

iOTA 02

January 2017

iOTA is the little efanzone put together after the manner of Dr Frankenstein's creation, using bits and pieces found here and there. The putter-together is Leigh Edmonds who can be contacted electronically at hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au.

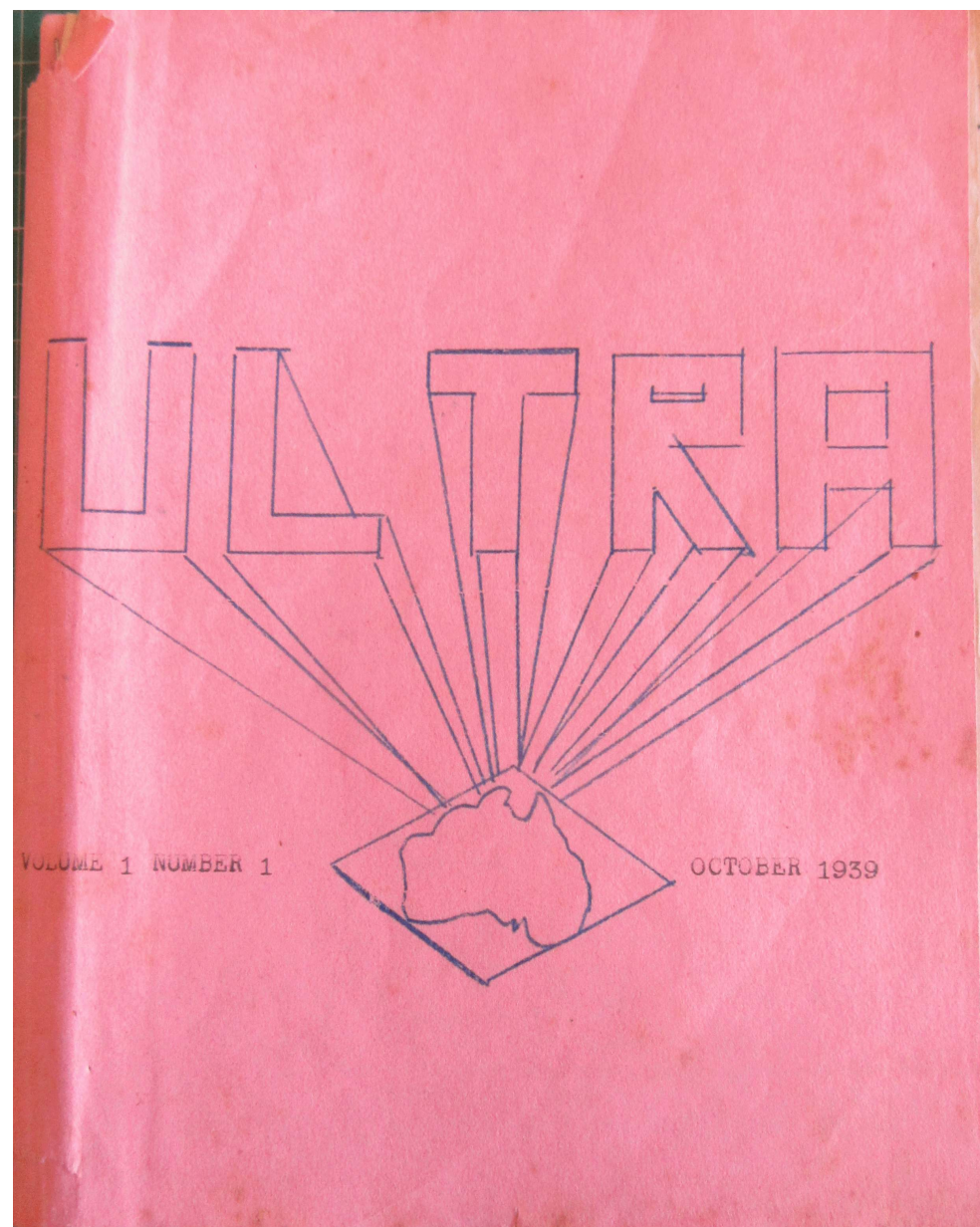
The purpose of this little efanzone is to serve as a progress report on my current history project which is to research and write a history of Australian fandom, focusing on the period between 1956 and 1975. It is also a place where I can publish little bits and pieces of the writing and art of Australia's fan past to help introduce you to the rich vein of material that previous generations of fans have left us.

iOTA would be available for 'the usual' but, since it's not a genzine in the usual sense of the word, and there don't seem to be too many genzines around these days anyhow, I'm making it available to anyone who is interested in getting it. Payment, in the form of rich gobs of egoboo, is always welcome but not necessary. *Ask, (at the above email address) and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,* as it says in the Good Book.

If you want more details about this history project you'll have to get a copy of iOTA 01 which goes into the whole business in more detail. (I'm not feeling quite so eloquent this issue.)

Our Cover

All self respecting fanzines have covers, and this one will too. The difference is that all our covers will be, shall we say, pre-loved. This one, for *Ultra* Vol 1 No 1, was published in October



1939 by Eric Russell. It is not the first Australian fanzine, but it is among the first and misses out by only a few months.

Pause for Thought

As well as looking at a lot of historical evidence about Australian fandom I've also been thinking, more than usual, about what historians actually do and what I, as a historian, am doing with this history. When I was rearranging some books recently I found that, unconsciously, I had brought all (almost all, anyhow) of my historiography (study of the writing of history) books together in a prominent place. Apparently my unconscious mind is telling me something.

One of my favorite writings about history is section vii of E P Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* about historic logic - partly because it is short and partly because it goes to the heart of some of the problems in doing history. I had another look at it recently, there is a great deal that I could recite here that is probably of more interest to me than it is to you, but I think the following paragraph is relevant to all of us who have a stake of some kind in this project, particularly those of us who were historic actors in it.

In the end we also will be dead, and our own lives will lie inert within the finished process, our intentions assimilated within a past event which we never intended. What we may hope is that the men and women of the future will reach back to us, will affirm and renew our meanings, and make our history intelligible within their own present tense. They alone will have the power to select from the many meanings

offered by our quarreling present, and to transmute some part of our process into their progress.

(E P Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, p.57.)

Hidden Treasures

For a long time Bill Wright tried to establish an organization called Meteor which would be a repository for material relating to the development of Australian science fiction fandom. However, due to a lack of sufficient support and failing health Bill has been forced to give up the struggle to make his idea a reality. As a result arrangements have been made for the majority of the collection that Meteor had gathered together to be donated to the Rare Books collection at Monash University.

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in December a handful of fans gathered at a storage facility in South Melbourne where the Meteor collection was surveyed to ensure that some items that should not go to Monash for ethical reasons were removed for later storage elsewhere. In



Bill Wright

passing some treasures were uncovered which, in relation to this history of Australian fandom project, included disks of the complete Aussiecon proceedings (which, those who were there will recall, was videotaped) and what looks to be the master



The gang after the work is done: Robin Johnson, Bruce Gillespie, Bill Wright, Thomas Bull and Carey Handfield. Not in the picture is Elaine Cochrane who wasn't of a mind to want to be photographed with this mob. (Once we all had hair like Thomas's, what went wrong?)

Aussiefan film. These two items will probably not go to Monash immediately, but will make it there at the appropriate juncture.

Those in fandom who want to ensure the preservation of

things we treasure from our past are very fortunate that a number of significant institutions around Australia including the libraries at Monash, Murdoch and Sydney Universities, have shown an interest in our collections. They have the resources and expertise that we lack to take in and preserve what we cannot. An organization like Meteor might have been preferable from many fanish points of view but it would have required the long term support and employment of trained and professional staff to sort and catalogue our collections in a way that would have been beyond our resources. More importantly, I think, placing our collections in these institutions opens them up to access by non-fans in a way that an inward focused organization could not.

There is, of course, the fear that, at some time in the future, the institutions which are currently building up their science fiction and fandom collections might falter and disappear or decide that our material is not 'core business' and dump it. That's entropy for you. If they can give our treasures a life of another fifty or a hundred years, it is more than we could have reasonably given them ourselves.

Now it is up to us to make sure that those collections are promoted and used so they remain relevant to those institutions and they see the value in keeping them.

Let's Get Organized - 1940

This extract is the lead item from the first issue of the *Futurian Observer*, published by Bert Castellari and William Veney in January 1940. It was transcribed from the original for efanzone by Kim Huett.

The theme of this item raises one of the key areas of inquiry that I need to resolve for the history - what is it that turns a reader

of science fiction into a science fiction enthusiast and even a science fiction fan, however such a creature might be defined.

Another issue that crops up here briefly is the one, touched on elsewhere in this issue, what we can't know because no evidence about it from the past remains. Here we read that there was a Sydney chapter of the Science Fiction League, that Charles La Costez was a member and that an attempt made by the young Sydney Futurians to get in touch with them was not successful. What more can we know?

One notes with much interest and concern where Australian fandom stands at present. Not suffice that what there is of it may soon be wiped out by the threatening ban of magazines, it appears that very few are doing anything towards assisting in raising it to greater heights. If Australian fandom is to get anywhere then fans should show much more enthusiasm than the present chronic display.

Oh yes! We have fans in this country! That's a definite fact, proof lying in suburban and city bookstalls and to a certain extent in the magazines themselves! But where are all these fans? Most of them seem to have hibernated for the duration of the war. Letters have appeared in the pro mags stating the existence of an Australian club, which is badly in need of members, but very few or no enquiries are made at all! Letters were received regarding these clubs from various parts of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia; I will say that. Yet,

totaling the number received we find that altogether no more than approximately twenty out of the fans have shown enough enthusiasm to bother writing. Still more only about five of these ever wrote more than once and when letters were written to fans who names had appeared in mags not more than two answered! Surely some of them are eager for Australia to appear on the map as regards stf fandom! Or are they like some parties we know, and don't care two brass farthings what happens?

I am not necessarily insisting that they should spend every minute of their spare time on science fiction. I am merely stating that they should wake up! There are many fans, I know, who do want to take up stf fandom in a big way. But they lack both support and co-operation! When they find they can't get older fans together they become discouraged and let it pass though there is still a longing to become active left in them. Those that wish to support a club and can't get news of one turn to overseas organizations. Result, an Australian club is formed and finds that it cannot get members. However, I don't think this will happen very often as every club formed in Australia in the past years has been advertised in one pro mag or another!

It is no secret that the present activity in the Sydney fan world (FSS) is caused by the work of fans of whom only one is more than sixteen years of age.

Adult fans ran the Sydney Science Fiction League and adult fans are needed to run present Australian clubs efficiently. Not that we younger fans are incapable of handling this situation! Far from it ... but an adult majority would tend to produce a stabilization of matters. I have already stated that contacts were made in different states. In doing so I neglected to mention that in South Australia three of our correspondents were adults. In Victoria, all have been adults. Again, we have with us Mr Charles La Costez, who was a member of the old SSFL. He has assisted us greatly in our campaign to contact other former members of that organization, even though this work has not obtained very satisfying results. But it shows that once the adult fans are awakened they can do much to raise Australian fandom to what it should be ...

While I'm on the subject of Australian fans it would do no harm to look at New Zealand fandom. As far as we know NZ has no stfans or stf organizations, even though there are many fans there. When all is said and done, NZ is a part of the huge area known as Australasia. In all probability there is some lack of co-operation among fans, so it's now up to both Australians and New Zealanders to join hands and form a larger Australasian scientifiction fan organization!

WHY NOT?

Bert Castellari

(Futurian Observer 1, January 1940. Transcribed from the original by Kim Huett for efanzone.)

Fanzine Review what you missed in 1939

Our friend Robin Johnson turns up with the most interesting things at times. Usually it is old airline timetables - and we share an interest in air transport so we can find hours of harmless interest and amusement in airline timetables - but not on this occasion. This time it was a little fanzine with a pink cover produced in the old fashioned way using carbon paper. (If you are not aware of this form of reproduction, I'm thinking about writing a little series called something like 'Reproductive Pleasures' in some future issues. Some people have never heard of carbon paper, which means that they are young and happy folk.)

This little pink and carbon paper produced fanzine is *Ultra* 1, produced by Eric Russell in Sydney, bearing the date October 1939. It is probably the fourth fanzine title to be published in Australia after John Devern's single issue of *Science Fiction Review* published in February 1939, *Australian Fan News*, a single issue of which was published by William Veney, Bert Castellari and Eric Russell in May 1939 and three issues of the *JSC Bulletin* (Junior Science Club) published by Vol Molesworth and Ken Jeffreys in June 1939. (Thanks to Chris Nelson for his extensive research in this area.) Of these early titles *Ultra* was among the early successful Sydney fanzines, seeing fourteen issues published between October 1939 and December 1941 when the commencement of the Pacific War brought an end to most of this kind of frivolity in Australia.

(Robin does not recall where he got this issue of *Ultra* from, he has a vague thought that it might have been given to him by 4SJ, and although there is some sense in this since most Australian fans seem to have established contact with Forry Ackerman very early on, it is only conjecture.)

This is a thoroughly enjoyable little fanzine of 12 pages in folded foolscap format plus the pink cover with a simple design and some pretty awful fan art on the back cover which may have been hectoed. There are some technical problems, the most annoying being that in this copy the carbon paper was not lined up properly on one page so all the first (and sometimes second) letters of a line are missing. The writing is quite literate, newsy and chatty in a style which would make some 21st Century fanzines/newszines more fun to read. There is some gossip about the exclusions from the recent first New York Worldcon and a couple of the writers give Ray Palmer a serve for the quality of his recent prozines. A John Foyster critique of *Amazing* from this period might have been more penetrating but these young fans knew what they thought and weren't afraid to put it on paper. To give you a feeling for this, Eric Russell's final editorial paragraph reads:

Is Palmer trying to double cross the fans? He says that a variety of artists will appear in the *Amazing* October 1939 issue. In it appear Gorey, Barnes, Wolfe, and Kay, now Bill Veney, Bert Castellari, Ted Russell and myself believe that these names are pseudonyms for Krupa & Fuqua. Palmer is trying to put one over us, and *ULTRA* will have shown him up as a fraud.

Beginning on the next page Bert Castellari continues in the same vein:

According to Ray Palmer 'Amazing Stories' circulations have increased by some 5,000 copies per issue since June 1939, and is now beating that of *Astounding*. However despite these increased American sales (and perhaps English) Australian sales if anything have decreased, registering the disapproval of it.

Now fans go for *ASTOUNDING*. Proof of this is easily obtainable, as there are no *ASTOUNDINGS* left within 24 hours of their release, while "Amazings" (and also other STF mags can be seen with only a few having been sold from a large pile.

Eventually only 'Amazings' are left for sale, which will answer Palmers question re. why Australians are not writing so frequently as they used to. Anyway those who do write only so do to ridicule 'AS' and tell Palmer how *LOUZY* it is!!!!

The rest of the issue is written in a similar style. There is a story by Edward Russell - but it will be the policy of iOTA not to review fan written stf published in Australian fanzines, and you should be thanking me profusely for this. One of the little delights of the issue is a short article written by the Harry Warner Jnr which shows that Eric Russell was well connected with BNFs overseas in 1939 and that Harry was, even then, the consummate newspaper man who could turn out the required number of words in just the right structure to fit the need and the space. (You will

ULTRA--Those Enfants Terribles
by Harry Warner Jr.

Undoubtedly many dozens of Australians who have never before seen a fan magazine will receive this issue of ULTRA. It is to these that this article is primarily addressed, in the hope of imparting a little information about these outlets of fandom.

Forst of all, the main thing to remember is, that a fan magazine never makes money; it is not intended to and any editor who expects financial gains is sure to be disappointed. Therefore, all these magazines are put out merely as a pastime, usually in spare time, and not too much should be expected for this reason. Luckily the editors are in the fortunate position of being able to do what they please with their mags; something the pro high factotums cannot.

A typical American fan magazine runs something like this, at the present time. It is usually anywhere from twelve to twenty pages--some smaller, some larger--and almost invariably sells for 10c American money. Almost without exception the means of production is mimeoing; at the present, there is not a printed fan mag, and only a very few hektoed ones. It's contents may vary in many ways, though at the present the trend is away from fiction, and towards articles & poetry, it seems. For the most part, the contents are written by fan authors (and too often by the editor under a dozen or so pseudonyms!) with here and there a scattering of professional writers who take the time to do a favour. (In case anyone is still unaware of the fact, only once or twice in history has a fan mag paid for material!)

In England, the situation is somewhat different. There quite a few of the magazines--or at least several--are printed on a press and on the whole the British pubs have a more professional and neater appearance. But to us Americans the majority of the material included in them is extremely hackneyed and uninteresting; the feeling is probably mutual vice versa. There are of course, exceptions to every rule.

In no other country has there ever been an honest-to-goodness fan magazine. Now Australia joins the ranks, and I have a hunch that Canada will follow suit before long. You may get disgusted a dozen times with fan magazines, but nevertheless they are things which are almost unique in the field of literature in any form.

Give them a break! They all deserve it.

THE-END

note that Harry uses the phrase 'fan magazine' in this article because the word 'fanzine' had yet to be invented.)

If you have a time machine handy it would be worth going

back to pick up a copy of this one, not just for its historic value but also because of its energy and overall joy of life.

What we can't know about what we don't know

Three things came together to force me to think about this problem on paper. The first came as I was working my way through Vol Molesworth's 'A History of Australian Fandom 1935-1963' which was published by Ron Clarke in *The Mentor* many years ago. In it we come across passages like this one which is about the Futurian Society of Sydney (FSS) in about 1948.

The addition of A Dick, Harold Lennon and Harry Brunen (Sydney) had raised the membership to 29 - Stephen Cooper having resigned - and as the Sydney members were now too numerous to conduct meetings at private homes, it was decided to meet on a weekly basis at The Quality Inn. For a while the Thursday night meetings were well attended and very enjoyable. Club business had been cut to a minimum (occupying only two minutes at Meeting 98 held on July 29) and the rest of the night was taken up with discussion, magazine marketing, and chess.

In September, Vol Molesworth became Director, Roy Williams Secretary and P Glick Treasurer, and the Library, which for the preceding thirteen months had been run by Mrs Molesworth, was taken over by A Dick.

(Vol Molesworth, 'A History of Australian Fandom 1935-1963', *The Mentor* 84, October 1994, p.27.)

After having read dozens of similar paragraphs I begin to ask myself if this is useful historical evidence for a history of Australian fandom written in the second half of the 2010s. The names mean almost nothing now (though I think I might have met Phil Glick at the Melbourne SF Club in the 1960s). What we can learn that is probably of interest is that the FFS had a membership of 29 and a library, it had met in people homes but began meeting at The Quality Inn on Thursday nights where people talked, bought and sold magazines and played chess. It is also interesting to note that they were so organized that they gave their meetings numbers.

I ask myself other questions after reading this passage. Perhaps the most important is, is there any causal chain between largely informal meetings of the FSS in 1948 and what happened later in Australian fandom. We cannot know the answer because the historical evidence for this period is so slight; several fanzines published in Sydney at the time and Molesworth's history which appears to have been written mainly from his memories and FSS records. It is possible that at these gatherings things were discussed which set in train events which would later become significant or relationships were forged which would also later play an important part in Australian fandom, but there is nothing in the record to suggest either of these possibilities.

Later that evening I was reading G R Elton's, *The Practice of History*, and came across a passage which spoke directly to this problem:

The study of history comprehends everything that men have said, thought, done or suffered. That much is commonplace, but also not quite true; some

reservations have to be made. In the first place, not all the past is recoverable, and the study of history is necessarily confined to that part of it of which evidence either survives or can be reconstructed in the mind. That is to say, while history may commonly be thought of as the whole of mankind's past life, it is in truth equal only to the surviving past. Historical study is not the study of the past but the study of present traces of the past; if men have said, thought, done or suffered anything of which nothing any longer exists, those things are as though they had never been. The crucial element is the present evidence, not the fact of past existence; and questions for whose answer no material exists are strictly non-questions. True, this is a less limiting reservation than may be thought because the surviving traces of the past are not confined to material survivals; evidence can to some extent be discovered where it appeared not to exist, and the historian's techniques at times enable him to reconstruct that which is lost from that which is still around. Yet the limitation remains important, especially in practice. Lively minds of little knowledge like to charge historians with asking the wrong questions or with treating uninteresting problems. The history of princes and politics, or war and diplomacy, is often called dull and insufficient; why do we not hear more about 'ordinary people', the lives of the poor, the whole of 'society'? The charge can be

true, but only if in fact the evidence for the study of such problems exist. If it does not, they have no place on the historians' table. The past is over and done with: it cannot be retrieved. It can be reconstructed - seen and understood again - only if it has left present matter behind.

(G R Elton, *The Practice of History*, pp.20-21.)

Following on from this line of argument it is clear that we can only know about the history of the FSS from historical evidence which has survived to 2016, the most readily accessible being the Molesworth history. We can make educated guesses about the nature and activities of the FSS from these scraps of information but there is a very restrictive limit to that. One of the most interesting lines of thought comes from the words 'magazine marketing', which has to be understood in the context of the availability of overseas sf magazines in 1948, given the dollar restriction import bans imposed on a vast range of products from non-sterling block countries, including sf magazines. How important was this magazine trading and the FSS library in attracting and keeping Society members? The evidence does not tell us directly, but the fact that they are mentioned might be a hint. But, more widely, there is no evidence so we can ask no questions of it and it is not something a modern history can even begin to discuss - unless I decide to discuss the blank and lightless spaces in a history of Australian fandom.

The following day I was working my way through John Foyster's *eFNAC* which is available online. Here he looks at the same problem as Elton with the spotlight firmly bracketing fandom and those blank and lightless spaces:

Fanzine fans tend to think of themselves as some sort of "core" of fandom. This is an assessment with which I agree to a limited extent, for just as the winners write the history, so do those who actually get around to writing decide what is written about fandom and thus what is recorded. Do we know much about filk or costumes or fringe fans? For the most part, only if some sort of description appears in a fanzine.

In Australia we have very specific examples of what happens to history if it is not written: there is little or no tradition of publication of regular fanzines in Western Australia, and to a limited extent there is consequently little "tradition" amongst fans in Western Australia other than that handed down by occasional long-lived fans, and that tradition has little disputation, leaving somewhat distorted histories, histories that may leave vast omissions in general understandings that lead to misunderstandings when communication with the rest of fandom is attempted; how long is it since you saw a letter of comment, much less a fanzine, from a fan based in Western Australia?

If only the antics of sf fans in Perth were all that could be debated! But there is so much more that is missing. Last year in a short piece in *MIMOSA* I tried to bring into the realm of the fanzine (and thus, in my view, to join into "our" history some of those whose participation in fandom has thus far been written out of history), an idea not entirely novel since many other contributors to fanzines (outside Australia) have broadened our understanding of fandom by writing about those who have not themselves been part of the world of fanzines.

(John Foyster, *eFNAC* 19, pp.30-31, February 2002)

A technicality perhaps, I disagree that the participation of some has been 'written out of history.' The fact is that it has not

been *written in*. Foyster's phrasing suggests that filkers, masqueraders and West Australian fans have been deliberately been left out whereas the lack of mention they receive is because they are largely invisible in the historical record. This has been because the people who have so far attempted to write histories of fandom have been, largely, fanzine fans and to most of them fanzine fandom *is* fandom while other parts of fandom are subsidiary. This can lead into a lengthy discussion of the role of fanzine fandom as the communication conduit between fan groups which may be what made science fiction fandom distinctive from other groups of fans.

But this is a discussion for another time. The point that needs to be made here is that even if fanzine fans suddenly decided to write copiously about other sections of fandom after reading John's article, that process would have begun in 2002 and there would still be a thumping great gap in the historical record before them. There are other significant gaps in the historical record of Australian fandom which include, for example, the Brisbane and Adelaide stf groups that we know a little about from issues of *Etherline* in the 1950s.

What is to be done about these gaps? Part of the solution is oral history, as Bruce Gillespie has reminded me emphatically. Certainly, I will be doing a lot of that in the coming couple of years, but oral history is expensive in terms of time, effort and resources and has some unavoidable problems which make it unreliable. There is also the simple fact that I cannot labor on this history endlessly and so there are limits to how much interviewing I can do. This will mean many gaps remain in our knowledge of Australian fandom that cannot be filled until the invention of that

indispensable tool of historical research, the time machine.

The result is that there are many things about Australian fandom that we cannot know, at this point in time anyhow, and therefore cannot include in the history. To complain about this is like crying over spilt milk, it is not even worth worrying about unless you happen to be the resident cat. What is worth worrying about is what can be achieved with the evidence of the past which has come down to us here in the present. To this extent, an important question to be asked is what effect meetings of the FSS at The Qaulity Inn in 1948 had on later developments in Australian fandom. However, it seems that the evidence that could help us reach a decision on this no longer exists, so it is not a question we can answer. A more interesting question is, is it a question we can even ask?

VIEWPOINT - 1953

Ian Crozier's short article on the delights of Sydney was published in *Perhaps 2*, edited by Lee Harding in 1953. It shows off the traditional rivalry between the two cities and, if you look closely, you will also note a couple of comments on what Melbourne fans thought of the pronouncements of some Sydney fans of the period.

As I have been requested from several sources to refrain from 'commenting' on any contentious subjects, I will therefore air my views on the Mecca of Australian sun-lovers - Sydney.

If anyone takes exception to this, then I'll give the game away, so help me. (Letters now accepted.)

SYDNEY: by a Melbourne Visitor

As we touch down on the wonderful air strip at Mascot (or pull into the Central Station, depending on your pocket), we see before us the imposing skyline of Beautiful Sydney - a symphonic tangle of unfinished railway lines, and the Harbor Bridge. (Imagine, 21 and not yet paid for!)

This typically delightful Australian city, where foreigners are unknown, is a tribute to the foresight of its founders, with its wide spacious streets, and clean new (almost) buildings.

The Sydneysider has a distinct patois all his own, and frequently breaks out into such phrases as 'Get out you mug' or 'Garn get your head read'. This endears him to the rest of Australia.

Here is a workers paradise with strikes unknown, except for an occasional feud or battle between the staid leaders. This state of happiness is due, I think, to the warm, sunny climate experienced the year round, which makes the inhabitants so happy and gay.

The ultra-modern transport system is the envy of every visitor, traffic jams being the sole prerogative of Melbourne. Trams cover a half of the city, the trains the other, and never the twain does meet. If you dislike either of these methods of transport, then there is the speedway - sorry - the bus lines, which crawl around the hills at a mere 90 miles an hour, thereby confounding the manufacturers who guaranteed them for at least 150.

The favorite pastime of the Sydneysider is the Bathing Beauty contests, which are held at the drop of a hat. This, together with surf carnivals, the dogs and murdering each other constitutes the simple pleasures enjoyed.

The shops and hotels play an old game known as fleecing, and every visitor should play it. I am sure they will enjoy it.

Being the oldest city (in spirit only, of course) in Australia, we look forward to the words of wisdom frequently passed to us by the responsible bodies in the Harbor City. What we would do without them I do not know.

And so as the sun sinks low over the gap, we must reluctantly say goodbye to sunny Sydney with this thought in mind -

There's a devil of a lot of NSW cars in Melbourne.
I J C

Letters of Comment

Carey Handfield *begins:*

Curse You Leigh Edmonds. Since your recent emails I have been thinking about your project and the period 1970 to 1975.

Some thought no particular order.

Partly due to bidding for and running Aussiecon there was an explosion of fannish activity. We went from one con a year to several cons a year. I remember the radical proposal of running conventions in hotels !!! Previously they were held in Scout Halls and other such places.

In Melbourne (and possibly other cities) there were suburbs which had concentrations of fannish activity. In particular there was St Kilda with John Bangsund and others, Carlton with Don Ashby and Bruce Gillespie.

Slan shacks should get a mention. In particular the Magic Pudding Club in Drummond St, Carlton. There was always something going on - weekly parties, dinners, fanzine production, convention running.

Thanks for your suggestions Carey. I had thought of some of these, some I had not. Your communication reminds me to suggest to readers that I am open to all suggestion as to what should be included in the history. I may have thought of it but, then again ...

Dick Jenssen *is more concise:*

I was not in the least embarrassed by the last page – just narcissistically pleased...

The ‘snippets’ from early fans – Bob McCubbin, for example – had me so nostalgic that I needed to pick up my old, old copy of “Adventures in Space and Time” and reread some Kuttner and Kuttner...

There’s a lot more like that coming up, Dick. Fans left a lot of writing for your humble historian to trawl through, some of it interesting, some of it well written, most of it reminding us that fans of all eras were generally interesting folk.

Bruce Gillespie *comments on something in issue 01 that also surprised me:*

The real surprise was finding that George Turner was known to Melbourne fans before WWII. According to the Turner viewpoint, he read SF in magnificent solitude until he met John

Bangsund in 1967 and began writing for ASFR. I did know that he sent a letter to one of the American prozines in 1935, but had never gained the impression that he had made contact with any fans before 1967.

Probably the first of many surprises, Bruce. George would have been about 24 in 1940 and the fans mentioned in Futurian Observer were 18, at the most. That’s quite an age difference so I wonder if George was very aware of other fans even if they were aware of him.

WAHF (We Also Heard From): Mervyn Barrett, Robin Johnson, Chris Nelson, Keir Reeves and Sally Yeoland.

IN CANBERRA - 1975

In 1975 I was editing a newszine called *Fanew Sletter*. It seems that I asked a few fans living in cities other than Melbourne to write about the activities that took place in their cities after Aussiecon. This item, written by John Bangsund, was published in *Fanew Sletter* 42 which was published in September 1975. It encompasses a great deal of the sentiment that made fandom the close community it was, despite the oceans separating fannish friends most of the time.

At about 10.30pm on Thursday 21 August I dreamt a crazy dream about forty-seven American fans ringing our doorbell. Sally nudged me ever so gently and said 'There are forty-seven American fans at the door!' I woke up sufficiently to put on my VIP dressing-gown before going to the door and switching on a few lights. Blinking at the assembled throng, I remarked in my most hospitable manner, 'Don't stand

there in the cold. Go home!' Ignoring this polite imperative, Susan Wood, John Berry and Carey Handfield slipped in before I could slam the door. I still don't know who the other forty-four were. Either I imagined them or they went home.

We sat around and talked and had a few drinks for a few hours, then went to bed. It was 11.30pm and we'd all had enough. I slept fitfully: I kept on having crazy nightmares about Susan Wood and John Berry being asleep in our house and forty-two faceless fans milling around our front garden while Bob Tucker and Jack Chalker tried to slip down our chimney simultaneously.

On Friday morning I swept all the bottles, food scraps, fanzines, cats etc. into a neat pile in the lounge-room where Sally could find them without any trouble when she came home from work, and noticed while doing this a figure resembling Carey Handfield asleep in the room. I poured myself a stiff coffee. The figure roused itself. It now looked like Carey Handfield in pyjamas. which further alarmed me. Fans don't wear pyjamas. I poured myself another stiff coffee, and Carey came back into the room and asked if he could have some. 'Handfield,' I said 'is it true that you are here in my lounge-room in pyjamas?' 'It is' he said. 'Is it possible that Susan Wood and John Berry are somewhere in this house?' I said. 'They are' he said. I opened a bottle.

I forget what we did all that day, apart from talking a lot and walking all over town looking for string, post offices and toy koalas and having lunch about 3 and driving up Mount Ainslie to look at Canberra. No, it's coming back to me now. We found this bloke up Mount Ainslie who'd locked his keys in his car, and I said I'd ring the NMRA when we got back down. I did. The bloke at the NMRA asked me for the other bloke's membership number, and I said he'd locked his card in his car, and he asked me the registration number of the car, and I said I hadn't memorized it. He sort of sighed and said he would send a service van up to the mountain real soon. I suspect he really didn't believe me. If you're ever up Mount Ainslie and you see this bloke with a brown Ford Escort, would you mind telling him that I really did ring the NMRA for him? Ta.

About 5 we sent Carey out to the airport to pick up Mike Glicksohn and Sheryl Birkhead. I didn't really believe he would soon come back with them, especially since I'd given him a map of Waukegan, Illinois, instead of Canberra, ACT, but he did. I keep on forgetting that Burley Griffin came from Illinois. Suddenly we had a house full of fans, and I felt a strange sense of déjà vu. (That's Latin for 'When does this convention end!')

About 9 we were all miles away in the depths of sinful New South Wales, eating unpronounceable Yugoslavian food at one of my favourite little

restaurants in Queanbeyan. Ask John Berry what the stuff was called, he made a note of it. It wasn't cevapcici. We sampled, nay drained, four fine Australian reds - a '66 Kaiser Stuhl J426, a '70 Killawarra Langhorne Creek shiraz-ouillade, a '65 Kassel's shiraz-mataro and a '70 Kaiser Stuhl red-ribbon shiraz. When we all rolled home we found a note on the door which confirmed my fond imaginings of the previous evening. I quote: 'Ve vas here but you vas not, so it goes. we are at the Lytham Flag Inn, Ned Brooks, Chalker, Stu Tait, Joan Serrano, Jake Waldman.' We consulted our maps of Canberra, Waukegan, Toronto, Vancouver and Gaithersburg, and could not find any place called Lytham, so we decided it was all a hoax and got down to some more serious talking and drinking.

Saturday morning: a bright, sunny, unseasonable Canberra day. Beside me on the back steps is John Berry. We are drinking Guinness and there is between us a profound sense of communion, of mutual fondness and respect, of wonder, wellbeing and hangover. We do not speak. Behind us, on the porch, Carey and Mike are playing table tennis. Occasionally one of them steps in the cats' food and there is a polite, gentlemanly oath muttered. Sheryl, Susan and Sally are on the lawn before us, playing with the cats and talking lady talk. If fandom did not exist, I think once more to myself, it would need to be invented, if only for

idyllic moments like this.

During the evening we invaded the Private Cellar Club, where I picked up a few dozen bottles to replenish my dwindling post-convention stock, and Mike failed to convince Bob (the Cellar-master) of the virtues of Canadian wines. Susan was back at 4 Hartley Street, writing her con report for Locus, and Sally was there, too, wondering whether she was cooking enough beef stroganoff and kitsch lorraine (in France it's called quiche lorraine, but we only have the Australian stuff) to feed seven. Mike, John, Sheryl and Carey agreed with me that we should drive up Red Hill to look at Canberra from the back end, but the Renault developed a flat tyre, so we didn't.

At some time on Saturday afternoon we all sat around listening to an incredible record sent by a Swedish fan, Rune Forsgren. Rune, if you ever get to see this, we would like you to know that we loved Ralph Lundsten's 'Nordisk Natursymfoni nr. I'. Thank you for sending it to me, and I promise to write real soon now.

We were just about to settle down to dinner when Robin Johnson, Fred Patten and Don Fitch arrived. Sally panicked, of course, but I knew we could rely on her lovely heavy hand, and so we did: most of the ten of us had second helpings. About 8 we were joined by Bobby Saxby and Rosemarie Bell (Ms Saxby stood unsuccessfully for the local Assembly elections some months ago, and I'm sorry I didn't vote for her;

Rosemarie is one of my unsung collators, dating back at least to the Campbell book, and was Sally's bridesmaid). Twelve isn't a large number for a party, but even so we seemed to split into at least three sub-parties before long, with sercon fandom in the loungeroom, fannish fandom in the diningroom and dishwashing fandom in the kitchen. I dimly recall talking until all hours with Bobby and Rosemarie in my study after the others had departed or gone to bed.

Sunday was sad. We didn't want all those wonderful people to go. There were hugs and kisses all round, and Don Fitch appeared in the far distance (he had stayed at the Canberra Youth Hostel) just in time for all of us to wave to him. Then Carey, John and Susan took off for Sydney, Robin, Fred and Don took off for the Snowy Mountains, and Sheryl, Mike, Sally and I took off for the airport. I hate leave-taking, and shall gloss over our feelings at this time.

Fred and Robin stayed with us on Sunday night, and we learnt a lot about all kinds of things we never knew we were interested in.

On Monday, confident that the last North Americans had dribbled out of Canberra, we found ourselves dead tired and attempting to play host to Grace and Don Lundry. A delightful couple they are, too, and we enjoyed their company. I forgive them readily if they did not enjoy ours: we were not exactly at our sparkling best by then.

On Wednesday I came down again with the dreaded Canberra lurgi with galloping irrits. On Thursday Sally conducted her first marriage ceremony. It is now Sunday 31 August and the 33rd World Science Fiction Convention seems a long way in the past. If only I could get over the lingering suspicion that Don Fitch is still out there at the Canberra Youth Hostel, and that forty-seven American fans are going to ring our doorbell tonight!

John Bangsund

Progress Report

Since the previous issue of iOTA I've been doing a lot of that fairly tedious work that I mentioned there. There are now over 250 Australian fanzines in my research collection, - many of them from the past and others like *Mumblings from Munchkinland* and *eFNAC* from the recent past but with lost of historically useful material in them. That's only scratching the surface of everything that was published by fans in Australia up to 1976 so I have a long way to go.

I'm trawling these fanzines for three kinds of information; the material that will go into the pudding that becomes the text of the history, specific dates to go into the chronology and a collection of all the images in these fanzines organized so it will be possible to find just the right piece of art, photo or cover when it is needed - that's the theory anyhow.

All this takes time and sometimes progress seems irritatingly slow. The trick with getting the work done is to stick to it and resist the temptation to find other more exciting things to

do, like reorganize the tea towels again or check Facebook again.

To Be Done

Lots of this unexciting work, I'm afraid. Last Wednesday I managed to get to see Merv and Helena Binns and Merv talked about the early days of fandom in Melbourne and about running Space Ago Books. This too will need to be 'processed' to become historical evidence for the history. I don't expect to be doing any more interviewing until later in the year when I have had the time to go through a lot of the written material that I'm likely to collect when we go over to the collection at Murdoch University, most likely in February.

The Sticky Institute

The Sticky Institute is a little shop in the underpass linking Degraeves Street (of fond fannish memory) with Flinder Street railway station. Bruce Gillespie mentioned this little shop in a recent fanzine and, after having become aware of the current 'zine making' movement, I thought it would be interesting to have a look. Being between trains, I didn't have time to chat to the people behind the counter, but it was a fascinating little shop stuffed from top to bottom with all kinds of 'zines. I thought it might be appropriate, since I began this issue with the cover of what is probably one of Australia's first 'zines, to conclude thisish with a photo or three of what fanzines have evolved into while we weren't watching. Almost all of the zines I looked at followed the *Etherline* format of standard sheets of paper (A4 I guess) folded in half. They covered almost every topic I could think of, and then some. It's well worth a visit if you find yourself nearby. Set aside more time than I did and poke around to see what it is that interest the zine makers of the modern age.

