatever seems to have the country in its name. But not Britain, of course, we've just the Royal Air Force, or Royal Automobile Club.

The Great Dividing Range is omnipresent, like a brick wall whenever you look inland. I can see why the first explorers wanted to get across, but the sheer size of it! It's not surprising it took so long for them to find a way through.

Hey, we've been here for one week now and I haven't seen a single real live native to whom this country belongs – an Aborigine – not even a westernised City one. Mind you, would I recognise an Aborigine in normal clothes? Perhaps not, although I can't remember seeing any non-white people, and surely that would be a starting point.

Things that have intrigued us: the railway crossings – it's the first time I've seen a railway crossing with the crossed chevron marks like in the movies.

Our first sight of a real live kangaroo was a dead one by the side of the road.



A strange bit of culture shock – walking past a butcher's shop in Bairnsdale there was a big sign advertising 'Private Bodies a Speciality'. Funny looking black cows everywhere (we don't have single coloured cows, except for some of the Scottish breeds, but you don't see many of those down South where we live). Even the telegraph poles are different. Ours are straight and manufactured – planed. Those out here are slightly planed, but you can see they are just upright tree-trunks, complete with wobbles. And all the single-storey and weather-boarded buildings – seems like we're driving past the frontage for a Hollywood wild west set.

## CULTURALLY CONFUSED ICED FISH

**DATE:** *Thursday 29/8/85*

Last night's meal was an experience. Not the food, that was just good, but the restaurant. It was one of these generic Chinese/Thai/Far Eastern places, with the waiters and waitresses in Chinese jackets/dresses (the waiters did not wear the dresses, no, that's not what made it an experience). The mix of cultures just left us spellbound. There were these hunky Australians attempting to ape the

small, delicate Far Eastern stature, greeting us with "G'day" in a slow Australian drawl, whilst the musac was playing Harry Belafonte's 'My Island in the Sun'. Couldn't keep a straight face. That good ol' British stiff upper lip was so limp I could hardly get the food off my chopsticks.

This morning we went round to Eden, which is a beautiful place. If we ever move out here that's where I wanna be. They even have a fishing port (Twin Bays) with an ice distributing facility. That's what John's in to at the moment. Producing a sort of reverse vacuum cleaner type affair that can discharge ice into the holds of boats. So wherever we go, we tend to end up by the sea (because I miss it terribly since I've left Brighton) going round harbours (for John to see what equipment they've got). Makes for great holiday snaps – beautiful countryside, sea, fish filleting halls....

As we continued on our way to Canberra, we were once again assaulted by the myriad of minor differences in the countryside which make this country so fascinating.

In the forest the majority of the trees were blackened stumps, at least at the base if not halfway up and we wondered if this is a result of last summer's bush fires. Or do the trees always look like that?

Climbing up on Snowy Mountains Highway we both suffered from popping ears. Wish we had an altimeter to know just how high we were.

Just seen a dog standing on the back of a flat-bed truck – not tethered or anything – hope the driver doesn't have to do an emergency stop.

I wish we'd brought The Eye Spy Book of Australian Birds with us. I could recognise the parakeet flying overhead, but I'd love to identify those two purple birds we saw trotting around by the roadside. They had pinkish hammer-type heads. Do visitors find our sparrows and magpies as exotic as I find the fauna out here? I think not.

The mountain ranges looked so very ominous. Dark, mysterious and foreboding. Perhaps this impression is caused by the fact that they are all forested, and therefore very dark when you see them from a distance. Oaks, ashes and birches seem to have much lighter leaves, though, which gives a softness to the greenery in the UK. Scotland, with its pine forests may be similar, I've never been up there except for conventions.

As we were climbing up into the mountains we could see that the boulders strewn around seemed to have a sort of green tinge to them as if they had a very heavy copper content. Later we noticed little green specks on the hillside which we thought must be more rocks, but on closer inspection turned out to be sheep wearing little green coats!

The skyline of trees on the top of the hills reminded me of the soldier ants in a Walt Disney cartoon.

We got to Jean Webber's house in Canberra about three in the afternoon, without any difficulty thanks to her excellent instructions. That evening Eric Lindsey took us

out for some socialising at the Smithfield Household.

"Right, first we'll explain that the Smithfield Household, though in Mossen, ACT is named after a suburb of Sydney. Mark Denbow, Kim Lambert, Kim Huett, Larry Larkin and Rob Macguff are staying here briefly. This household



frequently has dozens of people staying briefly and it's hard to keep track without a scorecard." These were Eric's opening remarks to another night of booze, talk and general camaraderie. I'd like to elaborate more, but I passed out about midnight.

## SOCIABLE GARLIC

**DATE:** *Friday 30/8/85*

Today was 'Let's be tourists' day courtesy of Leigh Edmonds. First the Post Office and Telecommunications Tower to see Canberra in all it's glory. This is perched high on a hill overlooking the city and gave us a great opportunity for taking panorama photos.



The two abiding memories are the magpies stalking around like guards on a turret, and copies of R2D2 everywhere. Oh, I see, they're put up by the Tourist Board. You press a button and get a taped explanation of what you can see. They still looked like

R2D2 to me.

Next stop was the National Museum/Library, which is next to a lake whose central fountain is a copy of the one in Lake Geneva.

Off to the 'Bugs Bunny' memorial -- which is in fact a war memorial with an eagle on top of a column. Unfortunately the eagle's wings are pointing skyward and from a distance look just like Bugs Bunny ears.

We finished the tour and got back by 3.30.



John went off with Eric, Valma and Leigh to the Academian Bookshop and I stayed with Jean because I wasn't feeling too well; I'd developed a stinking cold. She showed me round her fantastic garage and all the work she's been doing to the house which is just as good as it sounded when she wrote about it in WWW. And her fanzines! When the others returned we sat around and had drinks before going out for a vegetarian meal with Valma and Leigh. Valma wasn't feeling too well and Leigh plonked this sort of blanket affair on the table.... causing enormous consternation ... it turned out that this was Valma's little Willy... not many people have seen this!

I must admit to having better vegetarian food in a meat-eating restaurant, and I am still not convinced, even after a whole evening of Valma's insistent urging, that garlic tablets will help my cold now it's fully out. I'm quite willing to accept that garlic can help prevent colds, but once you've got the head, the nose and the throat, there's nothing you can do except feel sorry for yourself and get John to keep up a constant supply of hot drinks, Southern Comfort and sympathy. I don't care if they are sociable garlic pills, I ain't having any. Oh, OK then, just to keep you happy. (This damned cold had better hang around for a bit, just to prove me right.)

What do I think of Canberra? It's Sydney next.....

## MOUNTAINEERING PRAWN BALLS

**DATE:** *Saturday 31/8/85*

Eric acted as our native guide on the drive to Sidney, filling us in on all sorts of aspects of Australian culture including introducing us to our first real out of town downunder pub.

In Sydney we dropped off the car and resorted to public transport to get to Marrickville and Tony Powers's place by about 4p.m.

Tony was just this guy – a complete stranger that Justin said would put us up in Sydney. Now that's what I like about fandom. Any excuse for a party! No, let's be serious. It is good that in our sub-culture we do seem to show more hospitality than sometimes is good for us. Having myself had a few guests that seemed like a good idea at the time, I appreciate the willingness to be bitten first that fandom shows.

Anyway, back to Sydney, and Tony Powers explaining who was there and where we'd been, because I couldn't remember the names. "Well, here we are: David Ramsbottom, Peter Bismire (also known as Balrog), Victoria (his concubine), myself (Tony Powers) and Mark Probert. We went via the Lismore Hotel to try some Tuey's Old with a terrible band. We came on to the John Young Hotel for Spanish Bistro and Sangria and we're going on to Womble and Gerald Smith's party which is in Rosehill."

The food in that Bistro was superb – one of the best paella's I have had since my first in Majorca. I could get really fat living out here in Australia, what with the portions, the quality and the very, very low cost.

The taxi ride out to Rosehill exposed me to yet another alien custom. You tell the taxi driver where you want to go, and he asks which route you'd like him to take, over Piermont Bridge or.... I thought this was a good deal until Tony explained that this is taxi-ease for "I don't know where you want. I know this far, can you tell me the rest when we get there?"

We got to the party and it was a bit awe inspiring to begin with because not only did everybody come outside to greet us, they all looked incredibly smart with their dickie-bows. The first thought to pass my mind was a panic-stricken "Aaagh, I don't know anybody here. What do they expect of me all standing outside like a reception party? Am I supposed to be something really special? Help!!" My fears were unfounded, though, they turned out to be an absolutely great group of people who just happen to like making formal welcomes to strangers.

Later on Jack Herman turned up, as did Alison Abramowitz and Neil Kaden, so there were some people I knew relatively well. As with all parties, recollections get more difficult as the night wears on, and this turned into a very silly party. I remember standing outside with the smokers at one stage – the Smithfield mob – mapping out a GUFF revolution. From what I recollect we decided to go for a double in 1987. John would stand for GUFF to go over for their national convention at Easter, and they would stand, en masse, to come over to Britain for the worldcon in August. Can't remember how we were going to raise the money, but this was a mere technicality.



I recollect sitting in the back room propounding my views on equality to all and sundry. I usually get increasingly erudite and loquacious as the evening wears on; in fact there is perfect positive correlation between my erudition and the amount of alcohol I've consumed. Then I think I must have fallen asleep because the next thing I knew it was 3 a.m. and I was being told the taxi was here. A very ignominious end to the party – I don't know what they must have thought of me – I didn't even have the chance to say goodbye to Eric Lindsay.

The next day Tony took us sightseeing. Much to his chagrin, we wanted to go to Botany Bay. "It's boring." "But let's see it and make up our own mind." "There's nothing there." "That's the whole point, there wasn't anything there when Captain Cooke arrived either." "It's a tourist trap." "We're tourists." I just couldn't go back to the UK saying I'd been to Sydney and not seen Botany

Bay, I'm sorry, it just wasn't on. OK, I know that Cooke didn't actually land there because it was too inhospitable, but it was a name I'd heard of from my youth, and I just **HAD** to go.



I'm pleased I did. It was a beautiful place. I stood on the hillside, trying to imagine what it felt like to come into that harbour after months at sea, even though it was an inhospitable land with not enough water and crops didn't grow etc. Tony was right, it was touristy, of course, but furnished us with our first sight of an aborigine – selling boomerangs.

The whole experience made me wonder whether we've lost something in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The great explorers of our day I suppose are the astronauts, but they're so cosseted. Yes, they're making a big jump into the unknown, but Cooke, Columbus et al didn't have Mission Control to help, and four levels of built-in redundancy in their equipment. I'm sure we haven't lost that exploration urge, but I wonder what the modern day Columbuses can do now that gives them the same sense of stepping out into the totally unknown? Just a thought.

Our next stop was Circular Quay and the ferry. I said earlier that | miss the sea, well, you can imagine how wistful I got on that ferry. The sight not only of a harbour, but of the myriad of bays and harbours that make up Sydney had me spellbound. It was great to see the water being used as a proper thoroughfare. I felt very, very nostalgic wishing that the Thames could be used like that – I would love to be able to go to work on the river as Pepys did.

Wistful is a word I'm going to use a lot today, I just know it. Wistful about the sea, wistful about days long gone which I romanticise about, and then Manly. A tourist area reminiscent of my home town Brighton, but with scenery. And what scenery – words just fail me. We walked round the corner from the main bathing beach bay where it was more rocky so that I could actually get nearer to the sea.

I just had to touch it.

What amazed me more than anything was that it didn't smell very salty. In Brighton when you get near the front,

especially if you get up on a hill and there's nothing between you and the sea, the smell of brine in the air is quite strong – there's no mistaking where you are. Here in Manly the air is fresh but it isn't as strong, so I wanted to taste the water and see whether it was less salty; it wasn't so I don't know what makes the difference.

I gazed into the rock pools and got nostalgic again; gazed out to sea, trying to imagine the distance these waves had come. As I looked out, I knew there were no major land masses between me and the Americas. In Brighton I'd look out to sea, but on a clear day you could almost see France, so this concept of the vast expanses was new to me. The sun



setting over the horizon, the tall, foreign trees silhouetted against a backdrop of golds and reds, and the noisy cackle of cockatoos and starlings – ooh, I'm covered in goosebumps every time I think of it. I know I'm a stupid romantic, but hell, it's fun.

Dusk comes in very quickly here. We had to wait 20 minutes for a ferry by which time it was completely dark, providing us with a night ride back. By now I'd just about worn out all those ol' romantic bones of mine, and wisted all my wistfulness, so I found the trip boring – once you've noticed how pretty the lights look, that's it. The Opera House wasn't lit up on our side so that wasn't spectacular. But then came the Sydney Harbour Bridge in its night attire and the postcards just do not do it justice. In daylight it resembles the Tyne Bridge's big brother, but seeing it at night like that just blew my mind.

We decided to have our meal down in Chinatown. Chinatown here is like the pictures of San Francisco. The entrance is a Chinese garden with an archway, the street lined with restaurants and full of people. At the end of the street is another, smaller archway.

The restaurant we chose was packed out – very few Caucasians, mainly Chinese in big family groups with all the kids down to the age of about three months old. All the tables were occupied so people were waiting, queuing all the way up the stairs. This would have been fine, except for the topography of the place. The main kitchens were downstairs and the waiters were carrying the plates stacked with food, up the stairs (it was quite a steep flight) past all of us, to the top floor. They must have been shattered by the end of an evening because this place, which was very unusual from what we've seen of Australia, was open until two in the morning.

We eventually returned chez Powers to finish such a meaningful day, heady with images of man battling against nature and restaurant layouts, to watch Paint Your Wagon on the video. What a perfect end to a perfect day. Well it would have been, if John hadn't fallen asleep at the end again,

# CONVICT STEW IN THE SUEZ CANAL

**DATE:** *Monday 2/9/85*

Over the past few days our plans had been made, remade, made again, scratched, made afresh, revitalised, changed.... You know how it is. Now we've plumped for a coach back to Melbourne and giving Adelaide a miss. There were no daytime coaches available on the Thursday because it was the end of a two-week winter holiday (Winter! This is August you know!) so we'll have to get the overnight coach. That actually might not be too bad; they show a video, hopefully one I haven't seen before.

The rest of the morning was spent on our favourite pastime, looking in the shops to see what they've got that we don't have, what the prices are of the things that we do have, how things vary.

Had lunch in a little pub down at Circular Quay – well, you could hardly call it a pub. I can see why there is so little social drinking as such in Australian fandom compared to the UK, they just don't have the social system set up. All the pubs I've seen so far have a similar format – the bar area is mainly for standing at the counter, if there is seating it tends to be because there's eating as well. No comfy chairs in which you can lounge around, chew the cud and sip your favourite tippie whilst enjoying the ambience and the company.

Next on the itinerary was The Rocks and the first white settlement (according to my version of history, anyway; no doubt some smart bugger will write to correct me). Admittedly my feet were rebelling against all this walking which most probably didn't help much, but I found The Rocks totally boring – architecturally there was no novelty or feeling of great age. It resembled the old part of any town back home, Manchester docks even. It's obvious when you stop and think about it. In John's neck of the woods (Lancashire) most of the factories and mill towns date back to the 1830's and 40's; The Lanes in Brighton belong to the 13th and 14th centuries. When you live with it I suppose you become blind to the depth of history that surrounds us. Here there is even more depth, but it's a culture with an unacceptable colour. Somehow my mind had placed the convicts etc at a far earlier date than the Industrial Revolution, and the reality was therefore disappointing.

I wonder if the Australians also feel The Rocks a bit of a let down. Looking up the hillside from the bottom of The Rocks, you can see little lanes, typically narrow, winding and interesting. From what I've seen of Australia so far everything (obviously) is more spread out and 'designed'. This area, like Topsy, just grew and grew, so it could seem quite strange to native born Australians.

Some of the houses have been 'done up' to give them a feeling of being lived in rather than a staid museum piece which is good. More interesting, though, were the pictures of before and after the renovations, some dating back to about 1860. It surprises me that on arriving in this spacious country the settlers (I think they were settlers rather than

convicts) promptly rebuilt the trash that they had moved out of in London or Liverpool or whatever other industrial town they came from. Houses crammed together, terrible little alleys, nothing like the quaint, interesting lanes I had first imagined. The whole place is typified by one lane – Suez Canal – originally named Sewers Canal.

That evening we were due to have dinner with Jack Herman (and Cath, of course!). We were supposed to be there 6-6.30, but us being us we didn't leave as early as we'd intended, and it took us twice as long as we had anticipated to get there. The weather was cold (all day it had been surprisingly windy but not as biting cold as it would be with a wind like that in England) and the 'short' walk from the bus stop left us doubting we had hands, feet and noses. Still, we eventually arrived to find that Lise Eisenberg was staying with them.

After the meal we sat around chatting, and I felt like I was watching the tennis at Wimbledon. The players were Jack Herman on one side of the room and Lise Eisenberg on the other. I was the passive observer of their on-going verbal communication thread. But we exchanged a good bit of fannish scandal from all three countries (continents even), and realised it's the same the world over, only the names change to protect the guilty. We also devised some triffik schemes such as D West standing for TAFF again with Richard Bergeron as one of his American nominators and Avedon Carol as one of his British ones. I think this sets the whole tone of the evening.

Before leaving we arranged to meet up with Lise on Wednesday afternoon to go up Centre Point. Isn't it amazing how prevalent the British names are everywhere – Centre Point, Hyde Park, Brighton – you name it, they've copied it, if not in Australia (which is understandable I suppose – homesickness) then in the US (which isn't since they fought to get away from the British). I thought it would make me feel at home, but in some weird way it makes it all seem even more alien. Why can't people think up new names? Are there only so many names in the world, and we've used them all so we've got to start recycling?

## GUINNESS AND WINE

**DATE:** *Tuesday 3/9/85*

One of the things we'd promised to do before we left England, was call on an old business colleague of John's dad – John Coulahan. John's dad was the export manager for a textile mill in Manchester, and in the 50's made mind boggling business trips down to Australia and South Africa. I wonder what it was like then? It was bad enough being cooped up for 20+ hours on the way out here, but those journeys spanned days! Admittedly you had to stop often for refuelling, so you weren't sitting in a flying railway carriage for the whole time. But still, I get very travel weary after a couple of days. I yearn to unpack my suitcase and not move for at least a week! I don't think I could stand packing and unpacking, and trying to pass the hours day after day. God, there wasn't even video to keep you occupied.

Anyway, here we were, having to meet a friend of John's dad, somebody we'd never met before, who was a

generation older, and with whom we had nothing in common. You can see how I was really looking forward to this. It would be an understatement to say I hate this sort of thing. Who the hell is John Coulahan? Will he be in the slightest bit interested in meeting up with an old colleague's son? John's dad is always doing things like this to us. Still, we wouldn't dare go home without making the effort, so we telephoned and he promised to come round and pick us up. And what a nice man, a bit deaf and quite the ex-guardian. He gave us a guided tour of the very expensive areas in Double Bay, where I saw several houses that would do just nicely, and round the Naval Base, where I saw my first submarine.

We ended up at another naval base on Watson's Bay. He had contacts there and had arranged for us to be let in to the base which is perched on the head – the spit that forms the first entrance into the whole of the Sydney Harbour complex. At the very edge of the cliff there is a stunning church designed by a friend of his, with a ceiling to floor glass window behind the altar that looks out onto the Pacific Ocean and straight on to Tahiti or whatever the first landfall is. I'm not much of a fan of churches, but the solitude, simplicity and natural grace of this place made my spine tingle. OK John's dad, I forgive you for the embarrassment if it means I get to visit places like this, which would have been impossible to arrange as a mere tourist.

That night John wiped the household out of canned Guinness, which shows real desperation on his part and I drank nearly a whole bottle of red wine as we passed a pleasant time chatting with Dave and Tony, watching videos, waiting for The Young Ones to start. It wasn't shown because the football overran. Bugger. We started to watch Conan the Barbarian, but we were talking too much and missed so much of the complex plot we couldn't follow the action. When we first came in Tony was watching the end of My Favourite Wife with Cary Grant – a totally inane film to which he didn't have the ending anyway – I wonder about that boy sometimes. Then he showed us some clips from a comedy series called 'Australia, You're Standing In It'. Perhaps humour is a highly culture-specific thing, either that, or the programme was lousy. I found most of the jokes and puns just too obvious. They were funny, and rated a small titter, but not exactly a guffaw, even after a whole bottle of wine.

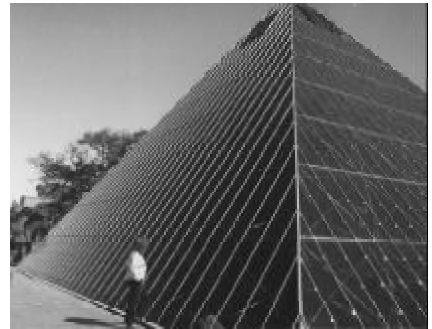
There's a thought that has been creeping in to the corners of my mind over the past few days. There is very little subtlety here in Australia. Everything is up front and obvious. No bad thing on its own, and I hate deviousness, but it smacks a little of innocence, in the ignorance sense. God that sounds pompous, but perhaps I am. There is so little depth of culture here. Not that I ever perceived or participated in 'culture' back home (apart from being a part of that culture, of course), but the lack highlights its existence, if you see what I mean. Maybe I'm just getting sensory overload, and a good dose of homesickness, I dunno. I'll have to wait till the end of my trip to make any valid conclusions.

## POPCORN AND A BOOMERCAN

**DATE:** *Wednesday 4/9/85*

Just for a change, we thought we'd do some sightseeing today.

The Botanical Gardens was proudly proclaiming the opening of an amazing new structure – the Pyramid Glasshouse. Quite nice, but it was so small compared to the glasshouses at Kew Gardens that I began to feel like a Texan – ours is bigger than yours, so there. I'll skip over Government House and the Royal Mint. They were built in the 1830s but as in the Rocks, the convicts and the settlers were so desperate to make this godforsaken place something like home they made everything identical to what they'd left. And so to us it's nothing new.



What did elicit some enthusiasm from this jaded tourist was Centre Point Tower (a tourist rip-off – A\$3.50 when it was only A\$1 to go up the Telecom Tower in Canberra). And then when you got up there you found it enclosed in glass which makes it very difficult to take photographs. They had certain panels which were supposed to be special non-reflective glass, but John still complained about the reflections of all the kids wandering around inside.

The views were spectacular and I realised that although I thought we'd done most of the harbour, we'd hardly scratched the surface. The other side of the bridge (the non-Pacific side) goes on twice as far as the bit we'd seen. Now that's not something we have back home; it's larger than anything I've seen, and more beautiful, and hey, I feel the return of my sensawonder. Ain't nature great!

Our return home was greeted by a sickly Tony – all the household seemed to have gone down with a 'flu bug; I hope it wasn't mine. Tonight, Tony wasn't wearing his lovely pink fluffy outfit of the night before, but was sporting a fetching little number in blue padded plastic. Where does he find these things? Why? We had another attempt at Conan the Barbarian, only to realise that even when you are taking note of it, the plot is difficult to follow. It's just too much to bear – beaten by a Conan film! I just don't believe it! Come on John, let's go meet Nigel Rowe from the station.

***At the moment we are sitting at the station; John is writing up his notes and I'm putting these thoughts on to tape. We're sitting opposite a poster about recycling aluminium cans, which is a great idea. They give you 60c a kilo, which sounds quite good but a kilo of cans is a lot of cans. And the name is great, it's Comalco Boomeran Centres.***

Talking to Lise Eisenberg earlier, she's going to try and make it over to the UK for 87, if not before. Seeing the troupe of people coming through the various houses we'd been in on our trip, both before and after the con, we're definitely going to have to set up a diary. All these people we've been meeting, all these people who've been hospitable to us – we have a duty to return their kindness so I'm gaily saying to everybody "when you come to England you can stay with us". And we're going to have to buy a lot more furniture so that they can sleep comfortably. After only two weeks I've learnt the pleasure of being able to sleep in a bed.

Going way back to the last day of the convention, we went round to Justin's house to drop off our spare suitcase and saw a fly screen for the first time. What an alien idea, leaving the front door open to let the air through, but closing the fly screen. In Britain you very rarely leave your front door open because privacy is everything. Of course you'll leave the windows open, but we hardly ever get bugs serious enough to warrant a fly screen. Not where I come from anyway. I'm still fascinated by the small things that are so very different, and which reflect the different way of life here.

Back at Central Station in downtown Sydney, the concept of being intellectually challenged by Conan the Barbarian (or perhaps it was Tony's latest outfit) had forced us out of our usual habits and we were actually early! So what to do? Find the bar. We'd had the foresight to ask whether or not there was a bar but, forgetting this is Australia, we had omitted to enquire whether the bar was likely to be open. And of course it was shut.

I hate hanging around for people. Not only is it a waste of valuable time, but it allows your mind to start wandering, and mine usually ends up thinking about all the things that can have gone wrong with the arrangements. You see, Nigel didn't know we were coming to meet him – it was a surprise. But what if he missed us and left by another entrance? (Entrance? Can you leave by an entrance? Well, I suppose Nigel can, he is a New Zealander after all.) We could be sitting here for hours whilst he's back at Tony's place drinking all the booze!

To make absolutely sure I went through a turnstile back onto the platforms again before realising that I'd have to get back off without a ticket. I had a nice chat with the guy at the ticket office who suggested we waited on the platform. Utilising my sweetest smile, I explained we wouldn't have a ticket: "No worries, I'll remember you." Isn't that sweet? None of the usual British, "More than my job's worth, duckie", or "you'll have to buy a platform ticket".

Of course there was no problem spotting Nigel and he didn't get back to the booze before us. On the trip back we introduced Nigel to the strange ritual of the Sydneysider taxi drivers. As per usual the driver didn't know where on earth we wanted to go. He knew Marrickville so John – the non-resident – had to guide him round to the house.

They'd finished their game of *Illuminatus* by the time we returned and were eating popcorn. So we sat, ate popcorn and watched an abysmal video that the New Zealanders (fans rather than professionals, I'm pleased to say) had

made as a take-off of *Star Trek*. Talk about crappy. It made *Crossroads* look like Shakespeare, and made John wish he'd brought our renditions of 'Attack of the Killer Shirt' and 'Clinto' (shot entirely on location at Novacon 11) to show them what real fan film making was all about.

**DATE:** *Thursday 5/9/85*

Today's the day for the great trek across country, back to Melbourne courtesy of Ansett coaches. First the farewells to all the bits of Sydney we'd visited, and of course to the harbour itself.

In the evening we stood around in Galaxy Bookshop, chatting to people, saying yet another set of farewells.



Why on earth is the Sydney equivalent of The Tun held in a book shop? It's very difficult to have a convivial chat when you're standing around with nothing in your hand (i.e. no drink!). Admittedly at the Tun you have to stand because it's so packed, which it's hardly convivial, but at least you can have a drink while you socialise. I think Australia's got schizophrenia. Its character is shattered into different parts and each time you look at a shard, you get a slightly different picture. Look in a pub and you see drunken louts, look in fandom and you see gentility and abstinence, at least in public. I'll have to ponder this weighty subject as we sit on the coach tonight for the long trek back to Melbourne.

## THE LAST LEG (OR ANKLE)

***This, at long last, is the final page in my diary. It's now 14 years since I first stepped foot on Aussie soil, the world has turned many times (5,113 times, to be exact) and my memories are tainted by subsequent events. In this concluding episode, therefore, I've added some present day thoughts to my original text.***

**DATE:** *Thursday/Friday, 5-6/9/85*

Australia, I've decided, is a particularly perverse place. Not just the people, the place itself. It seems to derive great pleasure from taking my preconceptions and throwing them straight back at me. For instance, it's such an enormous place that I thought communications would be paramount. No way. Not only is flying internally

horrendously expensive, but the roads! Abysmal is a totally inadequate adjective... No wonder the 440 mile coach ride from Sydney to Melbourne took all night.

What can you say about an overnight coach trip? Not much really. Unfortunately I'm not one of those travellers who can just nod off whenever the occasion presents itself. Unfortunately John is! OK, I thought, I'll watch the movie. Being on the back seat has its advantages, but not when you're only 5ft 4in and everyone in front of you not only can't sleep, but is either 6ft, or sitting on a very large cushion to protect their delicate parts.

*(It says in my notes that I was very ratty because I hadn't been able to sleep comfortably. With hindsight I think that would be an understatement – the incredible hulk has nothing on me when I feel hard done by and the jealousy of sitting next to John who was sleeping like a baby would have been unbearable. If I am suffering, then everyone around me, especially my loved ones, should be suffering as well. Isn't that what they mean my togetherness? Didn't John promise to share everything when we got married? Well, he damned well wasn't sharing my discomfort!)*

A good jolt of caffeine at the mid-journey stop worked wonders, however, and so did the improved road surface – let's hear it for the Victorian road maintenance crews – so I was human again by the time we arrived in Melbourne (about 7 a.m., so that made it an almost 12-hour ride).

Unfortunately we had to wait until 9 a.m. for Minotaur Books to open, where we had an assignation with Justin, his house keys and hopefully a shower (the shower's at his house, not the bookstore), so we whiled away the time in a pizza place with their bottomless cup of coffee.

Back at Justin's, feeling clean and with a bit of privacy for a while, it dawned on me that it's not just the living out of a suitcase that gets me down on a long trip like this, but it's also living in other people's houses. I want to get home to my own little nest. I couldn't travel round the world doing this. Hotels are OK, but in moderation.

*(It's really weird reading this now, and listening to the tape, I sound so mournful and lost. At this time I had done very little travelling, but in 1989 I started on my present career, which entails numerous foreign trips each year. I worked it out the other day and I've been 'lucky' enough to travel to almost 30 countries in the last ten years. So I do now exactly what back in 1985 I didn't think I could do, although I'm very rarely away for more than three weeks at a time. I still miss my home every time I'm away, though. The benefit now is that I am in a hotel, and my comment that hotels are OK was absolutely right. In a hotel you can make your own little nest that acts as a surrogate home. I spend seven hours a day standing up and talking with foreigners (for those of you who don't know, I train international bankers, specialising in the emerging markets) and having to concentrate on every word I and they say. So to get back to my little nest is the next best thing to going home at night. I can slouch around, put on the TV, listen to English and not have to concentrate. The amazing thing is that I don't like the silence of being alone in the room. You would think that after so long constantly talking and listening I'd crave the quiet, but I don't. I*

*suppose it reinforces my aloneness. The same reason I very rarely phone John whilst I'm away. It reminds me that I'm not with him, and if I only get the answerphone I find my loneliness almost unbearable. So I arrange my nest to make it comfortable, and spend the whole evening talking out loud to myself, or to imaginary participants, or to John, or to friends. Weird or what? But don't get me wrong, I adore my job, I just wish I could fold the world so places weren't so far away, or I could fit John into my suitcase.)*

The rest of the day we spent doing the tourist thing, making the most of the trams. What is it about trams, they seem to add a certain *je ne sais quoi* to a city. When we're on a 'wander day' we tend to pick names on the map which look interesting and just head for them. Sometimes you hit gold, sometimes iron pyrites. Our first destination proved to be the latter. I needed to get another fix of the sea – having been brought up in Brighton but now living surrounded by land, I have an almost addictive need for the sight, sound and smell of the sea. South Melbourne Beach had the sea, but little else – tacky is the only way to describe it, even worse than Brighton Beach at the height of the holiday season, although it did have sand.

We made a tactical withdrawal to Albert Park, saw another tram heading for St Kilda Beach which our trusty tourist guide pronounced 'a good place', so we changed directions mid stream. The book did not let us down. Not as spectacular as Sydney Harbour, obviously, and not very foreign (if you defocussed your gaze a little you could have been anywhere in the UK), but pleasant. It was very windy, though sunny, and an enjoyable afternoon was had by the Harveys getting their feet wet, walking around the outside of the Lunar Park funfair (we weren't going to pay good money for that!) and generally taking in the sea air.

We made our way back to town in time for the Melbourne group meeting at the Tavern Coffee Bar – next to a pub!



What is it with these Australians? I mean, the Sydney people meet in a bookshop and the Melbourne in a coffee shop! Again, all my preconceptions are being thrown back in my face. Aussies are hard drinkers. So what do I find? Beer is dispensed by the thimble full, and fan groups never meet in a place where alcohol can be purchased! (Mind you, given the quality of much of the beer, and the atmosphere of many of the drinking emporiums, there could be an understandable rationale here.) Although everyone else had meals John and I weren't hungry at that stage – our digestive systems still haven't been brought forward to Australian time.

Everything here seems to happen about 3 hours early, so dinner for us is still around 8 p.m., not 5.



Having said that Aussie group meetings appear to shun alcohol, the same cannot be said for Australian parties. We finished the evening at Phil Ware and Mandy Herriot's house for a memorable party. Most of us were standing outside enjoying one of those superbly rambling conversations that started with the obligatory raking over the coals of the convention and what was wrong with it; my health; operations I have known; children – no, we started with children and then went on to operations. It's always difficult to describe parties – you had to be there. A kaleidoscope of images is all I have now; an enormous boxer dog; the smokers standing outside as usual; Justin playing on an Apple Computer.

**DATE: Saturday, 10/9/85**

We were woken up early by the cats. Nearly every place we have stayed on this trip has been non-smoking (I smoke) and has cats (John's allergic to cats). Clive and LynC must be at the top of the pile, though. Not just one cat but millions (possibly just a couple, but they move about a lot!). No one warned us that our bed was under their nightly flight path: through the window at the back of the outhouse, across our bed and through the window into the house. All night. John's nose was streaming and his eyes already closing up by the time we'd had breakfast so we beat a hasty retreat.

It's Healsville Wildlife Sanctuary today, a barbie and the chance to see some kangaroos. There's another preconception that has proved woefully wrong,



kangaroos are not jumping all over the place. I haven't seen a single one yet, unless you count the dead one by the side of the road I mentioned earlier, but that could have been an enormous mouse (no, that would be in Texas). The ride was uneventful until Clive decided we needed some excitement, and being the perfect host provided it by running into the back of the car in front. Only half-heartedly, though, since no damage was done.

Healsville was a blast. The difference in lifestyles was obvious here – in warm climates people expect to do

things out in the open air. We didn't head for the animals, but for a picnic area. Not just little wooden tables with those awful bench seats attached which were definitely designed by men who wanted to see up the women's skirts! I have never found a delicate way of sitting at one of those unless it's sideways at the end. But also barbecues! Enormous, fixed barbies for anyone to use, with wood provided! Now that's something you don't see in England.

*(Actually you do now, although I'm not too sure about the wood. It just shows how international we've got over the last decade and a half. Today no Brit would be as astounded at the provision of barbecues as I was back then. It's not fair, I don't feel old enough to have lived through cultural changes, that's for grandmothers – oh shit, I could be a grandmother! I am old!)*

Mandy had been to the market that morning and stocked up with meat (Australia is hell for vegetarians), the rest of us brought the booze, the weather was fine, the company superb, God was in his heaven and it looked like I was going to join him.

Whilst the food was being set up we tourists did our touristy thing and went off with Mark Linneman to see the animals. I still don't believe the platypus is real, or else Mother Nature has a very perverted sense of humour. Mark described to me at length how you can tell the difference between a kangaroo and a wallaby (about as



understandable as Australian football, or the offside rule, but clearer than cricket). Back at the barbie John has recorded he had lamb chops and sausages – you can tell what's important to him about this trip! There were about 20 of us, and the afternoon passed in a haze of good food, good booze and good company (apart from the birds – in the UK we'd have trouble with pigeons, not here because we're in foreign parts it had to be ibises – until Mark Linneman decided to act as sentry, armed with a big stick and an enormous shadow).



At 5 the park closed so we decanted to Marc and Cath Ortlieb's to continue the evening sans alcohol! (I told you

these Aussies are a little strange). Once again, we smokers were outside with visiting dignitaries from the non-smoking camp. I was given an astronomy lesson to help me identify the Southern Cross, but I still can't see it. I thought it was BIG, like the Plough, not a teeny weeny little constellation that you'd miss if you blinked. Obviously there was yet more post-convention analysis, Jim Gilpatrick explained worldcon politics and I longed for some alcohol to dull the edges, but the Devil's food cake was produced just as I was about to gnaw off a part of my or his anatomy (I hadn't quite decided which). God, I'm going to have to diet when I get home.



**DATE: Sunday, 11/9/85**

Started the day with a trip to Mooney Ponds of Edna Everage fame, (a nondescript lower middle class sort of suburb). Having ogled at Everage Street (all of 100 yards long tacked on to the end of a small shopping arcade) we had brunch (hotdogs and rolls) and left to arrange transport.

*(Good ol' Thrifty Car Hire has seen us proud on all of our trips since then).*

Yet another sightseeing expedition gave us a tapestry of images and emotions:

**Disillusionment** at Captain Cooke's cottage. It is only when you are faced with what the Australians think of 'ancient monuments' in this country that you realise how young it is (white occupation, that is, no-one talks about Aboriginal Australia much).

*(At least that's changed for the better over the intervening years.)*

Captain Cooke is ancient history here, but you could see cottages older than this in many British villages. I suppose it's not surprising really, since it was his Yorkshire home, which was dismantled, transported over here and rebuilt. The only outstanding feature was its size – small even for a single man.

**Disgust** at the model Tudor village, which was absolute crap; donated by the people of Lambeth, they ought to be shot for what they did. By contrast, the Faery Tree – an intricately engraved tree-trunk – was beautifully executed.

**Disappointment** that the Shrine of Remembrance was shut but the views were marvellous and John just had to take an arty-farty photo at the eternal

flame.

**Pathos** – maybe it was the weariness of so many sights and experiences in so short a time, maybe it was just me being exceptionally receptive, maybe it was.... who knows... but the statue of Simpson and his donkey for some unknown reason got to me and I started crying.

**Amazement** – sitting on the hill watching the kids roller-skating in Myers Music Bowl a police car appears out of nowhere, driving across the grassy slope in front of us. Maybe they do this sort of thing here in Melbourne? No, everyone else stopped to look, so it couldn't be a quaint local custom.

**DATE: Monday, 12/9/85**

No matter how good the company, there are times in any holiday when you need to get away on your own. Monday was this day for us. With our trusty hire car we had intended to go to Port Welshpool – a deep-sea port – to investigate the fishing industry round there, if they had any ice-plants, how did they offload the ships. Well, isn't that what you do on holiday? If you were married to John, who is trying to set up a business in this area, you'd be finding these interesting places as well. To be honest, it is quite fun – not the smelly fish bit, but having a motive which is slightly different from the ordinary gets you to places you wouldn't normally see, and gives you something to look at rather than just the view. Adds another dimension to the whole experience. Unfortunately time was not on our side and so we decided to stop off at Philip Island instead before going out for a farewell meal on this, our last night in Melbourne.

On the way we stopped at a little town called Lan-Lan which proudly presented itself as having a population of 620. There are advantages and disadvantages to being a tourist off the beaten track. Walking into the 'hotel' at Lan-Lan for lunch, we didn't stop the conversation, because there was no-one there to be talking. The accent was obviously a dead give-away that we weren't locals. Unfortunately the tv had just finished running a series on Whingeing Poms, so we had a lot of bridge-building to do to assure the landlady that not all Brits can be tarred with the same brush.

*(Since that time, there has been a series here looking at the same scenario but from the Brit perspective. If that was true, then many of the £10 tourists had a right to be just slightly put out. They were sold a dummy from this end – today the advertising standards board would most probably have the Australian High Commissioner in jail by now for misrepresentation – and when they got there they were treated like refugees and slave labour! But that said, many did seem to make the most of it and take the opportunity to make a new life on the frontier, just as they did in the US. I suppose that whenever there appears to be an opportunity to improve your lot for free, there will always be those people who forget that nothing in this world is free. There is always a price to pay, and if the price is too high, then you shouldn't buy. The price in this case appears to have been about 18 months of hell for*

**most people, but those who were actually looking for opportunity rather than a soft ride seem to have reaped the benefits they anticipated.)**

Philip Island – pah. The koalas in the koala sanctuary were all practising their invisible man impressions. Picture this, the place is a woodland, obviously since koalas live in trees. A queue of cars are slowly driving down dirt tracks with heads sticking out of the windows, all looking towards heaven. No, not a religious festival. As cars pass each other, each passenger recites the mantra, “Any luck?”, which is responded to with “NO!”. Eventually the news filtered through that ONE had been seen, so there is a squeeling of tires as cars execute handbrake turns (maybe I exaggerate un peu) and drive off down the dirt track until the allotted place is found. It's easy to recognise, follow the people wandering around with faces turned to the heavens, bumping into trees. At last, nirvana. “There it is!” – that little black blob about 50ft up in the tree, clinging on for dear life in the high winds, is a real live koala! So we took the obligatory pictures and drove round the coast a bit more to find the Fairy Penguins.

Fairy Penguins – pah. They don't perform until 6.30 p.m., too late for us. So we continued our drive round the island. Let's see if we can watch the seals 'playing in the seas just off the coast at Nobbies' according to the guide book. Seals – pah, they'd obviously gone off to nibble some of Nobbies' Nuts.

Let's see the blowhole, that's supposed to be spectacular. Nope, the tide was out.

The scenery was awesome, though. I love the sea, especially in its rough moods, and here were waves crashing across the rocks with the sound of thunder – no, not thunder, more like a long, slow rumble from an underground explosion. I needed to get closer, to touch nature. Unfortunately nature touched me. As we were going down the path to the rocks I slipped and fell. I only turned my ankle over but it hurt like nothing I'd experience before, and I was almost sick right there and then. This just can't happen to me on my holiday. I won't allow it. But god, it hurts. I'm afraid I might have done more than just twist my ankle.

Having missed all the interesting sights on Philip Island, there was nothing more to do than sit in the car park with a soft drink and a packet of crisps. Now admittedly the window was very slightly open in the car and this might have been significant, but I'd just opened my packet of crisps and looked up to see four seagulls sitting on the railing in front of the car. Then two more came and landed on the bonnet. Then I noticed about six of them on the ground beside the car. And they were all staring fixedly in at me as if they knew we had food. As an experiment, I gingerly dropped a single crisp out of the window. Woosh, it was like The Birds – hundreds and thousands of them piling onto this one crisp. Driving off, a couple were trailing us – we could see their shadows above us. Eerie.

The return journey was relatively uneventful, apart from getting lost – well, I was navigating and only once is a record for me. After a great Japanese meal opposite the Southern Cross, we ended our last evening in truly

Melbournian style, good chat, good food and good booze. I think that aptly encapsulates my first experience of this city that I have decided I love.

**(And with subsequent visits that conclusion has been reinforced. I love Melbourne and I love the people. Much better than Sydney in my view.)**

I don't know if it was the ice pack on my ankle, which had succeeded in its impersonation of a black balloon, or if it was the booze, but I could hardly feel any pain. I spent the rest of the evening taking ice both externally and internally, in my Southern Comfort, with great success.

**DATE: Tuesday, 13/9/85**

Unfortunately my patent cure was only of limited duration. I can hardly walk. I'm afraid I've done something serious but it's not worth going to hospital because we're leaving Victoria this afternoon and there is no way I'm going to put off going to Perth.

I eventually found that by walking just on the toe of that foot and holding John as a counterbalance I could hobble for a short distance at least. So we started our round of goodbyes to both people and places. I wonder when/if we'll ever see them again?

We'd scheduled lunch with Justin, but as usual he wasn't ready. When I told him about my foot he was not very sympathetic; just related the tale of when he tore all the ligaments in his leg and had bruises all over his knee. What about some sympathy Justin? I feel sorry for myself and everyone in the world should feel the same. Outside Minotaur Books we pressganged a guy into taking a picture of all three of us outside the shop.

**(Unfortunately we lost one film when we used a postal developing service and it was this one. There goes a piece of fannish history.)**

It had been a bright sunny morning although they had been forecasting thunderstorms later on. When we went in to a bar for lunch it was hot and there wasn't a cloud in the sky, when we came out it was hailing – and pretty big hailstones. So we quickly said goodbye to Justin and walked round the corner to catch a taxi at the invisible taxi queue. We kept on hailing taxis and they kept on going past to pick up people just down the road – some things are universal. As per usual the taxi driver didn't know where we were going and John 'the visitor' had to direct him to Brunswick.

Clive took us to the airport, and since we were early we sat around in the bar just for a change. Here I had a solid reality check. The news was featuring riots in Birmingham, England. What! We've only been away a couple of weeks and law and order collapses.

The four-hour journey to Perth is best forgotten. Narrow seats and an aching foot are not conducive to a 'jolly' time. And, being a domestic flight there wasn't a video or film to pass the time away. To make things worse, someone had obviously reported us as members of alcoholics anonymous. As the meal was being dished up ('served'

is too generous a description) everybody else was being asked if they wanted a drink, but they just sort of missed us. But we did manage to attract attention eventually and get some alcohol.

Hey, we're in Perth! Change the watches again we're now on Western time. We were met by Sally Beasley and Dave Lockett and given a short tour of the area en route to their house, featuring prominently the local brothel – a rather nondescript building apart from its bright mauve colour. No red light outside, but then again it would have been lost with that mauve background.

At long last, reality met my expectations. I had thought that in a land as large as Australia, everyone would have lots of space. I had been very disappointed to see that in both Melbourne and Sydney the planners had used this totally blank sheet to design little square boxes in straight lines. Perth was also divided into boringly square plots, but at least they were bigger. Sally and Dave's was just what I had expected an Australian house to be – large and rambling, with two showers! The only one that has so far. We sat around and talked for a while and were given our itinerary for our stay in Perth.

**DATE: Wednesday, 14/9/85**

Foot alert – still swollen and too painful for walking any long distances.

Sally had organised our itinerary and today was King's Park day. Here in the centre of the city is a haven of completely untouched brushland. No wonder everyone is so proud of it. From one aspect you can look out over the bay of the Swan River which is so wide at this point it could be mistaken for the coast. Perth looks a very relaxed city – well landscaped and dissected by freeways, but even these have a statuesque beauty. You can see the amount of building work being done for the America's cup. I hope they don't lose it because all these new hotels will be surplus to requirements – might be good for science fiction conventions, though. I'm glad we've come now because an occasion like the Americas Cup could ruin the atmosphere of Perth, so at least we will have had a chance to see the before, although I'm not sure if Sally's itinerary allows much time for wandering around Perth itself.

We had a very British snack of scones, jam, cream and coffee in the restaurant in the Park overlooking the bays which though pleasant, was exorbitantly priced – the first time we've thought that throughout our trip. The Pioneer Women's Fountain, though not one of the most spectacular, was fascinating inasmuch as it had a variety of different fountains that went through a choreographed sequence to represent their story.

It's spring here in Western Australia, so the wildflowers in the brush were spectacular although Sally explained this was early spring, so not all of them were out yet. (A word of warning for other trip winners, take a thesaurus with you, there are only so many times you can say spectacular, great, beautiful...) During the summer things must look very barren, though.

If the restaurant in the Park was exorbitant, the smorgasbord at the Merlin Hotel was a give-away. It typified the difference in the cost of food over here. There were giant prawns, caviar, oysters... as shellfish lovers we thought we'd died and gone to heaven. And all for A\$15.50 (£7-ish) which is expensive for a lunch, but not for that lunch.

To walk this off we went round to the Aboriginal art gallery, the first time we'd encountered aborigines being viewed in any light other than a tourist attraction. Admittedly, we most probably hadn't recognised any of the others since they didn't meet our stereotyped images. Good stuff there except there weren't any aborigines. The gallery was supposed to be run on their behalf and was manned by the same type of middle-class ladies you meet in the Oxfam shop. It felt a little condescending. Why can't the aborigines run their own gallery? Maybe I'm reading too much into it, but I could almost hear the comments: they're good artists, they've done really well, considering... they're sweet little boys and they have natural talent, but they can't really administer the business side of it. John's going to be busy when we get back finding wall space for everything we bought. I agonised over the painted emu egg but had to leave it behind. What would be the first thing to get crushed in the baggage? Oh, but it was to die for! By that time my foot was absolutely killing me so we returned to Sally's to rest before going out for yet more food. (Diet, diet, here I come...)

I changed into a skirt and was ribbed about 'changing for dinner' but the rationale was more pragmatic than that – after that enormous lunch I knew I was going to be bloated and the skirt was a damned site looser than trousers! We went to Acapulco Annie's (guess the nationality) because of their happy hour. Being in a different country, you would expect things to be different, and this happy hour was. Back home we just have drinks at half price and you can choose whether to have twice as much. Not here, here you get two drinks for the price of one, or two pitchers of Margaritas for the price of one, in John's case. So, it's not our fault we drank so much, local custom made us, honest.

We were the first ones there, followed by John McDowell, then Ian Nicholls and then the two M's – Mark & Michelle. The food was very much like Cafe Pacifico or any other TexMex type place. Since it was Ian's birthday yesterday, we had an impromptu party back at Sally's place, which developed a splinter group at the dining table talking gaming, whilst Mark, Michelle and Sally were discussing gossip in the lounge – who was sleeping with whom, who wasn't sleeping with whom and who should be sleeping with whom, or who shouldn't be sleeping with whom!



The cabaret at the party featured Sally's cat and a variety of inflated condoms. The rainbow coloured ones didn't pass the quality test, bursting at the first pat, but the textured ones were a definite success. Why, you may ask, were condoms being sacrificed in this way? Well, to be honest I can't remember.

If memory serves me well, we were discussing 'the big outside' and I was rueing the fact that we hadn't really experienced it, except from the plane. Boring... was the rejoinder from those of the company who weren't killing trolls or something. Sally and Dave had decided to drive across to the convention, which entailed several days in the Nullabor. You want outback, you get it for mile after mile after mile after mile out there.

Apparently the highlight of the trip was to see who could be the first to spy the next patch of scrub, and to guess how long it would take to get there. Here in this desolate place, there are the occasional staging posts for those en route to somewhere else, and it was in one of these islands that Sally had cause to visit the toilet, to discover a machine. A treasure trove machine of condoms – amazing that this out-of-the-way hotel should be progressive enough to put a condom dispenser in the ladies' toilet, mind blowing to see the variety – coloured, textured, flavoured.... different sizes.... starting with normal



and getting larger (what man would ever admit to 'small'?). Why they were blown up and left to the tender ministrations of the cat, I have no idea.

**DATE: Thursday, 15/9/85**

Foot alert! Still swollen but now a work of art – all the colours of the rainbow. I'd picked up a cold somewhere so my nose was a bit stuffy and I had a sore throat, and where I'd been bitten by an ant or something yesterday, my arm was all puffy and hot – what a right, sorry specimen of the human race. This is my holiday; I won't let this happen; I will NOT be ill. John... I don't feel well... why me?

Dave came out with us today to show us one of the vineyards in the Swan valley. It wasn't actually in production so we couldn't go round and see them working on it, although they did have the tasting room open where Dave & Sally bought some wines. What a great idea. Here are all these little wineries and each one actually encourages visitors. You can try the wines with no real pressure (other than your own self-imposed moral pressure) to buy.

***(Little did we know that this was the birth of a tradition. Each time we've been back to Australia since we've been to some vineyards, and thanks to Perry Middlemiss we've developed quite a cellar out there. Each time we go we buy wines to drink now, to lay down for 5 years and to lay down for 10 years. That way each trip there are more wines ready for drinking. At last count there're over 60 bottles waiting for us!)***

Our next destination was the old town of York (1850 and the second settlement in Western Australia). Once again, I was stunned by the youth of things that the Australians

think of as old. At least here the architecture was different so the town could not have been anywhere back home. The buildings were all wood, and the archetypal wide verandas running round all four sides place you firmly in Australia. We had tea in the Settler's House whilst Dave went to the pub for alcohol and cheaper food.

***(I just can't believe that comment. We had tea whilst there was alcohol around! I must have been ill, or else I was being a very polite guest and keeping Sally company.)***

I enjoy wandering around old towns like this, although I don't think Sally and Dave found it as fascinating as we did. The printing museum was also a working print shop, and although the museum wasn't open, our British accents worked in our favour again and the owners gave us a private guided tour of all the equipment. I love old machinery. I think I would have liked to be an Industrial Archaeologist if only there was a living to be made in that line.

Then came the swing bridge (a rope across the river), the courthouse and the prison cells. Sally's interest in social history added an extra dimension here. Looking at the graffiti on the cell walls, she could identify from the names that most prisoners were aborigines. I find myself alternately drawn to investigate the aboriginal situation more, and repelled by the pompous self-righteousness of the white immigrants.

***(I have experienced this same feeling many times since then, as I travel to ex-colonial countries, and see the aftermath of the colonial empires. I sometimes feel like starting my courses with an apology for what my ancestors did, and a promise to try my best to redress the balance now, and I suppose in a way I am, since I'm teaching them the modern methodologies used by developed countries, so they won't be so dependent on the British and American bankers.)***

**DATE: Friday, 16/9/85**

This was Freemantle market and party day. The drive from Perth out to the coast at Freemantle follows the Swan River, past the expensive real estate, the expensive boats and the immigrant reception. Today is 'shopping' day, and Western Australia is opal country, so I spent an enjoyable hour or so looking at jewellery, eventually buying the most beautiful ring and earrings to match.

Lunch was at the famous Sail & Anchor which brews its own beer at wine strength. Can you imagine drinking wine by the pint! The US fleet was in town, and in the bar. I was fascinated by the uniforms. Just like the Gene Kelly film, they were all in white, flared trousers and black shoes that you could see your face in. The trousers were creased horizontally, as if they'd been folded in a suitcase, but I'm sure they'd been ironed that way. How bizarre.

We were joined by Joseph Nicholas, Judith Hanna and Judith's sister, but didn't stay for lunch since one of Sally's clients was in the pub. We didn't ask.

The market at Freemantle was a fascinating mixture of tourist crap and everyday items. I can get lost in a market



for hours on end. I love walking round food stalls, identifying the differences, watching the 'locals' live their lives, comparing prices, identifying unusual fruits. This is where you really know you're in a different country.

We purchased our obligatory souvenirs (teacloths, always got to buy a souvenir teacloth, towels and, of course, a

hat with corks (made in Taiwan!!) and headed for the harbour.

The US aircraft carrier was anchored just outside the harbour, which elicited a rant from Joseph on American imperialism, which got quieter as a US officer came up to look out over the harbour with us, and increased in volume again as he left.

This was our last night in Australia, so a party was laid on and a good night was had by all. An evening truly representative of our stay. Good food, lots of booze and excellent company. Details are a little fuzzy now, but I definitely remember Joseph falling asleep standing up. I also remember Ian Nichols outstaying his welcome but no-one wanting to upset him by asking him to leave. "I'm leaving tomorrow and I might never see him again, so I'll do it for you"... and I did. I wonder if I will ever see him again!

**DATE: Saturday, 17/9/85**

Today we leave, and my voice has already left. We met up at the airport with Jo & Judith who were taking the same flight back to Singapore, but the conversation was somewhat stilted, with her hearing problems and my lack of voice. Thanks to 'The Purple Rose of Cairo', the pain from my foot was forgotten on the flight back, aided by the free drinks of course. What a great film! So similar and yet so dissimilar to the other Woody Allen works I've seen.

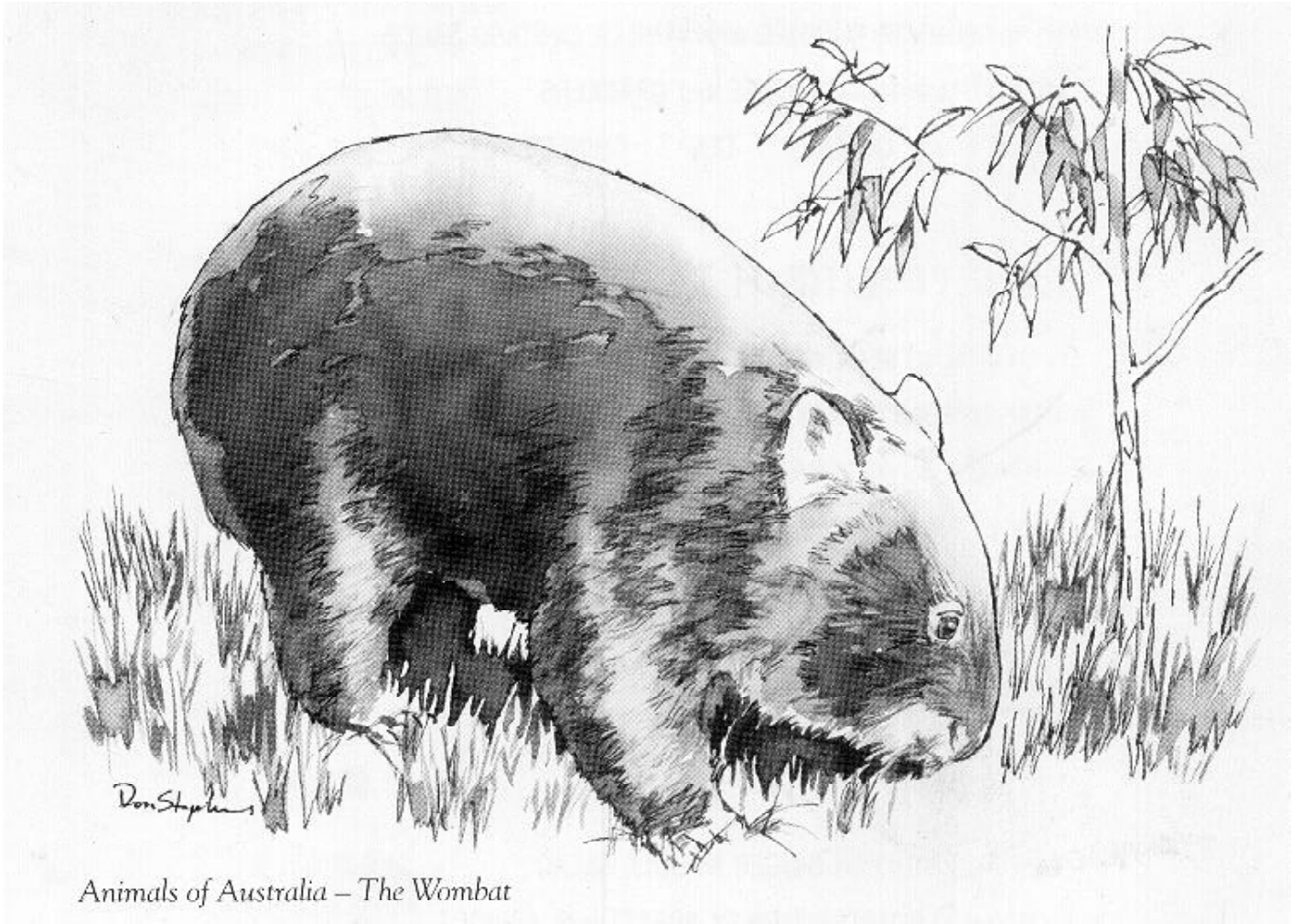
What can you say about a journey home? Not much, there's no excitement, only tiredness and memories. Via Singapore and Bahrain, we arrived back at Heathrow far too many hours later, to be met by Ian and Janice Maule, and transported back to reality and the doctors. Yes, my foot. Only twice normal size, and dirty dishwater coloured, it was the object of much poking and twisting. "You've walked on this" came the pronouncement. Yes, of course I have. Apparently I'd cracked the ankle bone, but because I had subsequently used the appendage, there was nothing they could do to help. Don't bandage it up because that'll only keep it weak. Don't twist it again or it'll crack again (as if I'd do that on purpose). Don't walk on it (so how am I going to get home?). Pah. The Brighton Belle is home, and just like the namesake, I feel like I'm being retired to the sidings. Reality is hell. I want to go back.

## PHOTOS - WE NAME THE GUILTY PARTIES

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Front Cover	- Cover of Wallbanger 12, design from a sweatshirt we purchased on the trip
Inside Front Cover	- Eve & John in the Victoria Lounge
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2	Qantas airplane at Bahrain
3	Merlion, Singapore
6	Bob Shaw & Charlotte Procter Eve, John, Clive Newall
7	Jim Gilpatrick
8	Race Mathews Eve, Marty Cantor, Bob Shaw, Nigel Rowe Ted White, a wombat, David Grigg
10	Peter Burns, John, Justin Acroyd
11	Marty Cantor, Paul Stevens, Eve, Nigel Rowe
12	Eve, Irwin Hirsh Chris Donaldson, Malcolm Edwards, ?
13	Joseph Nicholas, Terry Hughes, Lise Eisenberg, Judith Hanna, Ted White, plus 2 in the Pancake house
14	?, Roger Weddall, Roman Orzanski, Eve also in the Pancake house Larry Niven enthalls the fanlounge masses
16	John & Eve on route to Canberra
17	Larry Larkin, Rob Macguff, Eric Lindsey, Kim Huett John and Leigh Edmonds with a mushroom 'Bugs Bunny'
18	?, Terry Frost, Eve, Larry Larkin, ?, ? (Party at Rosehill, Sydney)
19	Eve and Tony Powers at Botany Bay John, Eve and Tony Powers getting wistful
21	Eve with pyramid
22	Neil Kaden, Nigel Rowe, Alison Abramowitz, Jack Herman, Eve in Galaxy bookshop
23	Lots of fans at Melbourne group meeting (Eve's found a baby!)
24	Even more fans at Melbourne group meeting
24	Sunbathing roos at Healsville Roger Weddall, LynC, Phil Ware, Mandy Herriot, Clive Newall, ?, ?, Jim Gilpatrick
25	Roy Ferguson, Richard Hryckiewicz, Roger Weddall, Marc Ortleib
27	Sally Beasley and her condom
28	Eve, condom and cat
29	Judith Hanna and John wearing that hat
Back cover	- Wombat from Quantas Airlines Menu

You know how it is with fannish photos, lots of people and few working memory cells. Any assistance in putting names to the questions marks, would be gratefully accepted.

(IT WAS THE TREE KANGAROO (I THINK))



*Animals of Australia – The Wombat*