

Ladeez and Gentlemen! Fannish Angst, Foreign Parts and Divine Retribution!
Its.....



Motorway Dreamer 6



Ross Chamberlain 1/09

" Seems in a hurry. Who's he got in this ish? God?"
" Nah! He had to settle for Robert Holdstock."
" Run!!!!"

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	You have Locced
	You have contributed to this or past issues
	You are a fellow faned. By gad, I salute you! You are the finest fellows I know
	You have asked for a copy (Its up to you now)
	You have Bad Karma (You had better LoC this issue or be reborn as something ghastly that Rob Holdstock just stepped in.)

EDITORIAL

There I was in Las Vegas, minding my own business one morning at Corflu and suddenly Sandra Bond appeared at my side." Psst" she said. " Already?" I exclaimed." Its only 11 in the morning."But by many mystic signs and portents she described an article to me. It was a gem, it only needed a bit of tweaking. Months later it appeared magically in my mail. I read it. It only needed a bit of tweaking. I scanned it and send it back. Many moons passed. About Xmas I wondered when the tweaking was going to stop. Magically, it never stopped. Indeed it might be tweaking still. So I edited it and even more magically its in this issue.

Pat Mailer and I have a lot in common. We have been to some of the same parts of the world, albeit she has been to them in modern times. When she said she had a story to tell about Tiger Leaping Gorge, I demanded to read it since I've never been there. Its in this issue with lots of pics.

Robert Holdstock is the star of the show. I am very honoured to have his poetry to print in my humble fanzine. I asked Roy Kettle for a suitably moving tribute, which I never got. So I nabbed a post Roy made to InTheBar concerning the great author instead. Its very funny. I tried to read *Mythago Wood* once, while I was in hospital. Its not the authors fault I took a turn for the worse and had to have large portions of my innards taken out and thrown away. But it felt like it.

Rob Holdstock has been promising to make an annual pilgrimage to Avebury, not a dozen miles from the MOTORWAY DREAMER editorial offices, since 2005. In all that time he hasn't managed to finish another book. Are these things connected? I invite readers to give their views on that - and his poetry too, of course.

BACK OFF BOOGALOO by Harry Bond

Editors Note: This long lost artifact was offered up to me by Sandra Bond. It was a typewritten MS of great antiquity. I had to OCR the manuscript to make it editable. If that has resulted in any infelicitous mis-translations, I apologise. You see, Sandra was going to ask Harry to rewrite it. But Harry was never at home. So I edited it. And here it is. Harry would have asked you to turn over the pages quickly- don't read it. But that only makes you want to read on, doesn't it?

Why me? Why me?

I mean, somebody has a screw loose here somewhere, and the more I think about it the more it appears that it's me. But surely, surely, three years in the world's largest metropolis studying doesn't damage your health? Something has damaged mine, though; be it fandom or university or little green men from Mars, I am depressed again.

To begin at the beginning; it is a sloe—black, slow, black car (actually dark blue, but the hell with that) which I am driving around the Christmas fan party circuit. Giving Dave Rowley a lift from a Pete Strover non-party to Mike and Alison Scott s. (You remember Dave Rowley; archetypal harassed nice person. He was once introduced to intrepid Oxfordite Ivan Towlson, who on learning his name gasped in awe “Dave Rowley! You're a BNFI” Exit Famous Dave in a huff, muttering. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness pinned upon them.

At the Scott's, paranoia begins to rear its subliminal head, but it lurks in the shadows, biding its time. I pull my usual stunt of hiding away from the party, reading the resident fanzine collection. After a few days it's all over. Thanks Alison and Mike. You tried.

And finally, we come to Martin Tudor's party. Finally is the operative word. Dave Rowley is not going to this one, but Wolf is. Does Wolf know the way? Nope. Do I? Nah. Guess the consequences. If you say “You lost your way” you score 0. Instead, Wolf ran out of petrol on the motorway. This necessitated over an hour's worth of driving about in my car, the while getting to know the back lanes in the vicinity of Nantwich in far greater detail than could possibly be of use to anyone, trying to find our way back to Wolf's vehicle, which then needed to be driven to Keele services. Do you know anyone who saw the New Year in by the petrol pumps at Keele services? You do now. There were three of us; Wolf, myself, and the attendant. We celebrated with a can of coke and a Toblerone. Wolf has the pictures.

But at least we got there. Finally. Jolly good party, too. Co—hosts Pam Wells, Tony Berry and Richard Standage all make jolly welcoming chat. I begin to feel quite reasonable again, despite the presence of someone who came with Dave Holmes who keeps being obnoxiously non-sober. The hell with angst and Ashley; things are good now. These things never last long.

Shame some of the guests don't feel as good as I do. Greg Pickersgill, noticing that John Brosnan is absent and that Dave Holmes' Anonymous Friend has passed out at last, takes it upon himself to play the role of Token Violent Drunk and assaults Brian Davies and Kev McVeigh, screaming “You're too fucking young!” Whether he refers to kiss-and-tell McVeigh's goings-on, as revealed to all (or most, at least) by his fanzine EFILNIKUFESIN 2, is unrevealed, but Lesley Ward is only just prevailed upon to refrain from proving her diligent studies of Kate Solomons 101 WAYS TO DEAL WITH MIDDLE-AGED SEXIST MALE DRUNKS. Soon afterwards our Greg vanishes entirely; it later transpires that he's reeled upstairs and razzed all over Tudor's bed.

What of me? I indulge in friendly talk with old mate Terry Broome, renew friendship with Elinor Predota, and attempt (but not very hard) to fight off the sexual overtures of Helena Bowles. Would you credit it; the first time any adult female fan has ever shown any interest in me. Talk about new

hope for the recently dead. Unfortunately Kev McVeigh, recovered from Pickersgill's assault, decides (probably correctly) that Helena has over-imbibed of the pleasures of the grape, peels her off me and puts her to bed, whence she does not re-emerge throughout the whole party.



This, as you may well imagine, makes me very annoyed; not so much at Kev, for some reason, but at the world in general. In an ideal course of events, Helena would have laid Kev cold with one stunning blow and A Good Time Would Have Been Had By All (except Kev). Or better still, Greg would have hit the man a bit harder and rendered his intervention impossible. Alas, all thinking, etc. I go and get another drink, then go and sit alone for a bit. I can feel the monster of paranoia sitting on my shoulder.

So, the next day, there I am. Elinor Predota and a gaggle of buddies have started playing charades at one end of the room. Pam Wells and Glen Warming are staring dolefully at one another. The McVeigh has vanished totally.

In actual fact, there is scarcely one person there to talk to. I'm no Ashley, I'll talk to any bugger. But there aren't even any of those. I'm the only one left outside a circle of conversation. Help. Paranoia. The bastards, they're doing this on purpose. They all hate me. Well, if they want to get rid of me, so be it.

And I retire to the front room where Tudor's fanzine collection is housed and grab a solid wedge of Simon Ounsley, Terry Hill, Malcolm Edwards. Then, suddenly, it's two hours later. Wha-a-a? I've read fanzines in my drunken folly for two hours. Okay, so I can read fatuities any time, but to become so immersed in them that two hours can pass without my noticing....??!!

At this juncture it dawns on me that not only have I failed to notice, but so has every other person in the place, as well. With one bound I'm up to my neck and in danger of drowning from self pity. The Fuckers! For all they care, I could have wandered drunkenly out of the house and been squashed flat under a bus. (On second thoughts, scrub that. There are no buses running here in Smethwick in the wee hours. Actually, knowing Birmingham, odds are they never run at all! But the principle remains the same).

I Stagger into the front room and observe the proceedings. Large quantities of sensible people have buggered off to bed. The rest all seem taken up in the same activities as before. Oh-h-h shit, them party blues. For the first time I begin to wonder whether the Richardson Option of staying comfortably at home and sneering at the inanities of Cilia Black on TV might not have been a good idea. This whole Christmas break has been one long fucking disaster.

Casting my gaze around me, I discern a figure approaching. Thank ghod! Here comes someone I can talk to. For three blissful seconds I feel human once more. Then I see that it's Chris O'Shea. Here we go again; I do not want to talk to this man. His conversation will inevitably- as it always does - consist of strings of jokes, puns, and merry quips, possibly punctuated by the odd conjuring trick. I am not in the vein for this today.

Christopher F. O'Shea II, to give this rotund, jolly, lovable character his full name, is somewhat of a maverick on the London fan scene, with his nice, poshly, printed Filofax convention lists. ("The perfect companion to SMALL MAMMAL" --N.E., Swindon. "I laughed all the way to the bank" - O'shea's printers, East London). While he has enough gumption to realise that fannish fandom is both fun and easier to get into than some people would have you believe, he is not so good at recognising the signs of terminal boredom he instills in most of his victims. When in a group conversation his witticisms frequently enliven things considerably. When in tete-a-tete, he is one big bore. He first crossed my path at Rubicon, when he managed at the same time as carrying off every trophy from every tournament and winning every panel game to offend so many people that (whisper this) the Harveys tried to keep the details of the next year's con from him in case he turns up to infest the Chequers again; look not for Rubicon IV in Chris's convention listing.

(Recently another story Too Good To Check about O'Shea surfaced; he found out about PAPA and joined the waiting list. Paul Brazier, intrepid administrator, visualising mass dropouts should O'Shea get into the apa, contrived to put him at the bottom of the wait list every month. He never noticed.)

And yet, despite the plainly discernible hiss of vented spleen emanating from these last few paragraphs, I really quite like the guy at times. For instance, he had the great good sense at Rubicon to boycott the ghastly disco in favour of a game of bridge with me, Steve Lawson, and some other fan rendered nameless by the effects of the clawing fingers of time upon my memory. And he let me kip on his floor at Novacon too.

But, as the saying goes, that was then and this is now; and now I need him like I need a hole in the head, as a different saying goes. Earlier in the party, indeed, I was having a Personal Conversation with Pam Wells on a Sensitive Topic, when suddenly appeared a pair of beady, inquisitive eyes watching us. We turned to look at him.

‘This is a personal conversation,’ chided Pam.

“Oh, ah,” said O’Shea; but he didn’t go away. How to impress our meaning on the guy? Pam eventually realised that the best way through to him is to be simple.

“Fuck off, Chris,” she said, gently. And Chris fucked off.

But can I tell him to fuck off, without Pam to guard and guide me? No, I can’t. I just cannot say that to people; not bluntly, not with circumlocutions, not nohow. And for my sins I am stuck with him. And he is indeed in a jocular mood; which is all very well when you’re in a hotel room at Novacon, pleasantly pissed and with the atmosphere made all the merrier by Lawrence Dean and Terry Broome. But Lawrence is presumably celebrating the solstice in whatever way they do such things in Canterbury, and Terry is right up the other end of the room, indifferent - might as well be in Canterbury for all the good that does me. I scowl at O’Shea. He is oblivious. Can the man not feel the waves of anger my pulsating brain is sending at him? Hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, nine, ten, out. Does the man know what emotions are? Does he have them? Is this bonhomie a front for a genuine human character or is it the guy’s natural personality? He’s cracking pun after joke after witticism, now, all at my expense. I’m beginning to see red. O! for the gay abandon of a Pickersgill, to be able to pick him up and gently beat out his tiny brains against the staircase. As he continues, I begin to feel myself losing control. If I stay here five seconds more I’ll crack. And I won’t take a swing at him, or burst into a stream of invective; I’ll start crying. I know it.

In a rare moment of sanity I spin on my heel, march from the partying back into the front room, slam the door, grab a random fanzine from the collection, start reading. I just need to be alone. I’m shaking all over with frustration. Then the door opens and Terry Broome comes in, worried look on face. Am I OK? What’s happened?

Then the door opens and Wolf lumbers in, worried look on face. “Christ, Harry, what’s up?” Door opens, Pam Wells comes in (etc. etc). Door opens. Jesus Christ almighty, its bloody O’Shea.

I’m sitting on the sofa now, Terry’s arm around me (good old Terry), Wolf and Pam coming over all motherly. To a man they turn and look daggers at the oblivious O’Shea, who breezes over and squats by the sofa, proceeding to make more funnies and score more points off me. Terry, thank ghod, interrupts this torrent of humour.

“I think you ought to apologize,” he intones.

O’Shea boggles, mind working overtime. Has Terry somehow managed to make him see that he’s hurting me? A stammer or two, then he begins to apologize: “Harry, I’m really sorry, I didn’t realise you were getting upset, only I thought it was funny the way you...”

And off he goes again; Terry is too stunned to intervene any more. Now this is simply unfair. Were there any Cosmic Justice or suchlike in operation then O’Shea would surely have come in line for a thunderbolt by now. Hemmed in on the sofa, I can’t run away any more. One recourse; switch off. Eyes close, drop into dream-format. (Quite easy). Let him wash over me.

I slept on his floor? I did? At Novacon? What happened at Novacon?

The usual, the usual. Martin Smith throws up. D West tries to grope me. Brian Ameringen kisses me. (These fans worry me sometimes....) I sleep on Chris O’Shea’s floor and discover that his jokes and puns are not only bearable but also exhilarating at five in the morning when you re half cut. I meet William McCabe for the first time and engage in a rambling discussion of the writer and traveller Richard Burton. This over, I mention it to Rob Hansen; “Hey, Rob, I’ve just had this really fascinating conversation with WAM about Richard Burton.” Hansen’s reaction is astounding; jerking

upright, eyes popping through his glasses, he ejaculates "What does HE know about Richard Bergeron?"

And of course, the Saturday night incident. I am walking through the lounge of the Royal Anus, when my attention is diverted by a raised voice. Nothing new in that; fans shout at one another all the time, especially if they happen to be either pissed or called Greg Pickersgill. But hey, this is Owen Whiteoak. Why's he shouting?. Whiteoak never shouts. Owen is affable quiet to the point of shyness. Never seen him raise his voice before. Never seen him angry before. Never seen him extremely inebriated before, though.

At first I imagine he's faking it for some reason; but I watch and he evidently isn't. He's hopping mad -literally; bouncing up and down with rage in front of his target, Pam Wells. By her side, a stunned-looking Glen Warminger. By Owen's side, an inscrutable Avedon Carol. What gives? Bending an ear to the talk (not difficult; Owen can probably be heard back home in Highbury, maybe even in Edinburgh) I learn that Pam is on trial for the crime of Not Thinking That Michael Ashley Is A Total Wanker. It is somewhat of a kangaroo court, for each time Pam tries to say anything, Owen's voice drowns her out. Fascinated, I edge my way into the argument. Owen is clearly seething with rage; once or twice I honestly think he's going to rear up and clout Pam. Eventually I suspect that he thinks so too and wants to stop himself, for he abruptly snarls "I'm going to bed," and exits. Avedon attempts to carry on on his behalf, but she lacks his alcoholically fuelled spirit. Glen and Pam both slip away, leaving me looking at Avedon and vice versa. After a moment's silence, she cries "Another victory for sobriety," and walks off. This is, I imagine, a reference to her teetotal habits (it can hardly refer to Owen's). If the victor in this distasteful matter is the last combatant on the field, I suppose that means me (who am solidly on the side of Ashley's right to exist and continue to write for fanzines); but how anybody can really claim to be the victor at all in this shouting match beats me.

So much for Novacon, anyway. Back to Tudor's party, two months in the future and half the city of Birmingham away? Well, its a bit of an anti-climax really. When I cautiously squint at events around me once more, O'Shea is long gone. Terry Broome assures me that he insulted me continuously for minutes on end. Later still, Chris apologises to me once more (maybe Terry got onto him about me). He doesn't even have the Whiteoak Excuse of drunkenness, as the man only drinks orange juice. Still, he sounds sincere as we discuss our relative character deficiencies. Really he means well. Is he that distant from my crashing boringness with which Michael Ashley rightly taxed me? And does this make me a hypocrite for working out my anger in the way I have over the last couple of pages? Oh these deeeeee philosophical questions (maaan).

Well then. There you have it. If only I could tell people to fuck off, not only would I not have had the O'Shea episodes to be the backbone of this article, but I might not have needed to write the article in the first place. There's something almost beautifully neat and symmetrical about that. Pity that I had to spoil it with my insensitiveness and reticence and depression and angst. Wotthehell archy. I've done it now. I feel better for it.

Whats that? Oh, you want to know what happened after that? Well, the party ended, and I said goodbye to Tudor and Pam and Wolf and Terry and Chris O'Shea, and went back home. And a couple of months after I sat in a pub with Pam and talked things over; and a couple of months after that I sat down and wrote all this.

That's the story.

Furthermore, it isn't true.



A Walk To Mr Feng's

by
Pat Mailer

The trip came about this way. In the summer of 2000, a friend, Liz, returned from a year teaching English in China as a way of exploring her Chinese heritage. Both her parents are Chinese, but the family moved to Malaya before Liz was born. They relocated to England when she was very young so she knew little of life in China. Her year in China had whetted her appetite to see more of the country, and, when she announced that she wanted three fellow travellers to return in 2001 I was the first to raise my hand and say "me, me, can I come?".

The next few months were spent pouring over a map of China, and planning our journey. The initial idea was to fly to Pakistan and travel in to Xingjiang by road, along the Karakoram Highway. We chucked that idea when we heard how the road can be blocked by landslides for days on end which would eat into our five week trip. (Having since read Johnny's account of that road I'm relieved we didn't try it). We decided instead to fly to Beijing and from there to Urumqi to explore some of Xingjiang Autonomous Region, the Muslim area in the extreme Northwest. Next we would take a flight down to Kunming in the Southwest, where we would make our way up to Tiger Leaping Gorge. The name itself conjured up mystery and challenge. It is named after a mythical tiger who leapt from one side of the gorge to the other to escape being killed. After trekking the Gorge, back to Kunming for a plane to Shanghai. In this way we would visit the four corners of China. Attractions such as the Terracotta Army or the Five Gorges we would leave for another time.

Reading this last paragraph I realise I have so much I could write about this trip, and I think some day I should but instead, here, I will give you some brief thoughts taken from the journal I kept, before telling you about the Tiger Leaping Gorge trek.



<<<Here is a photograph of the four of us, Liz, Sue, Ann & I drinking airport champagne in the comfortable hutong guest house we found, run by a women's co-operative, still with its raised gateway to stop the ghosts entering (they glide). We have arrived in China, four middle aged women carrying rucksacks like gap year kids on the far side of the World.

Next stop Xingjiang Autonomous Region's capital Urumqi, frontier city plonked in black/grey desert. In the museum we saw, amazingly preserved in the dry desert soil, mummified corpses, one remarkably like John Lennon, with neat long straight hair, wearing a maroon woollen robe and striped socks under long leather boots. Impossible to believe he is around 3,800 years old. Interestingly he is of European descent, the woman and child buried with him are of European and Mongolian descent, a fact the Uigur Nationalists enjoy publicising to further the cause of their independence.

The 24 hour train journey West to Kashgar was a new route, efficient but slow, all the better to take in the scenery. Along the line were odd abandoned settlements, could have been gulag's but more likely were housing for those building the



The Train to Kashgar

line. Occasionally one showed a light in the evening gloom and in one place a woman walked alone along a road towards a settlement barely visible in the distance. Where could she been coming from? The plain was bleak, wet and dark. Tea from the samovar, pot noodles, then bed. Next day, desert, sun, haze, dramatic terrain; peaks to the north and the empty Taklamakan Desert to the south. Occasional stations in little oases and camels by the line.

Kashgar was for centuries an oasis trading post on a branch of the Silk Road, situated at the junction of the old empires. The old Turkish, Russian, Chinese and British Empires all met here. It did not seem Chinese at all, yet it also did. The Old Bazaar was a Middle Eastern souk with lamb and flat bread smoking, workshops welding metal, mending bikes, making pots. Side by side with wide streets with smart shops and a huge statue of Mao raising his hand over the city square. The Sunday market a gathering of Uigurs, Kirghiz, Kazakhs, Han Chinese, Pakistani's, and more, arriving on donkey carts, lorries, handcarts. My head swam with sights and smells: donkeys, goats, sheep, cattle, horses; meat, melons, tomatoes, apricots, chillies, coriander. Bright hued fabrics, pots and pans, bikes, and hats - each nationality have their own elaborate style, felt, velvet, and fur.

We hired a driver to take us up to Karakul Lake, the road taking us from fertile plantations with grazing yaks, through sand dunes, gorges, gravel banks, to snow

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			Top of the H.W. Rd.	Half Way Guest House

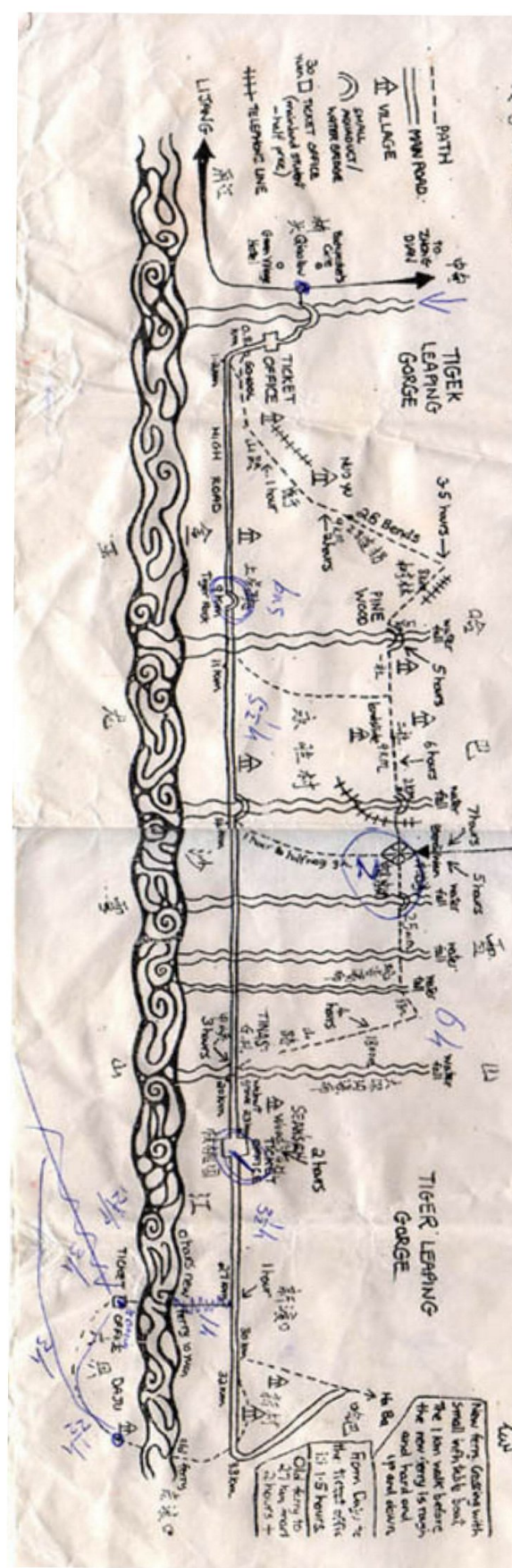
Times from Dayu and Qiongzhusi are based on average times and local experience, some will be faster, others slower. 云南省中国昆明旅游风味镇永胜县 本地导游 导游 导游

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From Dayu to the ticket office 1.5 hours. Old ferry to 27 km road 2 hours.

New ferry crossing with small white boat. The 1 km walk before the new ferry is rough and hard and up and down.

He also gave us a short cut down to the bottom road because he didn't think we would manage the second half in one day if we stuck to the preferred high path and there is no accommodation. We were walking from right to left on the map and it showed seven hours from Halfway House to the end on the left. That would be fourteen hours for us, too much in the steamy heat.

So, the plan was to take the bus to Daju, hopefully find someone to drive us as far as possible to the ticket office, where it would be a thirty minute walk to the new ferry over the river, then climb up for an hour to the bottom road, then walk along the road to the guest house at Walnut Grove. The second day we would climb up to the top path and trek to Mr Feng's. On the third day we would trek past the waterfall and landslide (!) and down the path to the bottom road which would cut out the highest bit and the 26 bends, and give us the opportunity if we wanted it for a bus from Tiger Rock. This was the point at which the mythical tiger was meant to have leapt across the gorge so the road has been strengthened to that point to allow tourist buses in. We were to find out later what other measures the Chinese Government had taken to make our visit more enjoyable!

We set off for Daju first thing in the morning. We had been told in the cafe not to be led into buying a ticket for Snow Mountain and Yak Meadow. (No snow and no yaks). Tourism in this area was just opening up and the new road went past these attractions. There would be tour buses stopping there, but ours wasn't, we were just passing through on the ordinary bus. The cafe people felt this was a Government scam. We would be buying a ticket for the gorge when we arrived there. After some time on the bus we reached toll booths and the bus stopped. We were approached by the driver, as were three Israelis and four Koreans who were also on the bus. We were told we needed to buy the tickets for Snow Mountain and Yak Meadow, and we politely explained that we were not going there. The bus decided it was going nowhere. We would probably have given in and bought the tickets, but we wanted to support the others and not give in to the scam. The driver asked repeatedly and we politely repeated our "no"s. The passengers sat there unmoving. Maybe they were used to this. After what felt like a long time the driver got off and came back with a thug. This guy wore black like the police, but had no badges or numbers on his uniform, just plain black, and for a Chinese he was huge. He went for one of the Israelis who sat near the door, grabbed him and pulled him off the bus. Next he went for my friend Liz, grabbed her arm so hard she had bruises afterwards and pulled her off, to much shouting from the others. At that point we all admitted defeat and got off the bus. It pulled away and we were left by the roadside miles from anywhere in searing heat! What to do now? All we could do was turn back the way we came and hope a bus or a lift would stop for us. We soon came across a weird thing, a group of local folk dancers in national costume dancing in a field. So we went, were welcomed, and joined in. Shortly after, back on the road a truck driver stopped for us and we all piled in the back, back to Lijiang.

Next day we set off again but this time with our own driver as we didn't fancy the indignity of maybe having the same bus driver and meeting the thug again. We were asked again at the toll booth to buy a ticket and this time we paid up. The driver agreed to take us as near to the ticket office as she could but explained that it is very rocky and not really a road at all. She was right. Not far out of Daju and about two miles from where we hoped to start, she had to give up and leave us. I know two miles is not far, but it was nearly noon, the sun was scorching, the rocky ground was uneven and glaring white, so by the time we reached the ticket office I felt very shaky, Sue decided she was going back and we were in the middle of nowhere. Totally scary. Liz and Ann took charge and convinced us we all had no choice but go for it. Three and a half miles back to Daju over those rocks was not an option. After a rest and a ration of our water which was disappearing too quickly, we set off down the half hour "rough and hard and up and down" path to the ferry, which miraculously appeared as we reached the Yangzi.



Climbing down to the bottom road

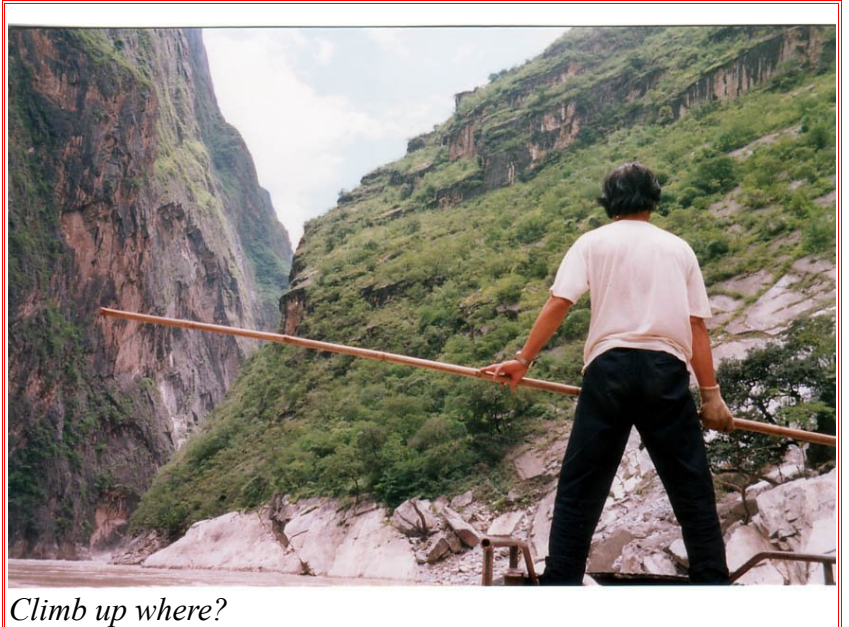


Liz on the Ferry

I was so relieved to reach the river I didn't care a jot that the boat looked flimsy and the river swift flowing and I can't swim. I did, however, gaze at the other side and wonder where was the landing stage? and where was the path? The answer to that was - there wasn't one! Were we expected to clamber up the rock face? What had we got ourselves

into here?

The boat pulled alongside a big lump of rock and we scrambled out and up it. There on a little ledge waiting for us were a man, a young boy and a small horse. I suspect the woman at the ticket office had called them and said some stupid women were on the way and they would need help. They were great. Our bags went on the horse, the man led the way and the boy took up the rear. They knew the way through the rocks and scrubby bushes



Climb up where?

and took away some of the panic. After the hour predicted by the cafe man, we made it up to the bottom road, which wasn't a road but was at least a path and was flattish. For the first time I could appreciate the landscape and our situation. The scale was enormous, dramatic and threatening. I felt so tiny and aware of my own vulnerability. Already the river looked a long way down below. But the seven km walk to Walnut Grove Guesthouse was nothing now, and the welcoming beer rivalled that in Ice Cold In Alex. We drank another and ate wonderful pancakes on a terrace overlooking the misty gorge, bordered by wild flowers and wild marijuana plants, after a shower rigged up inside a tiny cave in the rock. Heaven.

The euphoria didn't last when later that night I looked out at the towering slope which we had to tackle the next day. Fortunately our kindly man, boy and horse offered to be our guides again. Just before the climb we met the young Koreans from the bus adventure and we hugged like long lost friends. The climb was much longer but not so steep as the previous day and we made it quite easily with frequent rests. The cafe man was right to double all the times, we were not young. Each time we stopped the water was further down and began to look like a tiny trickle, brown with mud. The path turned and became a ledge carved into the rock face. We were so high now that all we could see across the gorge was mist, so we had rock to our right and nothing but white to the left. We crossed small waterfalls where we were saved from a drenching by the overhanging rock. A whistle suddenly pierced the air and our guide shouted "Run!" Run? Over rocks slippery with water with the drop to the gorge on the left and overhanging rocks dangerously close to our heads? How? But his tone told us not to argue. We ran. We heard a low boom in the distance, then after a few moments our trusty guide stopped. He explained. There were excavations going on to develop the bottom road and we were under an overhanging rock which could have given way. Hooray for our guides again.

The top path is not on the top of anything, just top in relation to the bottom road. It

clings to the side of the almost vertical mountainside for much of the way. The Yangzi was now 4,000 feet below. The feeling of being in the middle of this giant gorge was very eerie. When walking in mountains there is the feeling of space, peaks are in the distance and there is a big sky. In the gorge the mountainsides are right there, in your face. On the other side of the gorge the mountain is higher, and gives the impression you could reach out and touch it. The sky is only a strip above your head.

Eventually, the path became less rugged and we stopped to eat apples and walnuts brought by our guides. We saw terraces, groves of walnut trees and rhododendron bushes. After a while Bendi Wan village appeared, and the famed Halfway Guesthouse. We entered a courtyard and met Mr Feng himself. THE MAP had come to life. He was busy preparing vegetables for our supper. Did he know we were coming? Unless my memory is defective (possible) there were no other guests that night. We said goodbye to our trusty guides, we could do it ourselves from here. The beds were comfortable, the shower warm and the toilet was the best in the world. The sign on the door said so "Number One Toilet In Heaven And Earth". It was just a channel to squat over (with a good water supply so was clean) but was built out over the Gorge so the view was spectacular. After the obligatory beer, chicken, vegetables and lots of noodles I felt human again. Breakfast was wonderful and plentiful, he's a great guy that Mr Feng. We had pancakes with local walnuts and honey and fresh coffee. The Yunnan Chinese were proving to be expert at cooking pancakes.



Pigs on the Bottom Road

The morning was misty and chilly, there were clouds around us and below us in the gorge. Today's trek was different; small settlements, cultivated terraces and small fields. We followed THE MAP. Four kilometres, under the telephone line, across the bridge over the waterfall and past the landslide. We found what we hoped was the path leading down to the bottom road. We had found our mountain feet by then and reached the bottom easily, with only one or two straying's off the path to sort out. The Bottom road was flat and stony with occasional bites out of it where landslides had taken bits away down to the gorge below, so we kept away from the edge. We walked quite some way with only a group of pigs for company, but gradually the road widened

and once we reached Tiger Rock there was considerable traffic. We had intended to walk the length of the road out of the gorge but it wasn't very pleasant what with the dust and traffic, so when a truck pulled up and offered us a lift we succumbed and climbed in. The driver took us to Qiaotou where we could catch a bus back to Lijiang. We waited for the bus reflecting on the fact that we had, after all our misgivings, walked Tiger Leaping Gorge, quite some achievement. It was no spiritual journey like the one I found in Nepal, it was at times threatening, bleak, stark and frightening, but I guess that is spiritual in its way, highlighting the frailty and insignificance of the self. But then the few people we met, the cafe man, the fellow travellers, the guides, and Mr Feng were strong and caring . Yes, altogether a successful and thought provoking experience.

There were more experiences to follow; the overnight bus with beds complete with duvets and pillows, the magnificent architecture both old and new in Shanghai, the beautiful Humble Administrator's Garden in Suzhou for now they will have to stay in my head. On reflection 2001 was an ideal time to visit China. Things have changed. It is now possible to purchase tickets form Urumqi to Kashgar online, we fought the crowds in the dusty station for ours. And I believe you can now take a coach tour through the length of the gorge by bus along the bottom road.



On the trail



Roy Kettle

writes about: a telephone conversation with Robert Holdstock.....

who recently has taken to writing a lot of poetry instead of finishing(or even starting) his novel. (Abridged.)

Rob: "Can I read you my latest poem?"

"No."

Rob: "Please."

"You can email it to me as usual. I still have a delete key."

Rob: "I want to text it to Sarah in China but I don't know how to begin a new line."

"What sort of phone have you got?"

Rob "A Vodafone."

"No, what make is it?"

Rob: "A VODAFONE."

"Does it say Nokia on the cover?"

Rob: "Yes."

(Pause.)

"The same as mine. Maybe the functions are similar. Go into "create text" and put in a few random letters."

Rob: "OK. Wait. Nearly there. Text. Create. No wait. There. A d a. My battery is low."

"It won't take long. Now press the key with the asterisk."

Rob: "There isn't one."

"Bottom left?"

Rob: "No. There's one with an asterisk and a plus sign."

(Pause)

"Press that one."

Rob: "Oh God it's all gobbledegook. I don't understand it. It's gobbledegook."

"Just press the up button."

Rob: "The what? It's all gobbledegook. I don't know what it means."

"There's a key with a chevron pointing upwards. Between the red and green keys."

Rob: "The what?"

"Can you see a key with a chevron pointing upwards?"

Rob: "No. Oh, the screen's gone dark."

"Don't worry about the screen. Just find the up button for now."

Rob: "I don't have an up button."

"OK. Is there a green button?"

Rob: "No."

"OK. There's a layout of digits."

Rob: "Where."

"On the keypad there are digits. What keys are immediately above the 1 2 3 buttons."

Rob: "The 1 2 3 buttons?"

"There's a button with a 1 on it."

Rob: "Aaaagh! Now there's a full stop on the screen."

"Don't press any buttons. Just stick with describing the keypad. After the 1 there are also buttons with 2 and 3 on them?"

"Rob: "Aaagh! Now there's another A and a d on the screen."

"No, don't press the buttons. Just look at the keyboard and answer my questions. What's above the row of buttons marked 1, 2 and 3?"

Rob: "They have letters on as well as numbers. I just don't understand what's happening. I can't do it. I - The screen's gone dark again."

"This is as bad as talking to Brosnan about a computer."

Rob: "Don't say that."

"It's worse than talking to Brosnan about a computer."

Rob: "It's not easy. I'm a 60 year old man."

"But with the brain of a 5 year old. You should be able to do it. What key do you press if you want to start a phone call or listen to one if someone's ringing?"

Rob: "The button with the green telephone on it. Aagh!, The letters have disappeared from the screen and it says `phone number'."

"Did you press a button?"

Rob: "Now it's gone back to the main screen."

"Stop pressing buttons for now and just describe the keypad. What's between the red and green telephone buttons?"

Rob: "An up and a down button."

(Pause)

Rob: "Aaagh! I've got a list of names."

"Rob, stop pressing buttons and just listen. Not press. Listen. You're a writer. You can cope with these words."

Rob: "Now it's asking me for a phone number again."

"Stop pressing buttons. Go back to the create text screen and put in a few random letters again."

Rob: "The screen's gone dark again. Oh, now it's back. My battery is low. A d a."

"Now press the button with the asterisk on it."

Rob: "It's all gobbledegook. What's it mean?"

"It's a choice of characters that you can insert into a text message. One of them will be highlighted."

Rob: "The full stop. But it's just gobbledegook."

"Press the up button. What's highlighted now?"

Rob: "A Q."

"That's odd. There isn't a Q on mine."

Rob: "It's next to a diagonal line."

"That'll be an ampersand."

Rob: "Oh."

"Is there an enter symbol on the screen?"

Rob: "A what?"

"A bent arrow."

Rob: "I don't know what you mean."

"A little horizontal arrow without feathers. The end that's away from the point is bent upwards."

Rob: "I don't know what you mean. Oh, the screen's gone dark."

"The same as is on the Enter key on your PC keyboard."

Rob: "My what ?"

"There's a key on your PC keyboard that says Enter."

(Pause)

Rob: "Yes. I see it."

"What's underneath it on the same key."

Rob: "Nothing."

"OK. Many keyboards have a bent arrow on the Enter key. It's also often on the key you press if you want to confirm your credit card number in a machine."

Rob: "I don't understand."

"It's a symbol like a tiny arrow pointing sideways but there are no feathers and the bit that doesn't have a point on it is bent upwards. It's the universal sign on most keyboards indicating the key which tells it to perform an action. People on many other planets use it as well. It enters whatever instruction you want doing, like checking your credit card number on the machine if you're paying for something in a shop. If you highlight it on your gobbledegook screen and choose the "use" option then your text message reappears with the cursor on the next line."

Rob: "The screen's gone dark. Oh, it's back. My battery is low. There's no character like that. There's a question mark and a squiggle and a plus sign and a smiley face and another smiley face and..."

"But no bent arrow."

Rob: "No."

"OK. Then you seem to have a model which has a different approach to mine."

Rob: "It's Sarah's old one. It's ten years old."

"Mine's ten years old too. What's the model number on the case?"

Rob: "The screen's gone dark."

"Forget the screen. Is there a model number on the case?"

Rob: "It says NOKIA."

"Nothing else?"

Rob: "Oh, it's back. The battery's low. Here, it's on the back. The model is I F F O. Oh, it says 'If found please return to...!' Sarah put it on."

(Pause.)

Rob: "I can't do it. I just can't do it."

"You've got a different model to me. Or I've failed. I may have failed."

(Pause)

Rob: "Are you still there?"

"Yes."

Rob: "Don't ring off."

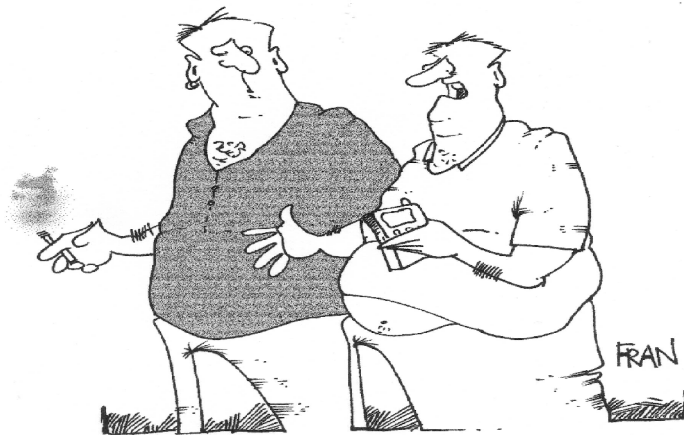
(Pause)

Rob: "I am balloon headed.
Flying high
Charged with creativity..."

"Are you reading me your poem?"

Rob. "Yes."

"I'm ringing off."



I MEAN WHAT IS THE POINT OF GETTING THE
INTERNET ON YOUR MOBILE PHONE IF YOU
CAN ONLY SEE ONE TIT AT A TIME?



Hello Readers! Its time
for your treatment. Its
the.....

OBLIGATORY

POETRY

SECTION

And , really, its a privilege to be able to print poems like these:

The Field of Tartan

by Robert Holdstock

(For my Grandfather. Who walked across this field on the Somme : July 1916)

I walked for my life, across a field of tartan.

The Scots went first. They had it worst.
The First, the Twenty First. Highlanders.
They sowed the seeds, the soft touch
Of fabric-woven earth, over which we walked.
They had been mown down to a man.
They made a field of tartan.

Before they went, they sang.
The songs were haunted.
We joked about their skirts;
They took it in good part.
There was a sense of peace,
Resignation! That touch of Spartan
In each heart.

(He walks for his life, across a field of tartan.)

No mud when the top was crossed,
When the iron wind blasted and counter-crossed,
Seeking the marrowbone, the head, the heart,
Taking us down into that field of tartan.

It was so strange, so savage.
Astonishing to find no mud, just fallen flesh;
To briefly meet a dying gaze,
A last remembered highland day.
To walk over limbs clad in scarlet tartan.

And we slipped and slid upon the patterned cloth, but made the other line.
There was killing, then.
No charms, just arms, the sinking down, the frightened frown,
Flesh suddenly shaped into dirt, life dearth,
Blood silt,
Nothing to hearten us
Except our unwanted luck at walking over hand-weaved kilt.
Not sinking into earth.

Walking across a field of tartan.

JUGGED

by Robert Holdstock

There was a moment:

I was sprawled across the wire,
Shot through, limb lost,
Thinking, faintly, of what might be higher
Than the iron barbs, keeping me so still, dead not,
Not yet,
A moment when a creature ran through No Man's Land.
A hare.
It had no business being there!
I'm surprised it wasn't shot.
It stopped and looked at me. God! The dawn was grey.
It rose into that stark, cold, early morning,
Gun clatter sounded, but it didn't run away.
It stayed. Curious of face (hares can do that.)
Missing his form? Or searching for some other place.
Somewhere quiet.

And the hare said:

"I'm just a dying dream.

A memory from a time when it must have seemed, to you,

That life would last forever.

By the way, your brother...

Over there, further down the line.

He's gone away.

I was skinned, cooked, your grandmother did it.

My fate, the fate of all my kind,

To be juggled, quartered, heated on the fire.

Yours, you poor sod, to struggle on the wire.

I wonder why men bother?"

FOX DAWN

by Robert Holdstock

Hunted, always haunt-seeking.

Sleek,

A shadow, silver, moonlit,

Streetwise, street-screaching,

Moonshadow, mercury, slipping over walls

Your calls, cries of fox-lust,

Fox hate

Fox fun.

Silver slivers, twining,

Binding, arms and legs, my street your bed,

My bin your feast,

After the street feast,

The dawn-play of fox fucking.

If men were foxes, (for a while not men,)

Would we think of copulating

(With our Vix)

Outside your dens?

And eat the rotten remains of hens,

You'd nicked from nearby coops?

Sneaking up, silver covered against the snow?

(You clever ghosts.)

Probably!

(Don't fancy it, though.)

and finally- this haiku from Steve Green

spring

seventeen *morae* ,

sown as seeds across three lines;

we'll harvest *haiku*



BACK SEAT DRIVERS

You put out you fifth ish and the first LoC you get is still about your fourth. Still it is from.....

Pam Wells

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I know you sent me MD4 in the post, lo these many months ago, and I know I must have dipped into it when it arrived, but then I must have "put it somewhere safe" and never got round to finishing it. I've just read it from virtual cover to virtual cover on efanazines.com, and enjoyed it enormously, particularly your article about Buddhism (with which I agree and am fascinated, though unlikely to follow a purely Buddhist path myself).

Following on from that, I wanted to share with you my own "religious experience", which according to Swinburne would probably be part way between Private-describable and Private-indescribable -- certainly a good deal more describable than yours appears to have been. Having been raised in the Christian tradition (Methodist parents; Methodist Sunday school, C of E primary school), my "vision" had a distinctly Christian flavour.

It happened when I was in my early to mid-twenties, I guess. I'd been through a fairly intensive suicidal period, which wasn't uncommon in those days. I lived in a flat in North London at the time, and had just had a week or two off work with something that wasn't officially described as depression, some of which I'd spent visiting Greg and Linda Pickersgill (as they were at the time) in their flat in South Ealing. They had a new kitten, Antny, who spent a lot of time sitting on my lap and trying to make me feel better. I spent hours just sitting on their sofa and stroking the kitten, listening to whatever music Greg was playing, and not saying much. Linda worked during the daytimes, but Greg was at home. I was sleeping at least 12 hours a day at that time, and would get up sometime in the afternoon.

I remember having a conversation with Greg during that time, in which I told him that I would kill myself, and he gave me the most sensible response I've ever been given in

that situation. Something along the lines of, well, you're an intelligent human being, and I'm sure you've thought it through, and if that's what you really want to do, then fair enough. He said this in a very matter of fact manner, very supportively, without being in the least bit hostile or confrontational, and it was exactly what I needed to hear. It sounded very respectful and kind. He also said as to how he'd prefer it if I didn't, but he didn't do anything to persuade me not to. I was shocked, because most people didn't take me seriously when I said stuff like that, and I usually had to pretend that I didn't really mean it in order to make them feel better, which of course only used to make me feel worse. Greg didn't seem to need this falseness on my part, and I will always be grateful to him for that.

Later that day I started feeling a lot better and more purposeful. I announced my intention of returning home, and wrote a letter to Exit asking them what might be an efficient, tidy and painless way of terminating my life. I felt great, actually. I knew what I would do. It was either that evening or the following day that I travelled home. At any rate, I remember that I arrived home on a Thursday.

That night I went to bed early, but I couldn't sleep. I just tossed and turned for hours on end, in a weird sort of half-wakeful state. Then, all of a sudden, I saw a bright light shining through my bedroom window, and came fully awake. I think I sat bolt upright, actually. It was an ethereal sort of light, extraordinarily bright, and not just the kind of light that might be shining through from a neighbouring window. And I heard the following words, articulated clearly and distinctly, inside my head:

"I shall lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

I'm not aware of any particular voice speaking these words, but it was definitely an auditory experience -- I was hearing the words, not reading them. And at that moment, I knew that I would not be taking my own life.

Sometime later, I recognised those words as being from Psalm 121, which I had read out during an assembly in Primary school, which must have been before the age of eleven. (Possibly quite a long while before -- I was rather a precocious child.) But I hadn't had any cause to read those words since then, and would not have consciously remembered them at that time.

The following day, a Friday morning, there was a letter from Exit in the mail, saying that they were not allowed to tell people how to terminate their lives, because to do so was against the law. But they did send me their brochure, which explained their work and what they were allowed to do. So it goes....

And that's about all I remember, both of the "vision" itself and of the surrounding circumstances.

I'd say that I was suicidal for the first 40-odd years of my life. Maybe not actively suicidal for all that time, but certainly I had a strong preference for not being alive. I just wanted to "not be here". I still have to remind myself that most people think this is extremely unnatural.

There was a time during a therapy marathon a few years back when I made the decision to live, in a sort of "rebirthing moment", which was a real turning point for me, although even now I still hark back to those old feelings from time to time, even while knowing that I will not knowingly do anything to hasten my own death. But I think the real turning point was the day of that vision, getting on for 20 years previously, several years before I'd had any experience with psychotherapy.

Perhaps from that time onwards, I found whatever it was that I needed to keep me going? I don't know, and I don't want to attach post-hoc meanings to something which arrived in my head from who knows where. But the whole process of life is a process of meaning-making, so I know that I am failing to tell an entirely neutral account of what happened to me that night. In any case, I thought you would be interested, imperfect though it is.

They way we are built, our minds do not give us the ability to be neutral in the strictest sense, but I don't feel that you diminish the importance of the experience you describe if you call it a "religious experience" post hoc. Indeed, I think from what you write that you know that is what it was. Your clear and straightforward account also underlines how important others can be in , as it were, preparing the ground for such an experience to take place. Even if, as in this case, the preparation is provided by so unlikely a figure as Greg Pickersgill, if I can say that without giving offence (which I probably can't.)

Well, enough of that Dr Pam, what did you think of MD5?

My copy was waiting for me when I arrived home last night after teaching my evening class. I'd only intended to give it a quick glance, but found myself reading avidly from the beginning all the way through to the end of Graham's poem, which I also enjoyed. I especially appreciated John's piece of fiction, the reading of which did much to energise me after an exhausting day (as Thursdays during term time tend to be). It raised more questions than it answered, not least the part about none of it being about anybody, and I wondered where, had it been continued, it would have gone. In other words, John, if you write a sequel, I am so there!

Not much chance of that, I'm afraid Pam. Though you never know. While it is true that nobody is anybody, the template for one of the characters has reappeared in my milieu, via the serendipitous Facebook.

Right! Whose next?

Ritchie Smith

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Post-pub as well as post the Wyndham Lewis exhibition... But, hey, it was great to get "Motorway Dreamer" (a true blast from the past). What strikes me now is what struck me before: a classy-looking production! The Web - in this age, almost anyone can produce something that looks good, and you have. (Didn't the photocopied Bob Lichtman fanzine page look positively primordial!)

Okay, content. I thought your own piece was highly readable - but, c'mon, was this really entirely "fiction"? I seem to remember... Well. Maybe I'm wrong. That was all long ago, wasn't it? "The Laughing Policeman"... And I thought Uncle Graham Charnock's piece, though not exactly poetry, was very, very evocative ... "Arthur Negus, William Blake, Fred Dibnah, Kendal Mint Cake". The true spirit of Wrinkled Shrew and Ian Dury!

drunken kisses

And to you, my love. I haven't a clue what you are on about but that is the default state on your LoC's so far. Still, keep 'em coming Ritchie.

Next up, its that Frank Lunney lookalike guy from the bay area -

Jack Calvert

Firstly, thanks for giving me a copy. My first impression was the traditional neofannish, "ogoshwowboyoboy!" It's physically an impressive production. The story hit me in the right place, because I have a soft spot in my illusory being for Buddhist tales. And I suspected that this was going to be one when I read in the disclaimer "Indeed, nobody is anybody." That could easily be a saying of Bodidharma. Maybe in the dialogue with the Emperor of China just before that sceptic asked who he was talking to, then.

To which, as I am sure you know Jack, the Master replied " I don't know." The characters in the story would have said the same.

The Buddhist current aside, it worked as a piece of fiction. The people and their conflicts felt real, the scenes felt vividly believable.

Then the poetry section: fiction and poetry, you are running a high grade of fanzine, sir. I enjoyed Pat's contribution, and Robert's, and was amazed by Charnock's. The man's talent knows no limits. Robert's "Growl" got the look and feel of "Howl" down well, as far as I can tell. It also reminded me that it is "the" FAPA. Everyone just says "fapa" now. And the wait list is long gone. I read poetry quite a bit, but probably don't get out of it quite what one is supposed to. I read it for the imagery and the intensity

of the language. I think poetry gets a bad rap because schools make (or used to make) such an ordeal of "understanding" it.

Not 'arf, pop pickers! And, by the way, Jacks own stuff will appear next ish.

Gary Mattingly:

gsmattingly@yahoo.com

First, marvelous Dan Steffan cover and wonderful artwork and color throughout. Quite a production this, heavy paper, spiral binding, front plastic protector!! Very nice.

I thoroughly enjoyed "Waiting for Dardo". It seems, and here I am hopeful, it is but a short story from something longer. Very interesting description of the countryside, the people, the buildings and the very intriguing dreams. My mind wanders to koans. Wikipedia says, "generally containing aspects that are inaccessible to rational understanding, yet may be accessible to intuition." I liked the use of the lyrics. I look forward to more of your stories.

And of course, there is the most excellent "Obligatory Poetry Section". May it also continue and flourish. Pat Mailer's "Night Window" was very enjoyable. The descriptions, the scene drawn from the scene, lovely. "This Septic Isle" by Graham Charnock was obviously in a different direction. The connections, the path, the entertaining juxtapositions, all enjoyable but I need to read it several times more. And the music will be available when?

As others noticed instantly, Graham's poem is a very near take on a lyric by Ian Dury. I haven't tried it, but I imagine Dury's tune would fit. But Graham is a musician and maybe could come up with something different.

"Growl for the F.A.P.A." by Bob (aka Robert) Lichtman was a very interesting slice from the past. So will he be contributing more poetry to future issues? I certainly hope so.

If Robert Lichtman were to send me poetry for inclusion in this fanzine, you can bet I would print it. I expect he would say it was too poor. But then he would, wouldn't he?

Meanwhile I've got this list of books of poetry he said were certainly well worth reading so now I obviously need to cut back on other activities and read from the Beat Generation and much more. On to "Back Seat Drivers". With respect to Robert Lichtman's preference for fannish fanzines, I believe I must put myself in that category also. However probably the first fanzines I ever saw were in a past not quite that distant (1968 or 1969) and were probably TNFF and Tightbeam from the National Fantasy Fan Federation. I led an isolated life in Kansas at that time. Despite living in a suburb of Kansas City I felt both culturally and socially isolated from things and people I found interesting. I liked the vision he described of lining up punch cards and "where the holes were the same all the way through was our religion". Sounds very reasonable

to me. Meanwhile I must go see if I have "White Sport Coat" by Marty Robbins and if not must immediately purchase same. Something I found very interesting recently that I had not known was Steve Miller's early and long association with Les Paul. That must certainly have been an interesting and enjoyable friendship. I am envious.

News to me as well, chief.

Chris Evans writes a most interesting set of notes about performing "rituals of obeisance to favoured texts". Now I disagree a bit about the dressing up part on a strictly personal level. I feel I certainly must have been a Naturist in earlier incarnations for a Skyclad interaction with the spiritual or divine is without a doubt my preference. However robes can be nice on a particularly chilly evening. I was rarely if ever one to add to the load I carried and more often than not preferred shedding things. Now if I could just carry that over to the accumulation of books, CDs and DVDs I'm certain I would be much better for it.

And on to Eric Mayer. My mother tried her best to make me a good Christian. Sunday after Sunday she took my sister and I to the local Methodist church. Fortunately it was just on the opposite corner from our house. Most convenient don't you know. I think there were times where I raised questions in Sunday School which unsettled some of those attempting to teach us the holy tenets but fortunately I was such a good lad at memorizing verse that my odd questions were balanced out by my performances of quoting scripture at appropriate times. Add to that my mother's desire to have me sing at church, Eastern Star, talent contests and any place else she can place me in the public eye. I sang at weddings and funerals, functions and contests. However although I was quite capable of standing in front of crowds at the age of 6 through 10, such is no longer the case. Crowds are not my friends. Now in gatherings of many I need to maintain a distance and more often than not a bit of shielded isolation with brief forays and interjections at times, sometimes appropriate sometimes not but never any long sojourns in the company of the multitudes.

I have meditated off and on for many years. At the moment I must admit to slacking off but as soon as I shelve these piles of books, magazines and other detritus in my room I hope to return to the quiet. I actually enjoy it and it certainly helps my state of mind.

Pantheism or panentheism with continuing excursions into polytheism have always seemed more reasonable to me than monotheism, and have actually spoken of these things in my own fanzine, SKUG.

(http://www.amelor.com/skug/skug16/belief_systems_16.html)

Actually I have a greater desire for magic or at least quietude than worship and forgiveness. One of these days I must test the waters of ceremonial magic. Obviously I vacillate a bit in these realms but have little desire for the mundane. Or maybe I'm spouting words and haven't a clue. That's probably it.

Gary, I think you have a clue.

John Purcell has seemed rather ubiquitous of late. I really must read some of his fanzines (and everyone else's for that matter . . .). I must admit at the moment I would just as soon not "shuck this mortal coil" though. I seek it but then I don't. I think I take issue with, "I find that people embrace it (religion) when they need some assistance in their every-day lives." This may be true for some but I don't believe it is true for all. I do not equate the search for release with the search for assistance. I do not equate the search for union and oneness with a search for assistance. Meanwhile on the iPod, "Jesus just left Chicago and is bound for New Orleans."

Graham James:

jamesgc@fearnville.fsnet.co.uk

Just a short line to thank you for MD5. It arrived just after Inca which I thought was excellently produced, setting new heights in psychedelic fanzine production. But, you have raised the bar even further, especially with the Brian Zaikowski's toons -very fannish and the other illos. Do you know much more about him?

Brian Zaikowski is an excellent chap from New Hampshire who has a web site on which he puts up cartoons and says effectively "Go on and take them!" So I do. Besides his great style, he plainly finds a lot of the same things as interesting and funny as I do, like Religion and S&M.

I was glad to see that Robert liked my short article in MD4 and that this fitted the overall theme. Chris's loc was beautifully written although I do think, if you are particularly close with someone, shall we say, 'soul mates', then emotional cargoes are eminently transferable through music or any other media.

What a brave, but not foolhardy, decision to include poetry and fiction - a take on an early journey into fanzine production?

In the Seventies, as many will remember, there was a fan called Lisa Conesa who produced excellent fanzines with a more or less similar mix of fannish stuff, fiction and poetry. MD could be said to be a take on on her early journey into fanzine production, I suppose. But its mine, I tell you!! All mine!!!

I loved Graham Charnock's Septic isle, a collage using nostalgia interspersed with irony and barbs as a take on the BBC's Sceptered Isle of some years back. Very enjoyable, especially Birchall with Churchill and Dr Who & Wrinkled Shrew.

Waiting for Dardo is positioned, bedside, waiting for a midnight read. More later.

But sadly, there never was.

Well, since this is turning out to be the Special Robert Holdstock Issue of MD, it wouldn't be complete without his LoC:

robholdstock@btinternet.com

Loved Charnock's 'This Septic Isle'. The man has talent. He should try part-time writing!

Does this yet constitute a LoC? Like 'ritchieritchie', it's been a long time since I sent a letter of comment. Mainly because I find I have very little to say. No opinions except those I hold dear. No fury except that which fires my fure-lust. Love what I love. Hate what I hate. Indifferent to what indifferences me. As the poet said:

'What I took I took; what I take I take; what will be taken from me will be taken from me'.

(Christ Almighty! I've just realised I'm a fucking Buddhist!)

I don't know who 'ritchieritchie' is (your letter column), but as regards John Brosnan's 'wake' (and his regret at not having been invited), those organising it went to great lengths to contact all whom we knew would have wanted to come and remember the 'Jolly Aussie', as he was occasionally known. Inevitably, because we were feeling pretty down at the loss of someone who had been very close to us, and we had very little time, a few people would have been missed out. Sorry, Ritchie. Whoever you are.

The next time I'm down Avebury way, I'll be sure to drop by. Preserve Avebury from idiots! Not referring to myself. Just the morons who paint the stones. I love the place. Very Buddhist...(apart, of course, from the fact that it's three thousand years older...)

Robert, Avebury needs you! We are just waiting for the day when you will appear here. Up to now, all we have heard about you coming to meditate among the stones turns out to have been rumour and mythago.

Next- Jim Linwood

JLinwood@aolcom

The layout, physical appearance and quality of MD's contents (particularly your long piece *Waiting For Dardo*) are outstanding and defy comment of the usual fannish nature.

I was intrigued by Robert's *Growl For The FAPA* (written when he was just plain "Bob"). Younger fans on both sides of the Atlantic in the early 60s seemed to be very familiar with Ginsberg's *Howl*. Over here I think it was Mike Moorcock who started the saying "I saw the best minds of my generation, starving, hysterical, naked.... (insert name of

convention, party or other fannish gathering here)". The City Lights Books edition of *Howl* was freely obtainable in London bookshops like Collets and included the "obscene" footnote (*The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!*) omitted from other appearances.

Pat's poem nicely complemented Hopper's *Night Windows*. When Marion and I went to the Hopper exhibition at Tate Modern a couple of years ago we both got a sense of déjà vu as we'd seen his paintings accidentally, or intentionally, reproduced in countless noir films. *Night Windows* could be the outside of Sam Spade's office in *The Maltese Falcon* and I wonder if Hitchcock saw *The House By The Railroad* when looking for a suitable location for the Bates' Motel?

(<http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/assignments/paintings&poems/house.jpg>)

I liked Graham's poem - a homage to Ian Dury's *England's Glory*?

Even So, Subbuteo!

Attention on deck! It's Captain Robert Lichtman:

rlwh001@yahoo.com

Between my reprinted poem and my long letter of comment, I appear to be the dominant voice in *Motorway Dreamer* No. 5 other than your own. In the editorial you write, "Then there is the poetry, which suddenly issued forth from various unexpected quarters. Poetry in fanzines has often been an embarrassment, and it seems almost to have disappeared. I have said before that I want it back, not merely because I still write it, but also because I know its still a secret vice practiced by many, and I don't think it should be secret any more." Yes, getting poetry from me, Graham, and Pat Mailer—and thus not feeling the need to publish any of your own—is a good thing. You're right about the embarrassment factor of most fanzine poetry, and yet there's nothing like that in any of these offerings. Well, maybe mine for being such a patent "fandomizing" of Ginsberg's "Howl."

But it was 1964, Robert.

Fanzine poetry apparently does still exist, and even has its own special interest group, the Science Fiction Poetry Association, founded in 1978 by Suzette Haden Elgin. Their Website is at <http://www.sfpoetry.com/> and quite possibly you might find it interesting. I learned of its existence in correspondence with one of the people who bought some of my eBay offerings last year because they included fan poetry. His name is Drew Morse, he's a schoolteacher living in one of the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, and as you'll see if you scroll down the left side of SFPA's Website he's the editor of *The 2008 Rhysling Anthology*. And for that matter, the ones preceding it from 2005 forward. He's also listed as the Rhysling Chair, whatever that means. The vast majority of the names listed in the contents for these anthologies are completely

unknown to me, but there's the occasional familiar one (familiar to me although perhaps not all of them to you): Greg Benford, Ruth Berman, Joe Haldeman, Ursula LeGuin, Ian Watson, Bud Webster, Neil Wilgus and Jane Yolen. And the not-so-invisible hand of Steve Sneyd is present as publisher of some of the poetry.

"Waiting for Dardo" was a wonderful read, full of the sort of imagery that also infused your China train trip narrative in *Trap Door* and in addition a fascinating story interweaving dreams and reality, sex on the astral and material planes, and the joke at the end that the "soft wailing on the air" and Vim's certainty that sex was happening turned out to be Liz's vibrator. I also found it interesting that all the action, sexual and otherwise, took place while Dardo Rinpoche is away and resolved upon his return, even though he immediately absents himself because he's exhausted from his trip. Guess his mere presence brought forth a degree of enlightenment. I wish I had more to say about the story—because it really was enjoyable in its unfolding—but alas that's the extent of it.

In my letter, inexplicably my correction of the name of the Seattle bookstore Graham James was referring to in his article got shortened from Shorey's, as I typed it (just checked), to Shore's. I wonder if any Seattle fans will have written in to "correct" me.

Not a one, chief. And I am very sorry it happened.

Chris Evans writes, "It's not a new observation but SF readers, mostly an intelligent, very rationalist lot, are no less immune to the lure of transcendence than anyone else. Except that it usually has an intellectual rather than spiritual dimension. Most of us will have originally found it through the stimulus of stories that challenged our view of the world. We then went on to find fellowship through conventions, fanzines and all other means by which different groups in the SF world congregate." That worked for me for quite a while, but then (as you know) I got caught up in the spiritual bubble happening in San Francisco in the '60s and ended up living in a spiritual community, The Farm in Tennessee, for nearly all of the '70s. What I found there was that it wasn't too long before dogmatism tended to take over, that Stephen Gaskin turned out to be a flawed teacher who denied his own ego trips (and in doing so let others with their own trips that fed into his ride roughshod over others), and that in many ways the mental action there was less nuanced than what I'd found in fandom early on and went back to once I left.

As far as I can see, whenever a group is formed that follows a teacher, the very next thing that happens is an outbreak of power tripping. Maybe we should observe more closely the Buddha's instruction to "work out out your own salvation."

OiOi! Its Bruvver Nic of Maryland, whom Ghod preserve:

nicfarey@mac.com

Bloody good, that, the content is well up to the outstanding production values.

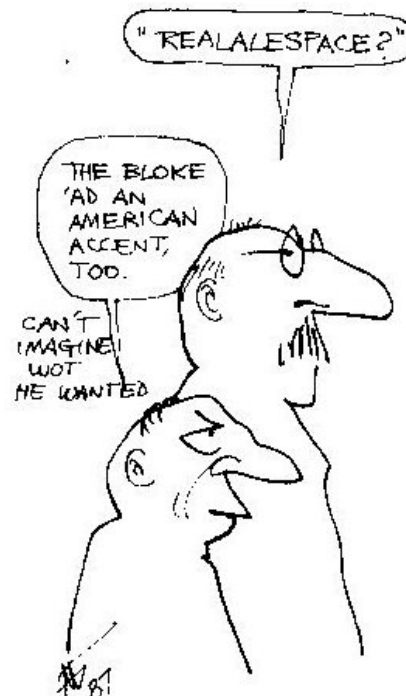
Highly interesting to me to see fic (and poetry!), which might even be making a comeback at this point. I'd always used fic (and the occasional bit of verse, as well as some specific artworks on occasion) in *Arrows of Desire* back in the day, and was lucky enough to get contributions from the luminary likes of Colin Greenland, Barry Bayley, Paul Di Filippo & Langford among others. I should still have paper originals lurking about here somewhere, so any indication of mild interest might snag you copies. You'd probably have missed em all, since the run (8 issues) was from the late 80s to about '95 or '96, I think. Whatever happened to Sylvia Starshine?

Not a clue. Who was she?

Anyways, I'm a terrible fuckin' loccer really, can't seem to get much past one paragraph - the gist is "read and enjoyed".

Good arrers!

And to you, sweetheart. Keep checking your rear view for them red lights.



This next effort, I wasn't going to print as the OPS was full. But then , I thought that would be cruel given the effort my dear old mate, Rich Coad, has gone to:

richcoad@comcast.net

Motorway Dreamer

(with apologies to John Masefield)

I must review the fanzine again, the text and illustration,
Dan Steffan art on the cover, man, I must give approbation,
And all I ask is a comment hook and a clever turn of phrase:
Dan's detailed Martian rover, his humor, all amaze.

I must review the fanzine again, the fiction of the editor
Is not at all unreadable, it's not at all a bore;
Most fanzine fiction is like Malcolm's very famous Lesions,
But Dardo even could be read by Buddhist Melanesians.

I must review the fanzine again, the obligatory poetry section,
The three you print support your case for reviving this confection;
Pat's contemplation of a painting contrasts with Graham's growl
But teenage Robert Lichtman raises fan poems to a howl.

Buddhist Melanesians- stretching it a bit there, I feel. Next its Sandra Bond

sandra@ho-street.demon.co.uk

The general burbles of wonderment I made at Corflu regarding Dan Steffan's cover are hereby renewed; of course Dan is one of fandom's top artists at any time, but this is one of his best large scale pieces, and I reckon it has to be the best front end of a fanzine I've seen this year, and possibly for longer. You jammy sod. I've never been favoured with any Steffan art myself (if this LOC is printed, that is a HINT, Dan). As well as the art, the lettering (again, as usual with Steffan) compliments the picture to a nicety, and the red-and-black effect does no harm either. All told, MD5 looks fab and gear even before you open it up. (So long as you don't look at the back cover first and get put off by the address label with its text all crooked... I know, I know...)

Actually Dan supplied the cover with the lettering in outline. I filled the letters in the house red in my photoshop clone. And you know what? I got this terrific cover by writing to Dan and asking him! I admit I was pretty servile, but what the hell, it worked. Go and do thou likewise, and I hope that when you get this ish Sandra, the back will not be adorned with a wonky label.

Nice to see that MD is, is, edited by you. You sound as though you're trying to convince a rather dubious readership. "I do so too edit this thing! I don't just amass it and throw it all together!"

Well, a piece of tittle tattle reached my ears once, to the effect that a certain old fart in Haringey had alleged just that. He went on to extol the virtues of his own fanzine which of course was crafted by him to perfection. This struck me as a bit unjust, since his editing skills and mine were about on the same level, even if I never did toil in the back room of NEW WORLDS in nineteen sixty hows-yer-father. Anyway, I "edit" just to make it clear.

"Poetry in fanzines has often been an embarrassment," you say, and somewhat to my amazement the next word is not 'but'. I don't know whether fandom is necessarily about creativity; self-expression, I'd say, which isn't entirely the same thing (though for you and for me self-expression does seem to involve creation, I'm sure we could both name fans both now and from memory of our earlier fan careers for whom that was patently not the case). I haven't myself penned any poetry, for fanzines or otherwise, for a while. There are two reasons. One is that I can only write poetry when depressed, and oddly enough, I haven't suffered from depression to speak of for a few years - at least, not when compared to the almost permanent state of it that I enjoyed through most of my teens and twenties. Furthermore, once having committed poetry, I usually find myself horrified by the mere thought of letting anyone else see it. My poetry is personal, a window into my mind, and I don't like the thought of any old hobbledehoy being able to peer through the window and see the state I leave my mind in (bed unmade, dirty knickers on the floor, books piled up everywhere, you know the sort of thing).

Well many of us apparently think that poetry is so personal, letting others read it in a fanzine is tantamount to walking down the street in the nude, but for my part, I think that when I have got a poem nailed on paper that's the embarrassing part over. What came before that is like leaving the lavatory door wide open, but finishing it, getting it printed, that's the sound of the flush and the faint whiff of the air freshener. But I doubt I will change your mind.

Being the uncultured bitch I am, I'm afraid most of your own piece sailed over my head (where were all the blasters, rocket ships and talking squids in outer space?) but a couple of points amused, such as the narrator ceremonially drinking tea to the point where he's desperate for a piss and doesn't dare ask about it. Also the dreams of commuting on the Sidcup line, and trying to boil a kettle. In fact, the most memorable parts of your story for me all seem to be where the exotic clashes with the mundane. Apart from "sitting on that stool full of shit" - was that a deliberate pun?

I know a bloke who told me once: there is no supernatural- its all natural. Besides, when you look into Zen, for instance, you see that that it is the small things, the mundane that frames, or contextualises, the spiritual. Somewhere I have a video of an important Tibetan puja, and the monks are chanting away and the cymbals are crashing and the drums going in glorious cacophony and this goes on for a very long time, and the camera catches the small boys- junior monks or novices - scurrying between the seated lines, hauling great steaming kettles of tea, to fortify the monks lest they get hoarse in

their constant chanting. One boy dropping tea into cups along the line, misses out a monk, who snags the boys robe with his finger without dropping even part of a sacred syllable. He gets his tea.

No, it wasn't a deliberate pun. But its only natural that it is.

Grah Charnock's poem is suspiciously similar to Ian Dury's song "England's Glory", which was recorded by no less a luminary than Max Wall (who Charnock actually lists) in the early days of Stiff Records. I think the 'Frankie Howerd/Noel Coward' rhyme features in both, even...

Lichtman's reprint is superb and well worthy of exhumation. Amusing to my fanhistorical head to note a few nods to real life early 60s events, such as rich brown discovering a loophole in FAPA's rules that allowed the whole waiting list to be blackballed, and give his flatmate Mike McInerney a free ride to the top of the list. I wonder whether 'Birmingham' is Alabama or West Midlands? Perhaps Robert will tell us.

I think this piece is just about timed such that the 1960s Brum Group was achieving some prominence, but whether such prominence had spread to the USA and FAPA yet...

Speaking of Lichtman, I liked the explanation in his letter of Stephen Gaskin's method of classifying religions. I also liked the use of red ink to denote your editorial responses to letter writers; isn't modern technology wonderful, eh wot?

Even so, Subbuteo!

As I seem to remember mentioning at Corflu, while Rog Ebert may be the fan who went on to most prominence outside the field of SF, Gene Klein/Simmons must run him very close for that honour (even if Lenny Kaye and Jeff Wanshel are left trailing behind). I would also suggest that Arthur C Clarke and Ray Bradbury can't be far behind in general terms of fame even though their renown was achieved mainly within the skiffy genre.

I fear that unlike Chris Evans and John Purcell I have failed to notice most of your subtleties this issue; I don't do subtle very well. I just grub around down here in the dirt with what's obvious and on the surface, like a pre-school kid in the sandpit. Still, I enjoy it that way. I don't think I'm shallow, exactly, but such depths as I have are usually fairly obvious rather than being hidden. Perhaps transparent is the word.

You don't do so bad, sweetheart. Subtleties are where you find them, and you plainly have.

That is your lot!! WAHF: Lloyd Penney, Geri Sullivan, John Purcell, Steve Sneyd (Sorry not to have done better by you Steve, but I hope you enjoy your copy of this ish) and

Bruce Townley sent a nice postcard. Before you go, one final bit of news:

Corflu **Cobalt**

**The 27th Corflu, will be held 19th-21st March 2010
*at The Winchester Hotel, Winchester, UK***

Attending membership, inclusive of Sunday brunch banquet: £40 (UK) or \$55 (US) till 31 May 2009; rates thereafter will increase .Supporting membership: £10 (UK) or \$15 (US)

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The organising committee are: Rob Jackson (Chair); Pat Charnock (Memberships); Graham Charnock (Programme); John Nielsen Hall (i.c.sums); Linda Krawecke (Hotel Liaison)

Corflu is the premier convention for fanzine fans, and this is only the second time it has been held in the U.K. If fanzines are your thing, you should be there. Fun and frolics guaranteed!!



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